

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**EXPERIMENTATIONS IN CREATIVE WRITING: AUTOMATIC WRITING AND  
THE AESTHETICS OF SUBCONSCIOUS PROCESSES**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

This is to certify that the thesis is the candidate's original account of research and all relevant literature cited have been given due credit. It is also to declare that this thesis has neither in part nor whole been presented for any degree from any institution.

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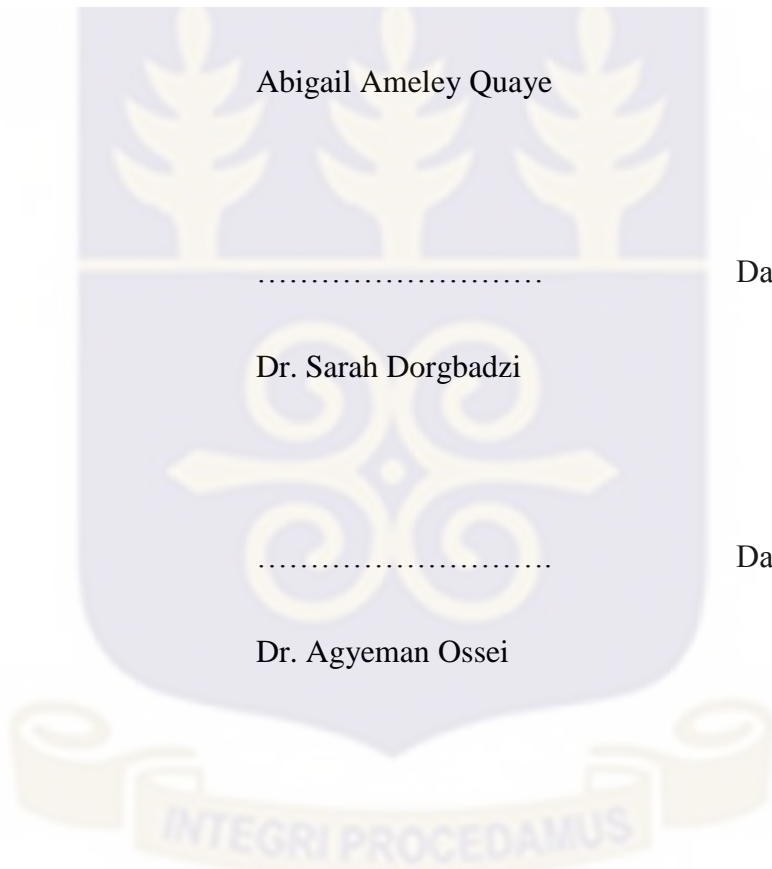
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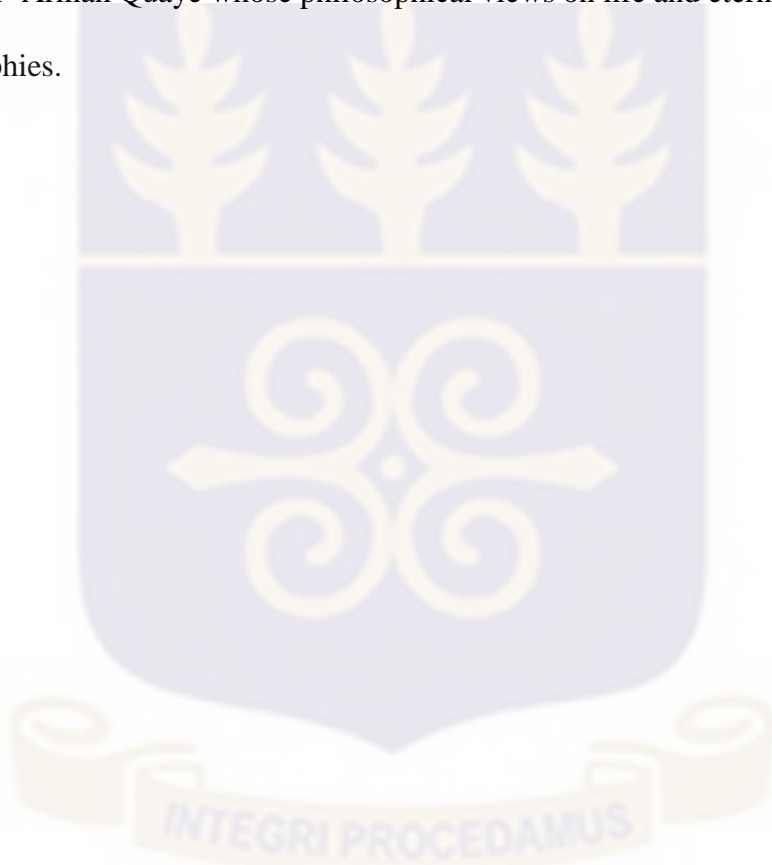
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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dearly beloved Grandmother, Susana Anyemah Quaye and my late father Samuel Nii -Armah Quaye whose philosophical views on life and eternity have shaped my personal philosophies.



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## ABSTRACT

Automatic Writing at first sight carries along with it meanings like free-writing or spontaneous writing. Indeed, both meanings qualify as descriptions for the discourse of automaticity. As convenient and easy as these may look in experimentation, Automatic Writing goes beyond merely writing on any thought or idea. The discourse has its roots in psychoanalysis where it is employed by psychologists as clinical tools for addressing medical issues like personality disorders of Dissociation, Hysteria, Amnesia and other psychotic related conditions.

The recognizable beginnings of Automatic Writing is found in separate aspects of Spiritism and Possessions. Available resource on Spiritism are mere reportages or philosophical assumptions. Though manifestations of the Spiritism and communications/possession abound in almost all cultures, there is often no empirically proven fact for its existence. In this work, Automatic Writing is considered as an occult methodology for creative writing. Both psychological and spiritual automatic writing contents, there appears to be evidence of ideas usually beyond the sensory perception of the writer involved. This suggests that external forces were at play during writing. If the writer is in the unconscious state and the subconscious is at work, then Roland Barthes concept of *Death of the Author* is a valid argument under automatic writing. Since the extinction of automatic writing devices, the human hand has assumed the status of a machine that only takes dictations and traces as instructed either by subconscious processes or spiritual forces. Beyond the controversies, the discourse possess an appreciable aesthetic quality worthy to be probed into. Indeed, denial of authorship is a key characteristic of Automatic Writing because of the autobiographical appearance of the creative work. There certainly can be a case of supervisor/student experimental automatic writing discipline aside the usual experimenter/subject case. An altered state of consciousness is a key element in achieving a state of automaticity.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The quest to try something new, to lay aside the old book which contains the conventions, to figure out which other means the cannons or rules governing an idea could be bended or broken to create either sophisticated or rather simpler innovations inspire artists to embark on experiments. Laying aside the old book of conventions to write a new book demands that the artist must be aware of the content of the old book. Perhaps, one can bend or break rules and laws governing an existing idea only when one is conversant with the preexisting laws. Automatic writing in its simplest definition or form is spontaneous writing. Most writers while in the process of writing, hit the highest point where ideas or language acquire an attribute which is unique in a sense and often defy the primary intelligence of the mind. In writing any creative piece, when that highest level is attained, the writing can branch onto different routes not initially intended. But can a play write itself or structure itself without the conscious abilities of the mind? Can a play be written without first conceiving a storyline, subject matters, thematic concerns or even literary and dramatic techniques for artistic embellishments? Can a dramatic piece be birthed out of unconscious abilities and reliance on higher spiritual forces or muse which characterizes automaticity in writing?

For a start, three accounts have surfaced as the earliest beginnings of Automatic writing. According to Armstrong (1998:188),

Automatic writing has its origins in two closely linked contexts. The first is Victorian psychic research and the technique's popularization at the séance-table by William Stainton Moses from 1870s. The second is the psychological

experiments conducted by researchers including Pierre Janet and Alfred Binet in France, Boris Sidis and William James in America, and Frederick Myers and Edmund Gurney in England.

Armstrong's account cites two narratives as the earliest beginnings. Another account surfaced which falls within the same category as the first cited by Armstrong. According to Thompson (2004:1), the history of automatic writing may perhaps be dated back to evidences sampled in March 1848 in Hydesville, New York. Rather deep rooted in Spiritism and superstition, this history presented a case which later cast doubts on the discourse of automaticity itself. The Fox Sisters<sup>1</sup>, perceived to be used as mediumistic spirit communicators were recorded as being the first to practice automatic writing. The communication between the Sisters and the Spirits manifested in a form of rapping sounds, suggesting that whenever a rapping sound was heard, a spirit had delivered messages to the mediums<sup>2</sup>. An advanced stage was attained when the spirits answered complex questions; each rap representing the first to the twenty sixth letters of the alphabet. A single rap represented the alphabetical letter 'A' as three raps represented letter 'C' and obviously twenty-six raps representing letter 'Z'. These rapping sounds as revealed were produced by the Fox sisters themselves by cracking their toe joints against the bare floor<sup>3</sup>. This revelation as confessed by the Sisters themselves is what cast doubts on the discourse of automatic writing. Contrary to the above confession, according to Verner (1910:4), while commenting on the authenticity of spiritual forces associated with the discourse itself posits, "I have seen a large table

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<sup>1</sup> The Fox Sisters, Leah Fox (1831-1890), Maggie Fox (1833-1893) and Kate fox (1837-1892) from Hamlet in Hydesville lived with their mother Margaret Fox on a farm house. They claimed hearing rapping sounds at night which was later confirmed by their mother. It is assumed that their claim set the tone for the American Spiritualist Movement. See Thompson's (2004:6) account on the Fox Sisters and their mediumistic activities.

<sup>2</sup> Mediums are humans who mediate between spirit of the dead or higher spiritual entities and other humans seeking for information. Mediums can also be humans who have been held hostage by spiritual forces to communicate the mind of the spirit to humanity.

<sup>3</sup> See Theon Wright's (1972:10) Open Doors: A Case history on Automatic Writing. After practicing spiritual automating by documenting the rapping sound believed to be communicated by metaphysical forces, they confess the rapping sounds were produced by themselves.

rise up from the floor, and I have been in a very large house that has been shaken by spirit influences, and the vibration could easily be felt”. Prior to making this comment, Verner asked a rather profound question that later shaped how the discourse should be handled in an academic field. He asked; “how is it that spirits condescend to come and lift the table, or *rap* on the table?” (1910:13, emphasis mine). Though thought to be a rhetorical question, in response, Verner again provided an answer which is deemed accurate in its own state. He argues that “a person has no right to condemn a subject that he does not understand. He should first study it, with an unbiased mind, and have patience, and then see what conclusions he can come to”. As opinionated as his answer to his own question may sound considering his background in Psychical activities, speculations about the spiritual gave reason enough for discussing and investigating into the discourse in academia. Curious about finding truths in speculated metaphysics led me into enquiring further about spirit communication in the Ghanaian context. In an unstructured discussion with Christian Koblah Dorgbadzi on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2017, he narrated real life happenings in Ghana which authenticates spirit communication. The spirit of a dead woman inhabited the body of a living man and gave detail accounts as to how her funeral rites must be performed. Directives like the cloth she must be arrayed in, the picture to be used for her obituary and where her remains must be laid to rest were all communicated. What makes this quite shocking was the fact that the man whose body was inhabited was not a close relation to the dead. The description of cloth she must be arrayed in was found among her belongings. As it was revealed, this cloth was a new one no one had seen her wear during her moments in life. My interest in the spiritual aspect of automaticity in writing emanates from the rather more ‘authentic’ manifestation recounted during the interaction.

It is also recounted that The Fox sisters relocated with their family to Rochester where the American Spiritualist Movement<sup>4</sup> gained grounds. They practiced occult communications of necromancy for families of departed souls using automatic writing. By this Spiritualists' Movement into the realm of the metaphysical stages of life, the discourse of automatic writing gained popularity (Brandon: 1983). According to a study conducted by Albanese (2007:220-21) as cited by Nartonis (2010:361), "during the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thousands and perhaps millions of Americans participated in spiritualism- defined here as talking with the dead".

The historical account underpinning the existence of the discourse of automatic writing is inconsistent with the earliest forms of practice. Automatic written pieces which surfaced during the early stages were not fully fleshed narratives. Some appeared as single sentenced or single worded and as such could hardly be categorized as creative in any form. Verner's psychical activities and automatic written materials which sampled automatic messages underscores the above with example of such writing coming across as "he will marry you" or "he is alive and well" and even "don't go into business this year" (1910:24). These pieces turned out to be very prophetic during the periods. The belief in the prophetic undertones were strong in those eras as most of the automatic messages were later confirmed to have manifested physically. The formative stages of automatic writing were merely production of sounds and not as the discourse suggest as one would expect it to be in the form of writings. With the expansion of mediumistic communications in the Spiritualist's Movement, it became expedient that mediums develop machines that aided them and the subjects<sup>5</sup> who consulted them in receiving and transcribing occult messages for reference sake.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to David K. Nartonis (2010) *The Rise of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century American Spiritualism, 1852-1873*.

<sup>5</sup> The use of "Subject" here refers to families of departed souls who consult spiritualist mediums to get answers regarding the death of the relation. They were guided by the mediums in the manipulations of the planchette, Ouiji Board and other devices to receive messages from the dead. Some subjects were either hypnotized or psyched to activate their spiritual senses in receiving the messages which often consoled them. Some books use Reagents

This gave rise to designing instruments like Planchetts and Ouija boards which aided in the documentation of messages. Psychobrette and Pytho Thought Reader<sup>6</sup> were later developed to advance the means of documentation of messages received from the spiritual realms. Automatic writing at this stage focuses more on the possibilities of spontaneity hence situating the discourse properly within the framework of communication of ideas. It throws more light on the metaphysical content and the surrealistic spheres of the discourse that got popularized in the 1800s. In academic discussions on automatic writing, the aspects of spirituality and believability raised several debates. As Thompson (2004:1) records, “such devices sutured human and machines into mere text-generating devices”. In most cases, as revealed by Armstrong (1998), Thompson (2004), Koustaal (1992) and others who have investigated the discourse of automatic writing revealed that most subjects who engaged in the practice were often in an altered state of consciousness or possessed by external spiritual entities. The state of unawareness coupled with the use of the planchette and other machines which transformed humans into mere text generating devices raised issues bordering on authorship<sup>7</sup>.

Automatic writing became a subject of interest to psychologists, clinicians and theoreticians of the mind both as a phenomenon in its own right and as a technique for exploring aspects of *dissociation* and normal and pathological consciousness (Wilma Koutstaal, 1992:5). While the spiritualist viewed automatic writing as means of receiving messages from spiritual forces higher than themselves, the psychologist regarded these mediums claiming to be practicing the discourse as

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instead of Subjects but both refers to the same idea. Although they practiced automatic writing, they were not referred to as writers because the writings were not regarded as creative pieces.

<sup>6</sup> See Thompson 2004, Koustaal 1992, Armstrong 1998, Verner 1910 for pictures and descriptions of these automatic writing devices. Pierre Janet also modelled his Stem Device taking clues from how the above devices were modelled and operates.

<sup>7</sup> See André Breton’s First and Second Manifestoes of Surrealism written in 1924 and 1930 respectively

individuals suffering from severe health complications who refused seeking medical attention. As Thompson (2004:6) elucidates further, “like Freud, whose secularized occultism transformed demon possession into neuroses, spirits into ego introjects and exorcism into psychoanalysis, Janet’s work made use of essentially occult methodologies- *automatic writing, trance, and the discourse of possession* for the purpose of bringing the occult into the clinic and under control”. The subject of hysteria, double/multiple personalities and personality disorders of *dissociation* were popular during the 1800s, the same time when the spiritualist’s movement was making headways with the practice of automatism in writing. According to Henri Ellenberger as quoted by Armstrong (1998:189);

...by 1880 or so, double personality had become one of the most widely discussed clinical disorders. In 1902, Henry Adams could comment archly that alternating personalities turned up constantly, even among one’s friends, adding that the new psychology...seemed convinced that it had actually split personality not only into dualism, but also into complex groups, like telephonic centers and systems that might be isolated and called up at will, and whose physical action might be occult in the sense of strangeness to any known form of force”

Pre-Freudian Psychoanalyst Pierre Janet’s interest in the occult methodology of automatic writing and his earliest investigations into the discourse revealed ‘subjects’ like conscious, unconscious and subconscious mind. He discovered that automatic writing was a powerful tool for releasing repressing information. The likes of Prince Morton, Gertrude and Stein, Frederick Myers, Alfred Binet, Downey and Anderson, Edmond Gurney among many others conducted clinical experiments into the practice of automatic writing<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> See Amstrong (1998: 188) *The Nineteenth-Century Context: Automatism and Dual Personality*. Piere Janet and Alfred Binet are French psychologist, Boris Sidis and William James conducted experiments in America, Frederic Myers and Edmond Gurney were British psychologists. See June E. Downey and John E. Anderson (1915) in the American Journal of Psychology.

According to Koutstaal (1992:6), during the early 1900s Prince Morton discovered two types of automatic writing processes; “those who, at the moment of writing, remain entirely unaware of what the hand was writing and those who experienced, at the time of writing, ideas corresponding to the written words, but who felt that those ideas surged apparently from nowhere without logical associative relation into the mind.”

There are occurrences where the writing occurs while the writer is engrossed with something else and the fact of the automatic writing is totally outside of awareness, or to situations in which, although the individual is aware of the writing, he does not feel that he is its author.

As indicated earlier, experimentation in writing seeks to depart from the orthodox or conventional way of writing. Creative writers set out to find new approaches to writing that is more authoritative, unpredictable and with a high sense of artistic expression and for aesthetic appreciations. Automatic Writing as a discourse or practice has been identified as the highest level in pouring out creative thoughts and ideas (Richardson, 2008). The writer is deeply enveloped or engaged/engrossed in this process. The physical body, in this case the hand, is controlled not by the conscious but the unconscious mind, directed by the subconscious and manifests as writings that is often beyond the physical and conscious abilities of the individuals involved in the process. The spiritual/metaphysical, mental faculties, and most significantly the soul is and awakened in order to get to the level of automaticity in writing. As good as this practice seems, it comes with its own controversies. One such controversy borders on authorial power and ownership. If higher spiritual forces possess the physical body, transforming the body into a mere machine for tracing, transcribing and taking dictation, then who truly owns the final piece? To complicate issues, most

automatic writers find their automatic works contradicting their personal beliefs and philosophies and as such tend to deny authorship.

The battle between psychotherapists and spiritualists on the subject of automatic writing dates back to the eighteenth century. While the psychologist viewed practitioners of automatic writing as those suffering from personality disorders, the spiritualists viewed the discourse as soul satisfactory. For the spiritualist, automatic writing was an avenue to receive messages from higher realms which often times cleared doubts about aspects of life and provided a sense of direction in life and comfort in the world filled with confusion. With several experiments into the practice of automatic writing, the psychotherapists begun adopting the practice as a clinical tool and found results defying normal sensory perceptions. Can the discourse of automaticity in writing be considered as art? What unique quality is left off the practice that the creative writer should adopt? In the practice of automatic writing, are the spiritual and psychological aspects considered as types or phases?

### 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

One will question the relevance of a nineteenth century practice in a postmodernist era. Automatic writing surfaced in the mid-1800s as the quest by humans to communicate with spiritual forces and find new and refreshing approaches to writing grew overly high. Beyond the science of the era and logic or truth of the moments, humanity focused on the intangible which is more tangible under philosophy for comfort and perhaps solution to the many problems that logic and science failed at solving. The psychotherapist, after numerous experiments conducted, found automatic writing as an approach which could serve as a clinical tool in solving personality disorders of dissociation. In yet another interaction with a clinical psychologist working at the Korle-bu

Teaching Hospital located in the regional capital of Ghana, revealed that automatic writing is still being used as a clinical tool for patients in the psychiatry unit. For practice, a paper is handed over to the patient and he/she is then told to write whatever comes to mind. For purposes of *distraction* or *mesmerizing*, if it is a male patient, and the psychologist is also a male, immediately the pen and paper is handed over to the patient, the psychologist gives instructions and then makes up an excuse to exit from the consulting room. When the patient is alone, another psychotherapist or a student intern of the opposite gender will enter into the consultation room and immediately spark an interesting discussion with the said patient. In the middle of the discussion, the second entrant will from time to time encourage the patient to write whatever comes to mind during the moments of discussion. The psychotherapists have a biased notion that today's relationship problems and life in general affects the mental wellbeing of humanity. As revealed, most patients write automatically, their issues which reveal their mental state. In the process of arriving at definite diagnosis, tests like Electroencephalogram (EEG) coupled with scans like Computerized Tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and others are conducted to view the structure of the brain in order to investigate whether there is a tumor or an infection in the brain. If all scans show no evidences of dislocation, presence of foreign growths or infection, the case is declared idiopathic. The patient is then made to engage in several automatic writing processes to reveal what he/she might be experiencing that is consequential to mental instability. In effect, the human hand is the machine for automaticity.

Most writers like Mohammed Abdallah will confess that in moments of writing, they fall into trance state where the writing is faster and the language distinct. In Paulo Coelho's *Zahir*, the account provided as a description of his own writing approach fits in perfectly for automatic

writing although the writer has not stated practicing the discourse. In an episode, he spent two days without eating and he hardly slept but just wrote. According to him, the writing seemed to *spring up from an unknown force*. This brings me to arrive at the point of almost conjecturing that Automatic writing has not been a *conscious writing approach* of postmodernist dramaturges or creative writers. The Psychobrette Thought Reader, Planchette, Stem Device among other machines used for automatic writing are nonexistent in these postmodern eras. Even if there exist any, not many might get access to them. How then can a playwright experiment with automatic writing in a postmodern era? What measures can be put in place to ensure that within an academic field, an occult methodology could be practiced without defiling the purity that is associated with it? The way to experiment on automatic writing in this twenty-first century and within an academic community then, is to create an unconventional prototype methodology that embraces both the spiritual and psychotherapeutic types. This creates balance in the presentation of ideas and provides an avenue where the experimenter can have a glimpse into both types.

In what the spiritualist will describe as receiving directives from higher force unknown to them has been acknowledged by Sarfo Kantanka. The car manufacturer on several accounts has stated that he receives directives from unknown sources as to how to model his cars. Some writers receive messages from unknown forces which serves as a guideline for writing. Could there be an experiment where rather than filling the creative piece with the message received on conscious grounds, the writer allows the unknown forces to write as they please?

Critically observing, there seems to be no prototype methodology for the practice of automatic writing in academia.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can automatic writing serve as a methodology for creative writing?
2. Beyond the controversies surrounding the practice of automatic writing; spiritual and psychoanalytical/psychotherapeutic perspective, what appreciable aesthetic components can be derived from the process.
3. To what extent is Roland Barthes's *Death of the Author* a valid argument under automatic writing with critical examination of subconscious processes and the autobiographical nature of art?

## 1.3 RESEARCH AIM

The revival and conscious experimentation of automatic writing interests me at this level. The creation of a prototype methodology for the practice of automatic writing is also one motivating factor for embarking on this research. The need to investigate the conditions necessary in producing a single authored creative piece that adheres to the truthful practice of automatic writing is also a motivating factor for this research. In this research, I also aim at investigating the veracity that automatic writing is a means of tapping the secondary intelligence and perception of subconscious processes.

Upon further observations, conscious writing sometimes appear to suffer creatively. Consciousness is equated to logic and lends itself into the hemisphere of the brain associated with logical reasoning (Armstrong, 1998:189). In that, at all points, the conscious tries to sound sensible and logical. There is always an instance when the conscious mind tends to assess and judge the authenticity of what has been created during the creation process itself. Over assessing, judging and critical thinking of created ideas culminates into losing the purity and truthfulness of the

artistic ornaments embedded therein (Ebon:1976). There is a high aesthetic value that is associated with spontaneity which automatic writing advocates for. The conscious is always in tune with logic, making conscious writing lack the purity in artistic expressions. According to Morton (1914: 67), Automatic writing, whether in the spiritual or psychotherapeutic types, has a way of awakening the hemisphere of the brain that is described as creative and primitive. It is indicated that during the Spiritualist Movement<sup>9</sup>, “Automatism permitted radical speech and transgressive behavior because both were seen to originate from a spiritually elevated “elsewhere” and not from the flawed feminine body of the spiritualist herself” (Thompson 2004: 4). Considering the Ghanaian context, this brings to mind the instances of spiritual possession in charismatic and Pentecostal church during ministrations. I am curious to find out why a substantive number of women practiced automatic writing during the Spiritualist Movement. Also, the general perception that women are more inclined to spirit possession is an aspect that interests me. It is even speculated that in highly patriarchal societies, women hid under the guise of automatic writing to speak on subjects that society deemed out of place to be spoken about by women (Showalter 1987). In this research, I am quite curious of the level of radical ideas that will proceed from me as a woman engaging in automatic writing.

#### 1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine through practice how automatic writing can be employed as a creative writing methodology that captures both the spiritual and psychological phases of automatic writing.

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<sup>9</sup> See Nartonis D.K (2010) The Spiritualist Movement was characterized by an insatiable thirst for supernatural dimensions to solving physical problems. At a moment when humanity was losing faith in science, a number of spiritual communicators sprang up. A significant number of these spiritualists were women. It became a full time job. Obviously, under possession, the power with which they openly communicated spiritual messages defied stereotypical definitions of feminine conducts.

2. To identify the aesthetic components and the freedom to conception in the automatic writing approach.
3. To access conditions under which automatic writing defy or endorse the concept of *Death of the Author*.

### 1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF OBJECTIVES

1. When one genre is practiced over a period of time, it becomes stale and that inspires a new genre.
2. Experiences stored in the subconscious are enormous but often forgotten by the conscious mind. Automatic writing provides the avenue to tap into the subconscious, making write-ups proceeding from this process pure.
3. The license to create under automatic writing are limitless. The freedom that accompanies this process is uncontrollable thereby making artistic products aesthetically pleasing to the eye and all other faculties of the human mind.

Avant-garde artist, of which playwrights who use the automatic writing approach form a part, are constantly looking for new ways to breakaway from canonized traditions of creating and producing artistic works. The conscious is limited by logic but the possibilities of creating under the subconscious will challenge ideas of the physical world and delve into the surrealistic stage of life.

### 1.6 SCOPE OF WORK:

#### 1.6.1 DELIMITATION

- Though Automatic Writing appears as psychological and spiritual, attention will be focused on the manifestation of subconscious processes and how these manifests. The

aesthetic components, the philosophical ideas and dominant issues like consciousness and unconsciousness under subconscious processes will be discussed extensively.

- Though the work will investigate both the psychological and Spiritual types of Automatic Writing, some automatic writing documents like *The Seth Material*<sup>10</sup> that delves deeper into the spiritual will not be considered. *The Seth Material* for instance, has been classified as a metaphysical text with dictations on the origins of the universe, God as multidimensional, the nature of self and higher self, death, rebirth, ascension to higher consciousness among other abstract subjects. Though such writings expound on the form and structure of automatic writing, an extensive discussion will create a deviation from the main research goal which bothers on aesthetics and not metaphysical debates.

A couple of automatically written pieces like that of Andre Bretons' will be examined.

#### 1.6.2 LIMITATIONS

- Automatic writing has its root in the metaphysical. Evidence of empirically proven fact on the belief in metaphysics is almost nonexistent. This makes discussions on the spiritual aspect of automatic writing quite cumbersome within an academic research work. Most references are individual reports and philosophical assumptions.
- In this research and experimentation, the piece will be single authored by the student and the supervisors cannot always be with the student during the 'automaticity state'. The supervisors will only get to read the post written document. Questions pertaining

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<sup>10</sup> *The Seth Material*, written by Jane Roberts, an American Psychic as dictated to her by a discarnate being from 1963 to 1984. The documents is recognized as the cornerstone of New Age Philosophy

faithfulness to the experiment will abound since the researcher is the one who can judge if the experiment was a truthful practice of automatic writing.

- To achieve an altered state of consciousness, some subjects are made to ingest alcohol or even smoke. Since this experiment is within an academic environment, due to some ethical issues and health concerns, I might not be able to entirely engage in the activities needed to achieving an altered state of consciousness. I might only resort to *distraction* to achieve automaticity. I will not be able to go all out to fully give an account of the other options available in altering consciousness.

## 1.7 RATIONALE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

- The human intuition or creative mind has been at the forefront of innovation and under the evolution of human civilization at large. An understanding of the workings of subconscious processes will go a long way in broadening the scope under which creative pieces are analyzed and interpreted.
- The creation of a prototype methodology for automatic writing will help in the practice of the discourse in academia and beyond. This will inform how creative writing courses can be structured to embrace diversity in creative works of Ghanaian origin.
- The aesthetic component of automatic writing will be a new area to explore in the practice of creative writing.

## 1.8 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

### CHAPTER ONE

This introduction is the first chapter. Preceding this chapter is an abstract which gives a brief overview of automatic writing. The rest of the work is organised in four chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

Literature is reviewed under three subheadings; Controversies within the Discourse of Automatic Writing, Roland Barthes's "*Death of the Author*" and Automatic Writing, the Aesthetics of Automatic Writing and Surrealistic Contents in the experience of Ghanaian Creative Writing.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on how Automatic writing can be employed as a methodology for creative writing. Three stages are considered to achieve automaticity in writing. The first stage is captioned as 'Careless Writing'. Under this first stage comes the 'Self-Induced Distraction Method and Possession Method. The second stage is 'Joining Unrelated Ideas and Remaining Truthful to Inspiration. The final stage in automaticity is 'Revisiting the World of the Creative Piece as a single Component. Under the final stage comes two subheadings; The creative Piece as a single component and Outdoorizing the Creative piece in play reading sessions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Under this chapter is the Analysis and Interpretation of the dramatic piece created using Automatic Writing as a Methodology. This chapter has three main headings. The Description or Inventory of Work heading includes the synopsis of the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain*. The second heading has to do with the Formal Interaction of Components. Under this heading are several subheadings which include; Post Modern Pastiche and Automatic Writing, Manifestations of Surrealism in *Another Dance in the Rain*, Manifestations of *Abibigro* Concept in *Another Dance in the Rain* and Brecht's Alienation Effect in *Another Dance in the Rain*. Under heading two is a discussion on Postmodernist Pastiche and the Selection Theory under Automatic Writing. The

Form, Structure and Genre of *Another Dance in the Rain* is discussed. Symbolic representations of Blood, Soul and Spirit of Humans are described too.

The chapter now focuses on the Interpretation and meanings of the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain*. The literary critic tool used in interpretation is the Theory of Deconstruction.

Possible performance aesthetic components of the dramatic piece is also assessed. Attention and Distraction under Automatic Writing is delved into by critically observing the piece under reading sessions. Finally, the Cultural Implication and Relevance of the dramatic piece is also examined.

#### CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS.

Under this chapter, conclusions are made. Findings are stated and Observations are expressed.

##### 1.8 SUMMARY

Automatic writing first surfaced in the 1840s with the Fox Sister in Hydesville New York and it gave birth to the American Spiritualist Movement. A second historical account surfaced in the 1870s with William Stainton under the Victorian Psychic Research and the séance-table technique popularization. By the late 1800s, Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, Boris Sidis, William James, Frederick Myers, Edmond Gurney, Solomon Stein and among many other psychologist had identified automatic writing as a psychotherapeutic clinical tool for personality disorders such as dissociation, multiple personalities, hysteria, psychotic disorders among others. Significantly, automatic writing could be grouped under two main categories such as spiritual automatic writing and psychological/psychotherapeutic types. Under each category, evidence abound for its manifestation and as such deserves enough observation and investigation to establish the aesthetic

components embedded in and how it can be adopted as an unconventional methodology for exploration in creative writing. Away from the European or American experience and turning attention on the African/Ghanaian context, automatic practices in the form of spirit possession and creation are evident. There is the need to explore how automatic writing can structure a play without the inclusion of full conscious abilities.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the structure of this work, I have interrogated literatures associated with the discourse of automatism in writing. There are two types of the discourse; Spiritual/psychical automatism or the psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic phase or type, narrowing down to either unconscious or subconscious writing (Thompson 2004, Armstrong 1998, Fer 1993). In recent times, the discourse has taken a more psychological outlook. To begin with, there is a deep rooted disbelief that arises during discussions of the spiritual aspect of automatic writing. Even with the psychological aspect, the discourse's complexity is augmented when issues of dissociation, hysteria, double consciousness, multiple personalities, primary and secondary intelligence among many others are considered. Within the framework of this research and considering the complexities of the various dimensions in the discourse of automatic writing, I intend to review literature that pertains to three categories or sub heading. These include;

1. Controversies within the discourse of automatic writing.
2. Roland Barthes's "*Death of the Author*" and Automatic writing.
3. The Aesthetics of Automatic Writing and Surrealistic contents in the experience of Ghanaian creative writing.

#### 2.1 CONTROVERSIES WITHIN THE DISCOURSE OF AUTOMATIC WRITING.

As already established in the introduction to this chapter, the discourse of automatism in writing is complex. Literature that discusses the discourse are of the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Almost all literature that discusses the discourse are based on the earliest works of histories and experiments into the discourse when it surfaced during the 1800s. For the

developmental stages, automaticity in writing was only examined through the lenses of spiritualism. According to Dorgbadzi (2017:32), “the idea of the metaphysical manifesting itself in artistic expression is as old as the relationship between art and religion”. Automatic writing flourished during the era of surrealism and as such, manifestations of metaphysical content is strong within the practice. For the scientist (psychologists in this context), believe in the metaphysical are merely philosophical assumption which lacks empirically proven facts and as such, remains quite preposterous. On the level of art practice, according to Ossei (2005) as expressed by Dorgbadzi (2014: 32), the metaphysical has manifested and complimented the arts since the “ritual practice of pre-historic man, through the monumental works of the Art of Eternity in ancient Egypt, the morality of medieval plays, to conceptual expression of the post-modern era”. The psychologist has often time associated expressions of the unreal and ‘nonpercievable’ in automatic writing to mental insanity. With regards to ‘perceivable and nonperceivable’, Dorgbadzi refers to Gyeke (1995);

What is primarily real is spiritual. It must be noted, however, that the world of natural phenomena is also real, even though in ultimate terms the nonperceivable, purely spiritual world is more real, for upon it the perceivable, phenomenal world depends for sustenance. There is no distinction between the sensible (perceivable) world and the nonsensible (nonperceivable) world in the sense of the latter being real and the former being unreal,... The distinction lies entirely in the perceivability of one and the unperceivability of the other. But the perceivability of one – namely, the world of nature – does not in any way detract from reality.

Again, though the above is significantly true, for the psychologist, it is a mere philosophical assumption which cannot be proved. The controversies surrounding the practice of automatic writing begins from this angle.

First of all, the mediums through which messages from the metaphysical were communicated were not regarded as writers. In most cases they were referred to as subjects or reagents. Attention needs

to be drawn to the fact that although the discourse suggested writing, there were cases where mediums spoke, in most cases authoritative and prophetic in nature<sup>11</sup>. The writing was a ‘post stage’ but it assumed the ‘automatic’ status based on the content (being metaphysical) and context (being spontaneous; defying the original nature and character of the medium)<sup>12</sup>. Questions and problems about the spiritual stage of automatism appear as; how sure can one be that the subject is truthfully receiving messages from the other side? It is apparent that in both cases, there are the workings of altered consciousness, unconsciousness and the subconscious mind but how can one tell the pieces are not mere manifestations of the conscious mind? How can one determine that the subject had left the conscious state to an unconscious stage? (Wright, 1972:13, Roshner 1961). But then again, are the mediums really in a state of unconsciousness while writing? Who corroborates the authenticity of the produced pieces as truly being one of a mystical origin? Thompson recalls the experience of a subject after going through the stages of automatism in writing. He recounts;

... the table we surrounded soon began to oscillate rapidly. My right arm was seized with a convulsive tremor, and then in a ‘positive condition’ it refused obedience to my will ... A pencil and paper were lying on the table. The pencil came into my hand: my fingers were clenched on it! An unseen iron grasp compressed the tendons of my arm: my hand was flung violently forward on the paper, and I wrote meaningful sentences, without any intention, or knowing what they were to be ... my hand rested on a cloud, while my guardian-spirit ... dictated to me. (Thompson 2004:2)

Picking from the point of “An unseen iron grasp compressed the tendons of my arm:”, suggests a metaphysical aura taking charge of space and time of the process. Stevenson (1978:316) in his article titled “*Some Comments on Automatic Writing*” submitted to the Journal of the American

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<sup>11</sup> See Verner 1910 for more examples of the prophetic aspect of automatic writing. An example was a woman whose husband travelled to another country. For over a decade, she received no information about her husband. During an automatic writing session, a message came assuring her that her husband was alive and that she would hear from him. After a year, she heard from him.

<sup>12</sup> See Thompson 2004. It is believed that promoters of feminism practiced automatic writing to air their views in patriarchal societies. They often hid under the guise practice to deny authorship.

Society for Psychical Research also indicates that “[S]ome subjects report feeling as if someone else were actually holding the writing arm and doing the writing while the subject, like a mere spectator, remains passive and detached from what is happening”. He again noted, “

A person who writes automatically is usually in a state of altered consciousness. This may occur only to a mild degree, *barely noticeable to other persons who are with the subject; or the subject’s ordinary personality may be*, or at least appear to be totally absent, so that he does not respond if called by name. In the latter instance *a quite different personality may seem to take over and implement the automatic writing.* (Stevenson, 1978:316. My emphasis added)

The stage of different personalities taking over the subject is rather cumbersome to interrogate entirely but the psychological automatic writing type deals with that aspect. The simplest order which explains the “*different personality*” taking over under the spiritual type brings the subject of hypnosis and the case of *Discarnate personalities*<sup>13</sup> taking over subjects. The former was to help the subject reach an altered state of consciousness which according to Koustaal (1992:7) reveals most often than not, an approach created to making bare the “secondary chain of memories”. The latter, rather much contestable suggests a situation where subjects feel their human bodies were possessed by very notable artists for writing to take place, significantly automatic in nature. Stevenson (1978: 323), brought to light “Mrs. Rosemary Brown”<sup>14</sup> who claims the spirits of composer Ludwig Van Beethoven and Liszt possessed her while she was composing her own music. In the Ghanaian context, cases of spirit possession by discarnate personalities abound. A case to look at is in funeral ceremonies where the spirit of the dead takes over a ‘living human body’ present to make known to the audience mystical revelations about events leading to their demise; that is if it was a natural death or death caused by another, issues of inheritance among

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<sup>13</sup> See Ivan Stevenson’s “*Criteria for Inferring Communication from a Discarnate Personality*” 1978:321-327 for more examples on Discarnate communications in automatic writing.

<sup>14</sup> To this case of discarnate personalities possessing Mrs. Rosemary Brown, skeptics who review those compositions in particular assumed to be received from the notable composers noticed mere imitations of works. See Stevenson 1978 for further comments.

others. Some of these spirit possessions are invoked and in other instances, they just occur. It is commonplace to find spirit possession in Ghanaian Apostolic and Pentecostal churches during worship time. The messages that come are often prophetic in nature. In extreme cases, during deliverance services, the demon taking possession of a human body speaks through the human body. The question still remains; how can one be certain that an unseen force or spiritual entity or to place it in context, a discarnate personality had brooded over the subject at the moment of practice? The only response I can offer critically after observing spirit possession and communication cases and through my own experience of practicing automatic writing, is the transition stages. In the moments of total possession, the medium's consciousness is completely arrested by forces higher than 'self' and the extraordinary<sup>15</sup> manifests. Doubts abound in the practice and theory of the discourse. In the same light, Alexander Verner, Founder and Principal of the British Psychological Institute in his forward to his book *"Table Rapping and Automatic Writing"*<sup>16</sup> asked a question; "How is it that spirits condescend to come and lift the table, or rap on the table?".(1910:3). This question I believe was conceived perhaps with awareness of the famous Fox Sisters<sup>17</sup> and the rapping sounds they produced. Again, this question was posed, I believe out of the concerns of scientist who are constantly searching for empirically proven facts and tested theories about the discourse. To such who have (in)valid doubts about the metaphysical content of automatic writing, Verner posits to reinforce and advance his argument. He states;

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<sup>15</sup> Okeyere (2014) first introduced the term 'extraordinary' in his MA thesis on the topic *The Role of Dance and what it Teaches about the Transcendence in Possession and Efficacy among the Brekete Gatsi Cult*. The term is used to classify actions/mannerisms portrayed/exhibited by possessed beings at the peak of the possession.

<sup>16</sup> Year of publication of this book *"Table Rapping and Automatic Writing"* unknown in the copy available for usage for this research. Place of Publication cited as U.S.A. Copy of this book is available at University of Guelph, Ontario Canada. Book was in a deplorable state but Database: WorldCatalog suggested publication year as 1910.

<sup>17</sup> Confer with Ruth Brandon's (1983) *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. Ernest Isaacs (1983) "The Fox Sisters and American Spiritualism" in *The Occult in America: New Perspectives*, eds. Howard Kerr and Charles L. Crow (University of Illinois Press: Chicago) for further discussions on the Fox Sisters and American Spiritual Movement.

To them I may say, when a person has passed on, he does not feel quite at home for some time-his spirit has its longings for those left behind; just the same when a man goes to a foreign country, he does not get accustomed to the country all at once- his mind travels home on various occasions, but gets used to his new home in time. It is just the same with the person who has passed to the higher life-he gets accustomed to his new surroundings and conditions in time. He has to begin to learn the different ways the same as he did in the natural world, and when we come to consider the time when he was sitting around the family table at the meal times, we do not wonder at him giving us a message, or letting us know that he is with us in the spirit. But he knows how much we can stand; he does not care to scare us, so he makes himself heard by "tapping" on the table or bedroom door, or any place where he thinks proper. (1910:3-4)

Perhaps, Verner attempted at justifying the disposition of spiritual automatism. Foreseeing that a lot of arguments will be raised, he quickly provides a rejoinder; raising a counter argument to silence anyone who would like to debunk his assertion of the original source to the discourse of automaticity in writing. He states emphatically; “A person has no right to condemn a subject that he does not understand. He should first study it, with an unbiased mind, and have patience, and then see what conclusion he can come to”. (Verner, 1910:4)

In scholarly discussions, spiritual automatism can never be downplayed because automatic writing takes its roots in Spiritism. As he further advances his argument in favor of spiritual automatism he comments; “Some people object to investigate psychic phenomena, and then they condemn it”. From all indications, it is clear enough that Verner agrees totally with the views of Pre-Freudian Psychoanalyst Pierre Janet on his position on the spiritual dimensions of the discourse. As indicated by Thompson (2004:4), she comments; “For Janet, the scientific appropriation of spiritualist possession enabled the development of clinical tools for the treatment of clinical tools for hysteric patients”. Janet, after observing the planchette<sup>18</sup>, modelled his own writing machine

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<sup>18</sup> Epes Sargent described the 1868 version of the Planchette as “A heat-shaped piece of board, mounted upon three supports. It is seven inches from the depression in the base of the heat to its apex, and seven inches measured across its widest part. Two of the supports are legs of wood or brass, terminating in pentagraph wheels or casters, usually of iron, bone, or hard rubber. The third support is a pencil thrust through a socket at the apex of the heat) pg.1.

known as the “Stem Device”<sup>19</sup>. Thompson quotes Janet; “[i]t is useless to go back to the description of [automatic] writing discovered by the spiritualists; if it has to-day no longer the religious character...it may in many circumstances subserve a medical purpose”<sup>20</sup> (Emphasis mine). Suggestively, it seems out of place to discuss the discourse of automaticity in the field of academia without considering both phases or types. Referring to the spiritual and psychological automatic writing as types, indicates that a writer intending to practice automatic writing can solely dwell on one aspect. To describe the spiritual and psychological as phases communicates the idea that a writer, in an attempt at consciously practicing automatic writing will transition from the psychological phase to the spiritual. At this stage of the research, I intend to use types. Perhaps, at the concluding chapter of this research, taking into cognizance my experience with experimenting automatic writing, I might arrive at suggestive proposition as to whether a subject or writer transitions from the physical to the metaphysical.

In this review of literature, I do not intend to downplay spiritual automatism because as Verner comments, “There is only one conclusion [one] can come to, if [one] studies the subject fairly, and that is, spirit communion is possible under the right psychological conditions” (1910:4). The subject of the mind is so strong in automatic writing that it can neither be ignored in the spiritual type or the psychoanalytic type. The recognizable beginnings of the discourse of Automatism in

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<sup>19</sup> Janet in his “The Mental State of Hysterical” describes the Stem Device and its manipulations as ... “a long stem, suspended Cardan fashion, and movable in every direction. The subject holds the stem by the middle as he would hold a penholder, and after having caused him to look away, we take hold of this same stem by the lower part, and follow with its point a word written on paper. The hand of the subject, if it is sensitive, will feel all the delicate movements in writing this word; the apparatus has enabled us to cause him to feel all those little delicate sensations and to retain, so to say, the graphic of the word we have written. But Margaret tells us that she has felt nothing at all. We know what that means: she has not had any personal perception of anything . . . we put a pencil in her right hand, which is entirely insensible, and make her look away. We see her fingers take hold of the pencil and the hand write. How could this delicate movement take place, when but a moment ago the subject could not move without looking? . . . The hand wrote the name John, which was the same word with the same form of letters we wrote ourselves

<sup>20</sup> See Pierre Janet, “*The Mental State of Hysterical*” (1977: 281) Washington, D.C.: University Publication of America.

writing in 1848 also complicates the discourse in its entirety. As revealed by Thomson (2004:1), the two Fox Sisters later confessed that the rapping sounds heard were produced by themselves by cracking their toes against the bare floor. The controversies surrounding the discourse and the response provided by Verner himself as against the revelation made by the Two Fox Sisters places the discourse on a certain scale that begs for some significant investigations for appropriate revelations or answer. By this revelation, the only way to bailout the discourse was the numerous experiments conducted by psychologists. The discourse had gained significant popularity during the American Spiritualist Movement<sup>21</sup> as the desire for answers from the metaphysical stage of life to clarify confusions of the physical world grew extremely wild. The instant justification for the need to skirting the Abyss to finding comfort in spiritual matters could not be ignored. During the Spiritualists Movement, the Ouija board<sup>22</sup> seemed to be the first device developed to take accounts and keep records of complex messages believed to have been communicated to mediums from departed soul to loved ones. Verner (1910:20) describes the Ouija board as “a very mysterious writing machine...by placing the fingertips on the board, various messages and answers to all kinds of questions can be secured...”.

That notwithstanding, there are several records of automatic writing pieces produced through mediumistic activities and spirit communication but were often disregarded as artistic materials. The subjects at this point were regarded as those suffering from severe psychological conditions of hysteria and dissociation (a personality disorder) who refused to seek medical attention. There

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<sup>21</sup> Refer to Ernest Isaac's "The Fox Sisters and American Spiritualism" in *The Occultic in America: New Historical Perspectives*

<sup>22</sup> See Verner's (1910:20-21) description on the use of the Ouija board and its manipulation. The second instruction indicates that the mind of both the experimenter and the subject must in a certain psychological alignment so as to achieve maximum results in terms of spirit communication. In the psychological field, see how Boris Sidis adopts the method of *Distraction to get subjects into the right mood for automatic writing to occur*. This method of *Distraction helps "limit all voluntary moments" for "consciousness to be contracted"*

must certainly be something euphoric and intriguing about the discourse to prompt Frederic Myers to suggest in his *“Further Cases of Automatic Writing”* that “few more cases of automatic writing should, perhaps, from time to time be submitted to the readers of the journal, not necessarily on account of any great intrinsic importance in most of them, but to help in keeping alive an interest in the subject, and a willingness to make experiments”. With regards to journal readers, as noted by Koutstaal (1992:6), Myer referred to the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, with the suggestion being his opening remark of the 1888 version of the journal.

On the aspect of a psychological type of automatic writing (unconscious or subconscious in nature), psychoanalysts and theoreticians of the mind have used the discourse to tap into the minds of patients who have suffered severe or partial amnesia due to injury or pathological deformities. Stevenson (1978:321) posits; “Automatic writing has been used in the exploration of certain psychopathological states. Psychotherapists sometimes deliberately encourage patients to write automatically *in order to obtain access to forgotten stressful experiences* that may have contributed to current symptoms”. Per the experiments conducted by Prince Morton during the early 1900s, automatic writing in the field of psychology was clearly identified and defined by Koutstaal (1992:6) as “instances where writing occurs while the writer is preoccupied with something else and the fact the automatic writing is totally outside of awareness or to situations in which, although the individual is aware of the writing, he does not feel that he is its author”. This definition was arrived at based on Morton’s experiments. He identified two typical cases in writings; “those who, at the moment of writing, remained entirely unaware of what the hand was writing and those who experienced, at the time of writing, ideas corresponding to the written words but who felt that those ideas surged apparently from nowhere without logical associative relation into the mind, at the

time of writing” (Morton,1908: 73). One can easily make a parallel connection as to why the discourse gained such a definition.

In spiritual automatic writing, as indicated by Theon Wright (1970:12),

It might be noted that automatic writing, in which the hand presumably is controlled by a force or entity other than the consciousness of the writer, is essentially similar in principle to the technique of psychoanalysis. In automatic writing the writer supposedly receives communication from a source beyond the range of normal sensory perception, whereas the psychotherapist gets it from the unconscious or subconscious mind.

While the spiritualist may attribute written documents as one communicated to subject or mediums through spirit communion from forces unknown to sensory perception, the psychologists use the discourse for an entirely different purpose. Referring to Stevenson (1978:321), psychotherapists found the discourse as one to adopt in tapping into the unconscious or subconscious minds of patients to arrive at conclusions as to why certain ill mental states was the resultant factor for current states.

Koulstaal (1992) upon considering the early experimental works by Frederic Myers, Edmund Gurney, Alfred Binet, Pre-Freudian psychoanalysis Pierre Janet, James William and Prince Morton who further centered their investigations into the discourse based on the earliest experiments and findings of the 1896 psychologists Leon Solomon and Gertrude Stein discovered that for automatic writing to occur within the psychological field, ‘*distraction*’ was adopted by the experimenters to get the subjects, who in this case are the writers to make them forget about their immediate surroundings and further zoom them into a mode of unawareness. This distraction was done by making the subject or writer read a book or recite their favorite poem.

An experiment conducted by a Prince Morton on a 20years old patient suffering from chronic psychogenic fugues revealed that the patient unconsciously wrote about her entire fugue experience when the ‘*distraction*’ method was used in getting her to slip into the subconscious

state. The question at this point is, does the discourse of automatic writing pave the way for the writing of autobiographies unconsciously?

Considering the two types of automatic writing, as indicated by Wright (1972:12-13);

In either case the source is not physically measurable, and thus remains a mystery. Who or what communicates? Is it a form of consciousness, or an unconscious entity, such as the spirit or soul? How can we be sure that what is communicated is merely the echo of our own subconscious or unconscious thoughts? How can we be sure that the source, or control, of such writing is outside of the mind of the writer-that we are really getting messages from the other side? Can there be an intelligible perception of nonphysical objects or thoughts by minds accustomed to physical concepts of space and time

In the practice of Automatic Writing, does the mind make up stories? On a higher level, can one conclude that there is subjectivity of awareness, unconsciousness and sub-consciousness of the mind? In response to the many questions that arise about the discourse, Wright in his book confessed that;

Many of these questions will be answered, at least in part, in the course of this narrative and in the concluding section of the book. Some cannot be answered adequately within the framework of finite understanding of space and time. Never the less the enquiry is worth pursuing for many reasons other than mere curiosity. (1970: 13)

In my understanding and interpretation, “the enquiry is worth pursuing” perhaps, for the aesthetic qualities most pieces written automatically possessed; the fact that there is evidence of secondary intelligence that is traceable in most automatic written pieces and finally, the case where subjects or writers, after descending from the state that accompanied the process of automaticity; that higher force taking over their bodies or hand, turn to look back at the written work that has surged from them and that is enough reason to deny authorial power.

## 2.2 ROLAND BARTHE'S "DEATH OF THE AUTHOR" AND AUTOMATIC WRITING.

In the discourse of automaticity in writing, considering theory and practice, it is established in the spiritual type that discarnate personalities take over subjects and enable them to write on issues outside of the sensory perception. This leads to the question of authorship cum ownership of texts. Who claims ownership of the final produced texts? Since the human is a mere medium who is often not aware of what he/she produces, can he/she be credited for or acknowledged as the author? On a higher level, the messages which is assumed to surge from spirits must definitely be attributed to that spirit. On another obvious basis, since the medium is known and the spirit often times unknown (exceptions being cases where the manifestations can directly be linked to deities or shrines) then the text belongs to the medium. After all, the spirit bestowed the message to the medium. But does the medium being the one transcribing the message, merits him/her to be the owner of the message? Practically, the spirit enabled the medium to write, thereby permitting the medium to zoom into the realm of automaticity. Can we actually judge what is of the spirit and what is of human incubated messages? These are the many questions that makes the subject or discourse of automatic writing a dangerous route to tread.

Roland Barthes's *Death of the Author*, originally written in French (*La Mort De L'auteur*) and as translated to English by Richard Howard posits an argument that favors the spiritualists' ideals on automatic writing. In simple terms, Barthes does not suggest that the author in the centre of the discourse is physically dead. The death in this context seeks to propagate one agenda; that is to suggest that every writing possesses a characteristic feature that should be judged solely on its own merits in terms of language and subject matter/thematic concerns. The work stands independently on its own grounds and the writer's inherent character is sharply distinct from the work produced.

No reference at any point in time should be made to author when discussing the work. With reference to Barthes's essay on *Death of the Author*;

The author still rules in manuals of literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men, anxious to unite, by their private journals, their person and their work; the image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is *tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions*; criticism still consists, most of the time, in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of the man Baudelaire, Van Gogh's work his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice: *the explanation of the work is always sought in the man who has produced it*, as if, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, it was always finally the voice of one and the same person, the author, which delivered his "confidence" (1967:1)

The usage of *author* encompasses originators and creators of creative works, be it painting, music and of course writing. Borrowing the words of Barthes, often times, creative works are *tyrannically centered on the author*, consequently, there is an insatiable desire to investigate the personal life of the author so as to juxtapose it with his/her works and draw meanings. In the Ghanaian setting, temptation is that, to better understand a work of art, there first must be an investigation into the background of the author. To make analysis of works by Ayi Kwei Armah, Mohammed Ben- Abdallah, Atukwei Okai and others in order to arrive at interpretations, one is tempted to first consider their background. If all art is autobiographical, what then does Barthes intend to communicate with his Death of the Author concept? Does he take into cognizance the working of the subconscious mind? Now I ask, does the author really die when the subconscious is at work? Thompson (2004:2) refers to the automatic hand as one that can "neither think nor represent, but rather only write, inscribe, trace, record". While Barthes's theory is valid under conditions of spirit communion and creation; thus a text that writes itself due to forces present, the issue of the subconscious mind bring the discussions onto a different level. A number of practitioners of automatic writing vehemently deny authorial power. In my own case as experimenting with the

discourse of automatic writing, I found solace in denying what surged out of me because it was too provocative and strictly in opposition to what my usual language and character trait projects. Thompson's *Automatic hand: Spiritualism, Psychoanalysis and Surrealism* investigates how humans transform into text generating devices. She arrived at the conclusion that there is absolute denial of authorship by mediumistic spiritualist subject and patience (psychotherapeutic automatic writing is perspective); *Death of the Author* underscores both aspects as practitioners believe the writings that surged from them was outside of their thinking and as such the work must stand independently on its own. Barthes's notion of automatic writing is interesting to look at. He defines the discourse as a process of "entrusting to the hand the responsibility of writing as fast as possible what the head itself ignores" (1967:3). He also appreciates the fact that the human hand transforms into a mere machine that generates text, perhaps, faster in approach than it would be if the head was at work. Downey and Anderson (1915) conducted scientific experiments to capture time duration for normal writing as against automatic writing. The evidence was clear. Under automatic writing, since higher forces are at work and the text is merely dictated, it is faster in process. Although Barthes does not intend to communicate that there is the physical death of the author at the moment of writing, under automatic writing, both spiritual and psychological, the author is physically dead at the moment of writing. He/she only resurrects after the automatic hand, like a machine, moving faster than the normal head would, after dictation or tracing or drawing or painting has ended. The head, upon sighting what the hand has inscribed, realizes a significant change in the flow of ideas and perception that he can clearly declare total loss of ownership. Barthes connects *Death of the Author* to Brecht's alienation effect where the author is absent during the writing, thus "diminishing like a tiny figure at the end of the literary stage" (1967:4).

The various dimensions of this subject when subjected to a significant amount of analysis reveals aspects that begs for further investigations. Barthes's concern is that no aspect of a creative work actually belongs to the author. Different aspects of style, language and culture (multifaceted in nature) belong to others from which the author has learnt to imitate or is inspired by. The spiritualist can run along and deny authorship in automaticity of writing. After all, the spiritualist automatic writer was merely a medium being used by the "higher forces present" but can the automatic writer under the psychotherapeutics follow suit?

The movie "*Knowing*" written by Ryne Douglas Pearson et al, produced by Alex Proyas and released in 2009 narrates the story of a time capsule which contained an automatic written piece. Event of the storyline bears witness to the description of spiritual automatic writing and discarnate personalities taking over a subject. Above all, the process to prove manifestations of the content leads to showing clear evidence of an automatic hand, which "neither thinks nor represents" but only writes as the forces present dictate. The content of the piece proved to be prophetic; the piece reveals chains of events to happen within 50 years. At the time of recovering this piece, major events as prophesied in the piece had already taken place with a few more to unfold pointing to an apocalyptic scenario. Though the movie is a science fiction and not a real life situation, the scene in which the character Lucinda, is engaged in the moment of automatic writing, gives clue as to how the hand can write without the control of the head. As represented in the movie, she could not stop writing even when the paper was taken from her. As usual, focusing on scientific aspects, the little girl through which the automatic message came through was presented as one needing medical attention. This same movie offers a typical case of confusion in defining the two types of automatic writing. The girl's condition fits perfectly for a case of psychotherapeutic automatic

writing but the content was of the spiritual automatic writing type. The content of the piece can in no way be attributed to the workings of the subconscious mind but that of higher spiritual forces present.

In the context of the psychotherapeutic automatic writing, the discourse ascribes to aspects of Barthes tenets on *Death of the Author*. The psychologist, believes that everything that surges out of the subject are repressed information captured and stored in the subconscious. When the “altered state of consciousness” is attained and the patient slips into the unconsciousness, the subconscious releases information that the conscious mind will not readily recall. Indeed, everything that is written automatically under the method of *distraction* encapsulates the lifestyle of the writer thereby making the piece autobiographical. Everything includes all that is borrowed from cultures and experiences. Does Barthes theory suggests that the author is dead in the process of writing? It is necessary to note that the pieces of writing often captures what is stored in the subconscious mind. Pierre Janet’s (1907-1908: 62) experiment on the 20year old woman suffering from psychogenic fugues revealed that when distracted and the pencil was slipped into in right hand, unknown to her, she wrote on her fugue experience and most importantly what led her outside home to wander about for several days. Janet records this as written by the woman; “I left home because mamma accuses me of having a lover and it is not true. I cannot live with her any longer. I sold my jewels to pay my railway fare. I took such and such a train”. Prior to leaving home and the entire fugue experience as noted by Janet, the patient loses memory completely but with automatic writing, she wrote with precision what was repressed in her subconscious mind. The aspect that begs for further explanation is the need to judge the piece in isolation of the author. A deeper understanding of the piece can only be arrived at by critically studying the history of the

author since the piece is a mere constellation of the subject's or writer's experience in various stages of life as in the case of the psychogenic fugue patient. This aspect, Barthes objects to. Barthes see no point in analyzing a piece of work based on the author's life. To emphasize this notion he states; "once the author is gone, the claim to "decipher" a text becomes quite useless. To give an author to a text is to impose upon that text a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to close the writing (Barthes, 1967)". This statement underscores the tenets of spiritualist's automatic writing where textuality is liberated from subjectivity but out of place for the psychotherapeutic stage.

Barthes notions on *Death of the Author* keeps the author in the dark and discourages him/her from speaking publicly about the various underpinnings in the write-up that could easily be connected to their background story and further help in the analysis and interpretation of the piece. Good as this may sound, it prevents writers from placing a stamp on their works and projecting their individualistic ideologies, interpretations and belief systems.

In the author's note to the play *Death and the King's Horseman*<sup>23</sup>, Nobel Prize for Literature winner Wole Soyinka, made a claim that the "Colonial Factor is an incident, a catalytic incident merely"<sup>24</sup>. Contrary to the events of the play, the presence of the colonizer was a major event that cannot be overlooked and as such, trivializing it raises many questions on the author's interpretation of the play. This provoked Antony Appiah (1992:78) to question; "we still need to ask why Soyinka feels the need to conceal his purposes" and for Barnaby (2014:125) to suggest that the playwright re-read his play since his author's note contradicts the central issues the play actually seeks to address.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid (pg. 1432-1456) for the play *Death and the King's Horseman*.

<sup>24</sup> See Worthen, W.B. (ED) *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama. Australia: Wadsworth (pg. 1432-1456) for Author's Note to the play*

By Barthes's principle, Soyinka would not have written his author's note in the first place. This would have prevented the likes of Andrew Barnaby<sup>25</sup> from lashing out at Soyinka. As Barthes indicates; "the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author". Although this might be an odd example since the writer has clearly not stated that his piece is of one to be categorized under the discourse under discussion, with reference to my other writings which fall under conventional styles, I discovered that in the process of writing, I came to the realization that there were certain moments where my hand moved faster than my head. Those moments might not fall under automatic writing but clearly, the muse factor seems to be dominate in the writing process. Those moments produce well-crafted and woven language which defies my usual usage of language. In an interview with Ghanaian playwright Mohammed Ben Abdallah<sup>26</sup> to find out his take on the discourse of experimenting with automatic writing, he acknowledged having no ideas on the discourse but made interesting submissions. In his view, he has never thought of subconscious writing but after explaining the discourse to him, he revealed that there were moments where his hand moved faster than his head and his characters actually possessed him. In a particular instance, he found himself drenched in sweat and very emotional. If all writers get to that level where the hand moves faster than the head, then certainly, the final piece might beat their understanding. Perhaps Barthes is right after all. The reader must be granted the total freedom to analyze and interpret a writing per their own standards.

In my case of experimenting with the discourse, I realized that after the play reading, those who monitored my progress in the writing understood the piece better than I did. What business then do I have with trying to interpret the play when readers can pick it up and make their own analysis

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<sup>25</sup> See Barnaby (2014:126-127) Purest Mode of Looking: (Post)Colonial Trauma in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*.

<sup>26</sup> Series of interviews done over phone in December 2016

and interpretations about the play. On one level, it was evident enough that I was dead in the process of writing and did not even realize that aspects of the play were autobiographical. The first comment made after the closed play reading was, “This work is Autobiographical in nature” as said by Agyeman Ossei. In my response I asked, “which portions are autobiographical”. This simple interaction made bare the fact that the reader makes his own interpretations about the play but then again, this comment was made because Ossei has foreknowledge about my background and nature. Can there actually be a better analysis of a play without first of all making a background search about the author? As indicated earlier, the works of Abdallah and Atukwei Okai and their philosophical underpinnings can only fully be grasped when a critical search is made into their backgrounds but does the investigations into the background rob the creative piece its actual meaning and appreciation?

### 2.3 THE AESTHETICS OF AUTOMATIC WRITING AND SURREALISTIC CONTENT IN THE EXPERIENCE OF GHANAIAAN CREATIVE WRITING.

At this level, first of all, I will consider what characterizes the aesthetics of automatic writing. Along this discussion, I will identify relevant features traceable in the content of automatic written pieces taking into consideration a Ghanaian creative piece written by Akukwei Okai. I must clarify at this early stage that the piece I intend to review does not necessarily fall under the spiritualist’s or psychotherapeutic automatic writing descriptions but I have chosen the piece, taking note of the spontaneous quality that came with the creation process and the content therein.

In 1972, the Ghanaian prolific writer Atukwei Okai was invited to perform a couple of his poems at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ile-Ife in Nigeria. The reading was to be done during the Institute’s Festival of Arts. As the norm, the writer arrived in Nigeria a couple of days before the actual date of performance. A tour in the land of Ile-Ife was set with activities like

a visit to the museum which was close the King's palace. During the tour, he was privileged to listen to the oral traditions of the land, beautifully recounted by a skilled curator. In recounting of traditions, the writer was first introduced to the mythical story of *Oduduwa*. As recalled by the writer himself in his essay "*Myths and the African Poet: Ideo-Structural Symbolism in the Fanfare for Oduduwa*", he states; "I heard and learnt that *Oduduwa* was the son of *Olodumare*, the equivalent of God. He had been sent from heaven to create the earth. *Oduduwa's* wife was *Olokun*, the goddess of the ocean. *Oduduwa* placed a cock on the sand so as to scatter it over the ocean. As this happened, and *Oduduwa* started to walk over the earth, the water thus dried up, leaving in its place the dry earth". Still in a nostalgic mood, Atukwei recalled how "*Obatala* was also sent down to mold human bodies out of clay, but at some point, he took palm wine and got so drunk that he fell asleep. When he woke up, in his drunken state, *he started to make a mess of his assignment and started to make people like albinos, hunchbacks,..*". (Emphasis mine). Okai on the other hand, being introduced to the African mythology on the creation story awakened his muse for his own recreation. Bearing in mind the *Obatala* scenario perhaps sent a spirit of uneasiness within his soul, thereby keeping him awake and staying connected with the muse until the writing was complete (not in a finished state but at least a first draft stage) lest he lost touch with the muse and created a mess of art work.

Okai's creation moments produced the poem *Fanfare for Oduduwa*. On the performance day, he ended with outdoorizing his poem *Fanfare for Oduduwa*.

The moments of appreciating his "automatic written piece" or rather spontaneous piece *Fanfare for Oduduwa* arrived six years after its birth. In 1977, the poet was invited to read his poem at FESTAC in Lagos. Unfortunately, he arrived late so he could not get the opportunity to participate in the festival. Among the organizers of FESTAC was one Professor Theo Vincent who felt "it

was unthinkable for me [him] to come all the way to Lagos and to FESTAC of all things and return home without affording the people the opportunity of listening to me [him]”. Prof Theo Vincent made arrangements with the television crew to videotape the poet reading his piece so it could be shown on TV at a later date. At the end of the reading, the crew and Theo Vincent himself were amazed at how someone of a different origin could write on a subject unfamiliar to him and capture the full essence of the mythology in an artistic manner. Two hours after the videotaping, while the poet was resting in his hotel room and watching TV, he heard his name being announced as the next poet whose work will be telecasted after a “Presidential command performance of a dramatic production by Wole Soyinka. Next morning, the writer came out of his room to have breakfast. As he narrated, to his surprise;

“[T]he steward boys had more or less lined up and were each quoting lines from the *Oduduwa* poem. While breakfasting, an agitated man rushed into the room, asked for Mr. Okai, and I was pointed out to him. He said he said [sic] he had to see me because *he was a Yoruba poet and that he was so impressed with how I succeeded in doing what he had tried but had not: in working with the Yoruba Gods*”. (*Emphasis mine*)

There is beauty in spontaneity; not thinking too much about what to write and how to write it. When the mythology of *Oduduwa* was narrated to the poet, it came with its own spirit and soul. Mind you, it is believed that the Ga people of Ghana of which Okai belongs originate from Ile-Ife in Nigeria. The connection is already established and at the moment when the mythology was still fresh in his soul, the muse came naturally and aided him in the writing. Perhaps the Yoruba poet has become too familiar with the Yoruba gods and his ears are dead to their voices. Perhaps he has become too familiar with the gods that when they appear, he does not connect with them to aid in the writing. Just maybe, he has a structure he follows and as such, tries to fit the mythologies into that structure instead of freeing himself and allowing the appropriate muse to grasp his hand and write with little of his conscious abilities. Mind you, writers have imbibed the conventions of

writing and these conventions are secretly locked up in the subconscious mind. When the hand is left on its own, it will inscribe or transcribe and trace structures that fit perfectly for any new piece.

After studying Anton Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Thompson (2004:8) discovered that,

At a time when literature and art seemed at an impasse, the imagination locked in a deplorable "state of slavery," and the possibilities of new expressions and sensations "increasingly circumscribed," the modern subject was left pacing "back and forth in a cage from which it had become more and more difficult to... emerge. Automatism seemed capable of ejecting its practitioners from the realm of mundane experience and appeared the only way out.

Although Thompson looked at this release from 'slavery' in the negative which gives rise to denying the author his/her ownership, I think it was good freedom from the bondage that the writer found himself in. Writers found themselves always having to follow conventions, and think too rationally about what they must write before they write. This situation kept the writer sitting and only creating dots on a blank sheet. The fear that their works after being written, will be subjected to rigorous analysis to identify if it conforms to convention or cannons of writing kept them in bondage. That is not to suggest that Okai did not think critically before writing. Mind you, he could have decided to wait and done more investigations about the myth before writing which by then, the muse to create flawlessly would have left him. When the right muse or spirit to write leaves the creative work which is the body, the final piece loses its soul and spirit. Writing done spontaneously or automatically often appeals to the soul and spirit. In 1979, while performing the same *Fanfare for Oduduwa* at University of Iowa, an incident of possession was recorded. About four to six people, mostly women needed calming. The spirit in the creative work connected to the spirits of humans causing a state of possession. One will question why all present did not get possessed. The answer I believe is simple. Those whose spirit were open connected with the spirit in the poem and that culminated into possession. Anton Breton in his *First Manifesto on Surrealism* written in 1924 identified automatic writing as an avant-gardist movement for writers

who sought liberation. In the same Manifesto, Breton documented the experience of an automatic writer and the beauty embedded in such writings;

“all of a sudden I found, quite by chance, beautiful phrases, phrases such as I had never written. I repeated them to myself slowly, word by word; they were excellent. And there were still more coming. I got up and picked up a pencil and some paper that were on a table behind my bed. It was as though some vein had burst within me, one word followed another, found its proper place, adapted itself to the situation, scene piled upon scene, the action unfolded, one retort after another welled up in my mind . . . my pencil could not keep up with them, and yet I went as fast as I could, my hand in constant motion, I did not lose a minute. The sentences continued to well up within me. I was pregnant with my subject.

Automatic writing is a matter of seizing the moment and writing; freeing the mind of all inhibitions and flying as the muse leads you. In my experiment, I realized that whenever I became an obstacle to the writing process, the language changes instantly. I become an obstacle when realization dawns on me that I am a playwriting student and not a novelist. I become an obstacle when I begin to feel the writing streaming out were too long and winding thereby taking the form of a novel rather than short narratives interspersed with dialogues.

## 2.4 SUMMARY

Manifestations of the metaphysical or surreal is strong in both the spiritual/psychical and psychological/psychotherapeutic types of automatic writing. Though the spiritual aspect of life is not empirically proven, manifestations of it in all aspects of life cannot be overlooked. The battle between psychologists and spiritualists seem to be heading towards an anticlimax.

It has been of much interest for the psychologist to prove that automatic writing by the spiritualist is an avenue to make evident personality disorders of dissociation, hysteria and mental insanity. In an attempt to prove, it has been recognized that the content of the psychological automatic writing

types also seems to surge from unknown destinations. It appears the intangible or the unreal aspect of life is more real and tangible than the mind can fathom. The unknown source of automatic writing contents account for reasons to the denial of authorship by automatic writers under both the spiritual and psychological. Beyond the controversies surrounding automatic writing, there seems to be an appreciable aesthetic value attached to the content of automatic pieces. In spite of the confusions within the practice, it must be noted that the same scientists, narrowing down psychologists further brought a dimension significant to the advancement of the discourse in its totality. Discussions on automatic writing then took a more scientific approach in the 1900s.

At all levels of writing, writers sometimes drifts into a state of automaticity. The language takes a form that is beyond the sensory perception of the writer involved. An example of such a moment is capture in an unstructured discussion with Mohammed Abdallah. In the Ghanaian context, I considered conditions under which Atukwei Okai wrote his *Fanfare for Oduduwa* and why it could be classified as automatic in a way. The aesthetics of automatic writing comes across as possibilities of a creative piece that structures itself under subconscious processes. For experimentations, the metaphysical content in the discourse of automaticity in writing deserves proper examination and investigation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I have looked at possibilities of considering automatic writing as a methodology for the creative writer, with focus on playwriting. Thompson (2000:6), listed Automatic writing as an occult methodology just as trance and spirit possession. Per the clinical experiments conducted by Prince Morten, it came to light that though automatic writing has been adopted by theoreticians of the mind as a tool for healing, the spiritual undertones of it cannot be overlooked. Instead of the *Ouija Board, Planchette, Psychobrette and Pytho Thought Reader, the Stem Device* among others which were used in the early stages of the practice of automatic writing for documentation, with this methodology, the hand assumed a status of a machine in my experimentation. Armstrong in his book *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* extensively discusses how development in modern technologies such as the typewriter and recently Personal computers have aided documentation of automatic pieces. For the creative writing process, using automatic writing, I will discuss the methodology under three subheading;

1. The Careless writing stage
2. Joining the piece of unrelated ideas and remaining truthful to the subject.
3. Revisiting the world of the creative piece to reshape ideologies without defiling automatism.

#### 3.1 CARELESS WRITING STAGE

The first stage of achieving automaticity in writing is what I have coined as ‘the careless writing stage’ where thinking seized, where the hand had control over the head and where sometimes the hand writing was too fast I could not read after writing. Under the careless writing stage is the

formation of a non-structured writing process. Non-structured denotes a process where I had no storyline to work with, I did not have a genre in mind, I did not plan the number of scenes, neither did I consider the characters to center the play around. Like a bird, I was ready to take flight with the muses available and this is what perhaps sets automatic writing apart from conventional writing. Most conventional writers will argue that in moments of writing, they get carried away. I do not in any way contest this fact. As I mentioned in chapter two of this work, in my practice of conventional writing, there were moments when I would get carried away, forget my immediate surroundings and write. In most cases, the language was beyond my usual usage of vocabulary. These moments captured the use of metaphors and well-crafted language with deep underlining interpretations. But the point of departure is, there is always a storyline which determines the genre, plot structure and even characters in conventional writing. My working methods in automatic writing, aside starting the writing process with no defined storyline and plot structure, the physical body, in this case the hand, is controlled not by the conscious but the unconscious, directed by the subconscious and manifests as writings that is often not pre-meditated or edited and this sometimes flies beyond the physical and conscious abilities of myself while I was involved in the process. Instead of sticking with the word conscious, I would rather borrow Stevenson's word "fully conscious". The spiritual, metaphysical, mental faculties, and most significantly the soul was activated and awakened in order to get to the level of automaticity in writing. When this is achieved, written pieces defy the "conscious" (used to suggest fully awake and aware of one's immediate environment) capabilities of the subject otherwise referred to in this context as the playwright.

At this stage I will consider Stevenson's definition of automatic writing. He defined the discourse as one

“Used to designate writing that is done without the writer being conscious of what he is writing, or even (occasionally) of the art of writing. Perhaps I should say “*fully conscious*” because automatic writers may have some awareness of what they are writing as they write. The activity appears to occur, however, without the subject’s ordinary voluntary control and for this reason is called automatic. Stevenson (1978:316)

Although most automatic writers will readily proclaim that they were totally unaware of what they were doing, with my experience, this is not the case. If one is fully unconscious, then how does one come by giving vivid description of their experiences?

With my experience, I just knew my right hand was writing or typing, but could not be restrained as thoughts kept rushing onto the paper like water gushing out from the grounds. A spirit of uneasiness overshadows the soul. A thousand and one ideas flood my mind and all of these want to rush onto the paper at the same minute. I guess this feeling is what Anton Breton (1924) in his *First Manifesto of Surrealism* described as “quarrels raging within me”. In some cases, I found my hand shaking and wished I could write with both hands. Ideas practically quarrel within me in order to make an appearance on the writing papers.

In the first stage of the writing, I identified subjects like consciousness, subconscious mind, double primary and secondary consciousness and unconsciousness. There were moments when spiritualist automatic writing features found their way into the disjointed piece I wrote. At the spiritual stage, I identified language was intense and the subject matter too abstract in nature, i.e., the use of surrealistic elements like ghosts, souls as characters and spirit beings being present in a physical world.

In the psychological aspect, there is the need to look at some subjects critically. Several confusions and debates arise in determining the truest state of consciousness, unconsciousness and subconscious mind. The gap in describing these subjects or fields have become extremely narrow

(Binet 1890). The margin between unconsciousness, subconscious and consciousness is rather too thin to fully grasp.

For instance, according to Prince Morton (1925) as quoted by Koustaal (1992:12),

There is no 'subconscious mind' or 'self' in the sense in which these terms are popularly used even by psychologists. At least there is no fact which justify such concepts. There are subconscious processes any of which may take on autonomous activity and determine 'automatic' and other kinds of behavior (including conscious mental processes of the personal consciousness); and among these activities may be automatic writing and hallucination. Theoretically, therefore, such scripts may be written by any number of different, more or less independent, systems of integrated dispositions; i.e., subconscious processes. Practically it is not uncommon to obtain scripts produced by two, three, four, or more such processes in the same individual.

The use of the term 'subconscious processes' encapsulate unconsciousness, subconscious and consciousness (double or primary and secondary). For Prince Morten, an automatic written piece tend to capture a broader scope rather than just the subconscious mind. The piece, when analyzed critically, reveals aspects of secondary consciousness (when consciousness is altered by means of distraction or hypnosis or injection of alcohol), unconsciousness (where the subject or writer slips deeper into the process of automaticity and might not even respond to his/her name) and the subconscious mind (which releases repressed information).

### 3.1.1 SELF-INDUCED DISTRACTION METHOD

Instead of the usual experimenter/psychologist and subject/reagent and the medium and subject operating the Ouija Board or Planchette, I found myself in a student/supervisor writing scenario. This scenario embraced both the psychological and spiritualist automatic writing types. Contrary to what happens during both types where the writing was done in the presence of the experimenter or spiritualist medium, my experimentation is a single authored creative piece. My supervisors

only get to see a draft of the work (post-writing draft). After presenting three of the disjointed piece, my supervisors could clearly identify traces of subconscious processes. They could point out moments when secondary consciousness was at play and moments when I totally descended into the subconscious or a possession. The language was different from my usual usage of language and the thematic concerns raised are not the kind I regularly would speak on. The content of the pieces become extremely abstract. The content is filled with many abstract ideas which clearly represent what was happening within all faculties of my being (body, spirit and soul). In the moment of writing, my mind wanders and I experience a moment of void within. Then within a matter of seconds, a variety of subjects are revealed to me. I write without pausing to explain. Time eludes me. Immediately I pause to reason with the ideas and I begin to explain on paper, automaticity is broken. The language and style takes on a different form which automatically reveals primary consciousness at work. When I stop the writing process, the first line in the next writing process reveal evidence of secondary consciousness. Same way, my supervisors identify a constellation of abstract ideas. In situations where because I needed to meet deadlines, my supervisors could clearly trace fully conscious moments in the pieces. In most cases, I could not deny that the writing was birthed from a fully conscious mind. The context of writing (in this case spontaneous or automatic) affects the content and structure significantly. The psychological automatic writing type is what I have identified as self-induced automatic writing methodology. As stated earlier, in an academic situation where deadlines apply, I could not always depend on the 'feeling to engage in writing automatically' to set in before I write. This stage was often accompanied by a fear of meeting deadline structured by my supervisor. I must admit that the thought of me being a playwriting student filled my mind and as such, I noticed that most of the pieces I churned out at this level were mostly in dialogues. Yet the content was quite unique and

comes to confirm what Theon Wright (1972:12) meant by “in either case the source is not physically measurable, and thus remains a mystery”. In ‘either case’ refers to the spiritual or psychotherapeutic automatic writing types. At this level too, issues of double consciousness or secondary and primary consciousness was at play. Alfred Binet’s *Double Consciousness (1890)* discusses possibilities of primary and secondary consciousness under the broad scope of consciousness and unconsciousness. When an altered state of consciousness is achieved either by *distraction, hypnosis or injection of alcohol*, the primary consciousness is often the one that gets altered. The secondary consciousness is often awake. Binet again notes that double consciousness and primary/secondary consciousness “reveal a direct process of reasoning and a directive volition”. According to Armstrong (1970:189) reasoning as directive implementation is directly connected to the workings of the left and the right hemisphere of the brain. The right hemisphere being “primitive and artistic, the left more developed and rational”. It is not too clear which aspect of the brain is likely to be more awake when an altered state of consciousness is attained but research has revealed that the right hemisphere of the brain is most active in moments of meditation. Meditation is moments of connecting with the quietness of the soul which often applies to automatic writing. I have therefore deduced that in the state of automaticity in writing, it is the right hemisphere of the brain that actively works since the writing often appears as abstract and illogical. The more a writer trains the use of the right hemisphere of the brain, the higher the chance the text will become illogical, automatic and of a higher aesthetic component.

According to Binet as cited by Armstrong (1998:189) in *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, “secondary consciousness can produce automatic writing, hear whispered messages, make calculations and so on without the primary consciousness being aware. The secondary consciousness is mobile, fluctuating, often incorporating oppositional impulses”. With my

experience, the state of altered consciousness is met with the secondary consciousness. In those states, I might hear someone talking to me and will clearly understand questions asked and even provide audible answers. But as a friend confirmed, when the writing ends, I usually enquire from them if I responded to their questions. This situation can be likened to remembering being asked a question and not fully remembering the answer provided. This same scenario applies to waking up from sleep abruptly. A person asleep can be awoken by a knock on the door, walk to open the door for another to enter but would find him/herself asking the next moment how the other person entered.

My method of *distraction* was staying in noisy zones. Armstrong defined distraction as a means of consciously drawing attention from all noises and in order to draw attention to a specific assignment which in this case is writing. In simple terms, *distraction is employed to achieve maximum attention*. Once attention is achieved, automaticity is attained. Since I found myself authoring the creative piece without anyone around to *distract* me, I had to find ways of distracting myself. As awkward as this distracting method may sound, it helps to consciously forget about the immediate surroundings in order to focus attention on writing down the messages being received and not subject it to conscious or rational abilities. For a start, one gets caught up in the realm of the noise and the realm of communicated message which is illogical to the conscious mind. As Breton in Armstrong (1998:202) suggests, “write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you’re writing and be tempted to reread what you have written”. As cited in chapter two of this work, Anderson and Downey (1915) employed the *reading aloud technique* during experiments on *distraction*. The two would hand over a poem or book to those engaged in the process of automatic writing and instruct them to read. While reading, the

subjects are made to write. The act of simultaneously reading and writing helped to take the writer's mind off all the activities happening around his/or her space and even the message received. Finally, when the book is taken away from the subject, attention is totally drawn to the writing. In my case, I rather would go and sit in an extremely noisy space and attempt writing. I must say that I detest noisy spaces. As I attempt at writing, my attention gradually gets drawn away from the noise and rather focuses on the writing. After an unspecified number of sentences, all the noise dissipate into the air.

### 3.1.2 POSSESSION METHODOLOGY

In one moment, I was alone in a very quiet room in Guelph Canada. I started writing from about 2pm in the afternoon. I forgot about time and space. I realized the room was becoming darker and needed some illumination but could not get up to switch on the light. I tried to stop writing but could not. Finally, when all the ideas had found their way onto the paper, I was able to get up. Then realization dawned on me. It occurred to me that I was miles away from home. While in the process of writing, time and space had eluded me. It felt like I was at home in Ghana. The longing to return home started. It got severe that I always dreamt I was at home with my family or picking something precious on the streets leading to my house. Then I realized the subject matters filling the pieces of writing were centered on the surreal and metaphysical. Most of the writings of this stage were long narratives. Time and space only become relevant when the writing is completed. Sometimes the room where I sat and engaged in the process felt heavy. At this point, I will consider the three stages to spirit possession as discussed by Okyere (2015:25-41) in his article on *Brekete* cult and rituals. Although his work pertains to Dance and spirit possession, I have identified some connections that could be made to automatic writing and spirit/muse possession. He identified

three stages in spirit possession. The first stage is the *onset of possession* which is characterized by the human drifting away and isolating him/herself from all forms of activities in order to connect with the external spiritual forces present. Okyere identified the second stage as the *Betwixt and Between consciousness and unconsciousness*. At this stage, the dancer finds him/herself contemplating whether they are ready to be used as a medium or channel of communication by the deities present. The final stage is the *full possession state*. Okyere clarifies that at the final stage, the mediums do not respond to their own names but that of the deity. Per the movement and the words spoken, other cult members are able to identify the deity taking dominion of the human body. Through the lenses of an interdisciplinary approach, spiritualist automatic writing could be looked at in these three stages. The first stage for the spiritualist writer is what I have termed as the *Pregnant with ideas stage*. At this stage, as the word pregnant suggests, the automatic writer gets uneasy because ideas fill his/her human anatomy like pregnancy. I realized that when these ideas cloud my thought, I hear people talking but I do not respond to them because in a split second, these same ideas that are flooding my mind seem to be escaping one after the other. I remain quiet to enable me catch them once again. The second stage is the *Preparation to document automatic messages*. In these moments, I move away from the noise of life to a quiet place to literally grab the ideas in my hands so they do not evaporate. At this same stage, I get my writing pads or laptop ready to document.

I noticed that after writing, when I was typing onto the laptop, the tendency to edit was greater. In effect, two writing stages will surface. To avoid defiling the authenticity of the process of achieving automaticity, I started typing straight onto the laptop. I created a file on the laptop and named it “Another Dance in the Rain”. The selection of this title underscores my personal desire for a freedom that adulthood has robbed me of. The freedom to dance naked in the rain and

appreciate nature in its truest state without the burden of analyzing the consequences of the action has been a desire. This has a direct correlation to my desire to even conduct this experiment on writing (the liberty to write without strictly fitting it within the framework of conventions).

I usually will just type and not read but later realized I could not make meaning out of them due to some extreme typographical errors and incomplete sentences. The way out was to read immediately I finished writing when the muse was still accessible. Interestingly, I observed that going back to read immediately had the tendency to journey me back into a realm to understand what was communicated and make the necessary corrections. In most cases, the writing becomes intense, suggesting another possession. The writing at this level is more like a communication. The simplest way to explain this communication is only by experience. On a complicated descriptive level, the communication occurs within a moment of arrest and tremor. The arrest is followed by a brief moment of fear and then chaos in the environment ceases. Peace settles in and announces the presence of the ‘other self’ I will communicate with. There is no physical presence of this ‘self’ but the presence is experienced. When I get confused and tempted to clean what has been written, I am told to continue. I get lost in the moment and understanding ceases gradually. The highest level is attained when in the moment of being lost, dictation gets clearer and the writing is fast.

On the next writing period, I did not go back to read what I had written already. Going back to read on a different day only tempts me to edit. Editing without the help of the muse available for that possession writing state only defiles the purity of the process.

The third stage is the *muse/spirit possession automatic writing*. With experience of writing, I have noticed that the possession stage can be attained when the muse pleases. Perhaps I must qualify what I meant by using noise as a distractive method. According to Okyere (2015:25), “the concept

of possession among the Brekete Gatsi cult [is] based on the philosophy of repetitive motif characterized by intense energy, rhythmic tempo and musicality (multidimensional, accentuated and phrasing from the *brekete* drum”. The usage of noise is descriptive of the impact intended to create which is distraction. From Okyere’s point of view, the sound composition impacts on the possession. In my case, I usually found myself at the Dance Department of the School of Performing Art, University of Ghana to prepare myself for a possible communication (possession). Among my favorite dance, drum and singing tunes is the *Sorsonnet*. The *Sorsonnet* is a dance performed by tribes in Guinea Bissau and Senegal had a way of creating that effect. The first time I saw *Sorsonnet* dance in performance was in level 100. The energy displayed by the dancers and the high pitch singing which sounded like a chant thrilled me. While away in Canada, I always kept the *Sorsonnet* drum sound and singing on high volumes when I wanted to distract to write. In the full possession stage, the muse takes over completely. I become completely dead to everything within my space. I cannot vividly describe what happens to me at this stage. Thompson (2004) provides the experience of a subject who on countless occasions denied authorship. She again posits; “The subject only recalls the forces that come to play prior to the moments of spiritual seizing/arrest”. The post-automatic writing stage gives me a glimpse of where I might have been. As postulated by Breton in his Second Manifesto on Surrealism, there is massive “rampant carelessness” in the writing. The use of pronoun “I” dominates in the writing and often comes across as long narrative. Sometimes, in the process of “spirit/muse possession, I would fall asleep. During the sleep moment, a continuation of the writing comes across as a dream. First thing I do when awake is to document it. There were other moments when the actions in the writing haunted me in sleep. There was this particular day when I dreamed my fingers were being chopped off as it appeared in the piece. I woke up weeping, and realized it was just a dream. The dream was too

real to ignore. In the writing state, I wrote about weeping for my chopped fingers. The spirit/muse possession automatic writing stage is too intense to fully comprehend and express but the aesthetics of it is appreciable. The collection of writing that was churned out through possession served as a bridge that connected other pieces produced during the moments of automaticity not accompanied by possession.

### 3.2 JOINING UNRELATED IDEAS AND REMAINING TRUTHFUL TO INSPIRATION

At this stage, I found myself asking these questions

- 1 After writing supposedly in an unconscious level, with streams of thought flowing from the subconscious (subconscious processes), what next is done with the chunk of unrelated ideas?
- 2 Can the creative thoughts be knitted to makeup a play?
- 3 In consciously knitting, does it render the final art work less automatic?
- 4 When consciousness comes in for reshaping the ideas, are issues of adulteration and dilution avoidable?

A lot of the ideas that streamed out in the first stage of automatic writing were seemingly unrelated. The unrelated pieces are read for possible piecing together. At this stage, one will come to the realization that though a storyline was nonexistent at the onset of writing, a single storyline seem to have been created in the “careless state”. Reading the automatically written pieces can be overly cumbersome. As posited by Thompson (2004:11) based on Andrew Rothwell’s *Incoherence and Allegory*,” *Paris Dada: The Barbarians Storm the Gate*, “the reading of any automatic text is perhaps an inherently difficult practice...textual slippage, complex metaphors, intertextuality, rhizomatic logic, and word association” is visible enough. In the process of reading

and joining, there is a higher possibility to deny having authored the creative pieces. This is because some of the subjects projected tend to defy my usual usage of language, my perspectives on specific issues and ideological position. Anytime I fidgeted with a portion of the piece, it was easily identifiable because the language sharply betrays the engagement of conscious abilities. Roland Barthes's discussion on *Death of the Author* slips in at this level. There were ideas I projected which I fully did not understand but my supervisors understood. These Ideas were particularly those that were written during the possession stage when understanding ceased. If I am at any point expected to write a note to the creative piece, I might betray myself as not fully understanding the subjects raised in the play. The tendency to also subject the piece to logical reasoning is high at this level as one can clearly see the manifestations of the left hemisphere of the brain being at work in the waking state.

In both the spiritual and the psychotherapeutic types, the manifestation of the metaphysical is intense in terms of content. From the self-induced *distraction* stage, the full possession stage could be attained. On the spiritual front, when full possession is attained, I have observed that spirit/muse communication can last for several hours. During the moments of muse/spirit communication, my soul is ready to receive instructions as to how to rework some already rampantly written pieces. I note down the instructions and then return to the pieces already written to rework. Breton's application of conscious abilities to the work on a level, is even the working of muses/spirits. In the possession stage, the individual written pieces inhabits the mind and prevents me from freely engaging in other activities except writing.

### 3.3 REVISITING THE WORLD OF THE CREATIVE PIECE AS A SINGLE UNIT.

Under this stage, two steps are considered;

- 1 Looking at the creative piece as a single component.
- 2 Outdooring the piece in a play reading session

#### 3.3.1 THE CREATIVE PIECE AS A SINGLE COMPONENT

In looking at the creative piece as a single component, I noticed a *re-visitation of spirit/muse*. At his level, the writer will be in tune with the muse that will automatically convey him/her to the world of the piece knitted together. Significant ideologies get to be reshape without defiling automatism. Considering the individual units of the piece communicates different meanings but considering the joined pieces as a single component brings a meaning and a perspective. Below explains what revisiting the world of the piece as a single unit;

**TUKU:**

Shhhhhhhh. They must believe I am whipping you. Continue shouting.

**TOPIPA:**

I have cried and shouted for thirty minutes. Who rapes a woman for that long?

**TUKU:**

Better ask the two hundred plus girls of the region wrapped in green-leafy soft cloth bearing one-third strand of purity.

*The region wrapped in green-leafy soft cloth bearing one-third strand of purity* was an add-on that came during this stage to express an idea that came during the first two stages of experimentation.

The add-on suggests the flag of Nigeria and expounds on the kidnapping of the chibok school girls who numbered over two hundred in the history of its postcolonial state.

### 3.3.2 OUTDOORING THE PIECE IN A PLAY READING SESSION

Listening to the reading of the play in a reading session does two things to the experimentation. Firstly, the writer sees clearly the picture painted in the creative piece. Secondly, the writer is informed of the varied interpretations assigned to the piece. Each reading comes with its own interpretation.

In my case, I had three different play reading sessions. The first was done in Canada with the subsequent two conducted at the School of Performing Arts. Chapter four gives a brief overview of the various play reading sessions.

### 3.4 SUMMARY

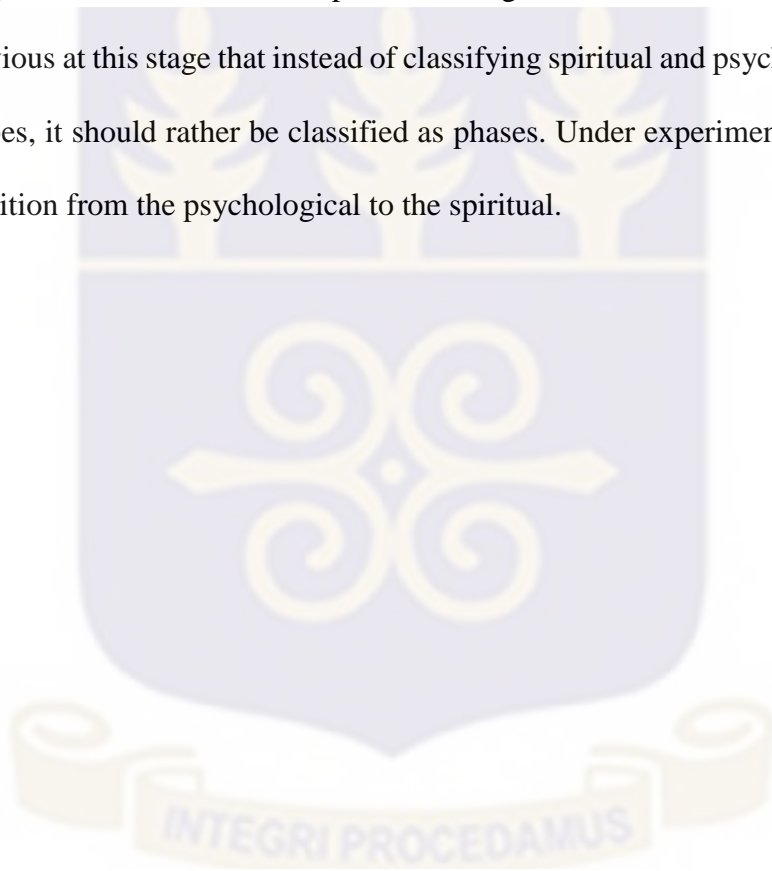
In the absence of the Ouija Board, Planchetts, Psychobrette and Pytho Thought Reader, how does a writer experiment with automatic writing in this postmodernist era? Under the spiritualist automatic writing type, the above mentioned devices were used to document automatic messages believed to surge from a supernatural world. The spiritualist uses hypnosis, smoking and injection of alcohol to contact psychical powers. During the modern era, the psychologist saw the human hand as the machine to help write automatic messages. The psychologist uses *mesmerizing* and *distraction* to alter consciousness of their patience to practice automatic writing. Advancement in technology has brought forth the typewriter and recently computers and laptops which can also aid in the documentation of automatic messages. Practicing automatic writing as a conscious technique

for playwriting or creative writing demands that one departs from the conventional ways of writing. For this experiment, a prototype methodology that embraces both the spiritual and psychological was created. This was done bearing in mind the limitations in the academic field.

The methods applied are categories under three headings;

- 1 Careless writing stage
- 2 Join unrelated ideas and remaining truthful to inspiration.
- 3 Revisiting the world of the creative piece as a single unit.

It became obvious at this stage that instead of classifying spiritual and psychological automatic writing as types, it should rather be classified as phases. Under experimentation, the writer is likely to transition from the psychological to the spiritual.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the experimentation on automatic writing under the postmodernist ideals. It will, in the same light, attempt at ‘interpreting’ the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain* as an automatic writing experimental play using the poststructuralist theory of deconstruction. In a more concrete perspective, conditions under which the dramatic piece in context can be described as a ‘pastiche’ will be addressed. Finally, some significant issues that emerged in moments of experimentation of automatic writing is examined at purposely for a kind of in-depth understanding of the text within the Ghanaian environment where evidence of metaphysics abound.

Whenever the “author” returns to the pages of the dramatic piece birthed out of experimenting under automatic writing, the temptation to edit is high. When André Breton in his *Manifestoes of Surrealism* cautioned that automatic written pieces must be submitted to the reasoning of the conscious mind, he meant to communicate that the piece should not be left in its *careless state*. The careless state is filled with some grammatical errors and sentence misconstruction. Submitting the work to the abilities of the conscious mind is to only clear it of errors and not tinker with the structure and thematic concerns or even language. It is therefore imperative that the author does not allow the conscious abilities to alter the structure of what was authored by unconscious abilities. As stated in the previous chapters, automatic writers, while in the process of creating, are often blind to the philosophical underpinnings, interpretations, cultural implications and even the very basic thematic concerns of the piece. In this experimentation, I will not deny that I was practically ignorant of the basic storyline that was running across the several disjointed sections conceived at the first stage of achieving automaticity. Separate readings of the single pieces were

very instrumental in helping me identify and string together for a storyline. The two play reading sessions put up on different days also helped me to somewhat get an understanding of the complete piece. In this chapter, I analyze and given an 'interpretation' of the piece based on three levels; the meaning I drew from the piece while listening to its reading during the play reading sessions, from some comments made by those present at the reading and finally, the meanings I identified while reading the piece as a single component. In terms of structure, the analysis and interpretation will be discussed under these subheading;

1. Description or inventory of work (Synopsis)
2. Formal interaction of components
3. Interpretation

#### 4.1 DESCRIPTION OR INVENTORY OF WORK (SYNOPSIS)

Movement one of the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain*, the experimented automatic writing play for this thesis sets the tone right for what to expect in subsequent sessions of the piece. Topipa and Tuku argue among themselves as to who is wrecked by alcohol. The demonstration of this argument even plunges readers/audience, into a state of confusion. It is not too clear who among them is drunk. The play revolves around these two main characters and their souls. Their status in the cave is clearly established but their character tags do not conform to their roles. Tuku the guard is quite soft. Topipa is presented as wild and insane and her insanity gradually infects Tuku. Undertones of sexuality is established. Topipa rather glorifies her feminine features contrary to what pertains in society where women are often objectified by men. Her role alternates between an imprisoned government official under dictatorial rule to a transatlantic slave woman and then a Mother whose child has transformed into a he-goat. The he-goat, His Excellency, is never seen in the entire piece. The several long narratives serve as a background to expressing levels of meaning

underscoring the main narrative. The episodic plot affirms the realities prevailing. Topipa wins the fight for freedom. Her slave master, Tuku, as a sign of love decides to grant her freedom. But this freedom comes with a price; to declare her free, her slave clothing which is stuck to her flesh due to excessive beating and brutality needs to be peeled off completely. True love is expressed as the chains binding her are not taken off. Indeed, it will take her a thousand years for her to arrive at her destination but her soul is happy and dances to the rhythmic sounds of the drum. Alas, she has fought and won her first freedom.

## 4.2 FORMAL INTERACTION OF COMPONENTS.

### 4.2.1 POST MODERNISM PASTICHE AND AUTOMATIC WRITING

The dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain* in analysis appears to lend itself to several period styles under art. The various styles could be classified under the French aesthetic descriptive theory known as Pastiche. This descriptive theory gained grounds during the late seventeenth century. The term flourished during the Renaissance era. According to Hoesterey (1995:493), the “French Beaux Arts discourse known as Pastiche was a borrowing from the Italian “pasticcio”. Literally, “pasticcio” denoted a paté of various ingredients—a hodge podge of meat, vegetables, eggs, and a host of other variable addition”. It denotes a terminology where inspiration for a single art work is drawn from diverse styles and techniques dominant from either previous eras or the present. Critically observing *Another Dance in the Rain* reveals styles like Surrealism, Brecht’s Theatre for Social Change and Abdallah’s *Abibigro*. The subsequent discussion reveals how postmodernist Pastiche manifests in the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain*.

#### 4.2.2 MANIFESTATIONS OF SURREALISM IN *ANOTHER DANCE IN THE RAIN*

Experimenting with automatic writing created a creative piece that can be categorized within the broad scope of surrealism. The 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde artist battled with expressing freely an emotion that conscious abilities could not help bring into fruition (Gladstone and Worden 2011). Only the unconscious which is illogical and abstract in presentation helped make manifest the bottled up emotion. Representation of the abstract embraced dream ideas, personally conceived philosophies, the intangible and almost insane or metaphysical aspects of life, belief in life after death and the futility of life itself (Absurdism). The power of the imaginative that transcends logic and the total reliance on the muse factor is an aspect that the proponents of surrealism focused on. Automatic writing flourishes in the context of surrealism because of its acceptance of spontaneity. Spontaneity in automatic writing permits surreal contents to dominate because the muse factor is unrestricted to delivering messages from the spiritual world which are often times beyond physical conceptualization. On the scenes of visual art, there came automatic drawings with the likes of André Masson practicing it in 1923. Before applying for graduate studies, I found myself drafting a storyline for the play I intend to write as my project. So many ideas for play writing came to mind which confused me. The confusion escalated during the first year when knowledge had been acquired. I noticed that so many emotions laid within my soul that needed to be released. In practice, the first careless written piece below captured the bottled up emotions.

TOPIPA:

*The man came to my room and pulled me to one corner. He said I was pregnant. I knew I had always been pregnant. I didn't really know the type of pregnancy he was talking about this time. Like I said, I was already pregnant. Dreams and visions*

*that make fears flea had been with me like pregnancy. He dragged me out to the open...*

The second pieces also captures another emotion;

#### TOPIPA

*The passion burning within me was red-yellow hot fire. I had always wanted to watch my body develop slowly. (Walks to Down Stage Center) I stood in front of the mirror. I got shy of looking at myself. It had transformed into something I had never thought of. My breast fitted gently into my palms....*

In an open forum discussion on the mental state of surrealists and their out of place ideas that prompted the need to bring 'such' under medical attention, Pierre Janet was open enough to acknowledge the ideals on surrealism captured in André's Manifestoes (1924) . This said discussion was with Doctor De Clerambault as recorded in the collection of Surrealist Manifestoes.

According to Janet,

*The Surrealists' manifesto contains an interesting philosophical introduction. The Surrealists maintain that reality is by definition ugly; beauty exists only in that which is not real. It is man who has introduced beauty into the world. In order to produce beauty, one must remove oneself as far as possible from reality. The works by the Surrealists are above all confessions of men obsessed, and men who doubt.*

To truthfully confess, I found myself overly obsessed with the subject of Africanism. I was concerned about the prevailing situation in postcolonial Africa. The younger generation seems to be treading the same path they criticized the old generation for treading. These subjects unconsciously manifested in the piece. Topipa in the piece is depressed with how her offspring are acting as goats instead of lions.

Surrealist propagator André Breton is a notable figure in the practice of automatism in writing. In his first *Manifesto of Surrealism*, he defined surrealism as “*Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express -- verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner - the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern*”. The moral concerns aspect of automatic writing also contributes to why authors deny ownership. In *Another Dance in the Rain*, vulgar words like ‘Fuck’ and ‘Vagina’ featured. Although the usage of these words sparked sentiments among the audience present during the play reading at the School of Performing Arts, I have kept them in the play to validate the absence of any conscious control in automatic writing. Though Breton’s quote about psychic automatism attempts at only providing a spectrum for discussing spiritual automatism, the contents of psychotherapeutic automatism follows the same dimension as discussed above. By observation, the aesthetics of automatic writing builds up on a gradual process. When the automatic writer focuses attention on achieving aesthetics during the rampant careless writing stage, the muse/spirit might dissipate. The full aesthetic component is revealed when the creative pieces is written as dictated completely. Pausing to ponder over the rampantly written and disjointed pieces only cuts the flow of spirit communication. During the ‘careless writing’ stage of *Another Dance in the Rain*, a piece, bearing features of mythology manifested. After writing that piece, for the first time, I went back to critically look at it. I felt I was not an authority enough to produce myths and Mythologies. I was quiet dispassionate in what churned out. Ideas bearing such features ceased to flow completely in subsequent writings;

### TOPIPA

My prison is open. My fertile grounds unguarded. Tell me the stories of how the stars got displaced when their mother slept and fell off on earth. I hear they come out at night searching for their mother.

### TUKU

Tell me about the legend of that woman who forgot about her children and bathed in the pool of cold waters while her children hanged up in the skies searching for her.

Surrealism thrives on the power of the imaginative. The imaginative is expressed in an environment where absolute freedom is of essence. The freedom to create brings along a complex aesthetic value that is not conceived during the conception period. The freedom to create is in a strikingly disorderly manner but the end product is knitted to conform to an orderliness which is unconventional in approach.

In experimenting with automatic writing and observing closely, I have arrived at the point that the aesthetics of surrealism and Automatic writing comes across as disorderliness which is in itself orderliness, a sense of hope amidst hopelessness and philosophies in the midst of nothingness or emptiness. The practice aspect of automatic writing alternate between the psychotherapeutic and spiritualist type. In my first attempt at writing automatically, I realized after writing, the piece captured a dream I had when I was twelve years old. This particular dream shaped my exploratory life of sexuality and bottled up emotions on expressing sensuality. With precision, I recounted this dream which my conscious mind would have left out details.

*Topipa: The man came to my room and pulled me to one corner. He said I was pregnant. I knew I had always been pregnant. I didn't really know the type of pregnancy he was talking about this time. Like I said, I was already pregnant. Dreams and visions that make fears flea had been with me like pregnancy. He dragged me out to the open. The young girl who sold oranges after school to*

*support herself and little sister through school was in pain. They lost their mum during a political campaign. She had gone there to sell water. Following the truck and chanting party songs, draped in party colors, a truck grounded her onto the tarred road. Too gruesome to narrate. A shovel was used to scrape her remains off that major road...*

Surrealistic contents burgeoned in the creative piece through three processes;

- The imaginative
- Dream situations
- Muse communication

The narrative above by Topipa is a combination of dream and muse communication. During the second stage of automaticity which is joining of the pieces, I realized it reveals the current situation of the African political scene. The poor in society support the politician and when they lose their lives, their children suffer in poverty. On another level, it presents the birth of His Excellency.

#### 4.2.3 MANIFESTATIONS OF ABIBIGRO CONCEPT IN *ANOTHER DANCE IN THE RAIN*

The desire to create dramatic art forms deeply rooted in the cultures and traditions that will subsequently serve as a backdrop or foundation to describe performances, precipitated the search for authentic theatrical forms of Ghanaian origin. Significantly, these forms or genres that emerged identifies, defines and brings diverse perspectives for looking at the Ghanaian context and content away from the Western cultures motivated Efuia Sutherland to create *Anansegoro* out of *Anansesem*. The tendency to get lost in a quest to use English to describe the African form incited Sutherland to use a terminology that the Ghanaian could understand and easily explain. Although the word *Agoro* somewhat lends itself to several interpretations, they all fall under or could be grouped under one umbrella to discuss concepts under artistic expressions. Mohammed Ben-

Abdallah on the other hand expanded on the concept to encompass a form that looks beyond playing stories about the legendary *Ananse* and looks at issues that affect the African in general. A critical observation of the piece *Another Dance in the Rain* reveals aspects of *agoro* or play. Instead of playing Ananse Stories, aspects of the long narratives are played by Topipa, Tuku and their souls. Although the play *Another Dance in the Rain* is structured in four movements with an episodic movement (plot) introduced after the third movement, *Agoro* and roleplay started in movement three;

Topipa: Let's start the performance. Take your position... to the left young man.  
(*Goes to whisper into Tuku's ear. He nods to confirm he understands*) Let the show begin. (*She goes to sit on the stone to the corner*)

The re-enactment of the above experimented with cross-gender roleplay where Tuku plays the role of Topipa's mother. Intentionally 'playing' is an avenue of limitless possibilities.

In other sections of the play, the characters make reference to the audience thereby breaking the forth wall.

**TOPIPA:**

Good! You've summoned my soul. Close your eyes Tuku. Face our audience. Full front. Good! When you look back, you will turn into a pillar of salt. (*She tiptoes and pulls out papers from behind the stone to UC. Whispering into his ears*) Let us put up a performance. I did not like what I wrote so I titled the piece "As you don't like it".

**TUKU:**

As YOU don't like it. I might like it. The audience might like it too. (*Scheming through the papers*). Topipa! I see myself as cast. (*Getting excited*) This story must not go out. I remember I was the driver and you as Otinkrama. We need Omane the all seeing one.

Breaking the fourth wall breaks illusion as well and helps audience relate with the act on stage. The action is also moved to where audience are seated;

**TOPIPA:**

But behind that one character are up to 20 backstage crew members working. You call them insignificant? Let's cut this argument. Find a seat among the audience while I tell the story of my cub who has transformed into a he-goat. (*Tuku moves down stage, locates a seat among the audience and goes to sit*)

**TUKU:**

(*Clapping*) Applause, applause! Let the show begin Topipa. Let the show begin my love.

The setting of the play is of African origin and the time alternates from 'past, present and maybe the unknown future'. The thematic concerns of the piece *Another Dance in the Rain* are not clearly spelt out but merely inferred but significantly projects the struggles of the past, the present day post-colonial realities and an envisaged future.

Topipa: I understand. They must be on their way by now. My eyes are shut now. Put the chains on my wrist and feet. See my soul...dancing to the tune of drumming... May a black seed sprout out with power and refuse the chains. May that seed carry my spirit and the spirits of all the ancestors.

(*Lights dims. Tuku's right hand is bandaged with a piece of Topipa's cloth. He struggles but finally put the chains on her feet and wrists. Light spots on Figure dancing to the rhythms of the sounding drums*) lights fade

Abdallah's *Abibigro* in terms of content captures the African history; slave trade, issues arising in post-colonial Africa, issues in politics among many. As Asiedu (2011: 370-371) further explains, "his plays often employ a constellation of characters and themes from African history and from different parts of the African continent, refusing to be limited to any one specific African context".

In pointing out and discussing what Asiedu (2011:371) describes as “the main point of departure between the theatre of Sutherland and Abdallah”, she emphasizes,

Whiles Sutherland seeks a Ghanaian-specific aesthetic in *anansegoro*, Abdallah seeks a wider African aesthetic in *abibigro*, which is encapsulated in the name he gives his practice. Essentially, Abdallah’s *abibigro* is an expansion of Sutherland’s *anansegoro*; not only does he seek a wider African aesthetic, but he goes beyond the use of Ghanaian folklore and story-telling traditions and is constantly experimenting with form, engaging with myth, ritual and contemporary realities.

In the episodic plot titled *Non-Aligned Movement*, though the language employed is drawn from Ghana, there is the mentioning of O.A.U bus terminal. OAU further gives currency to the African situation under discussion. Notable writers like Atukwei Okai who have experienced other cultures and languages employ them in their writing.

The *Abibigro* concepts presents strong female characters and affirms the role of women in society. Aseidu (2011) in her article “Abibigoro: Mohammed Ben Abdallah’s Search for an African Aesthetic in the Theatre” examines why Abdallah reworked and expanded his play *The Slaves*. The expanded version, *The Slaves Revisited* among other additions, presented a strong female character *Ayanda*. For Aseidu, this presentation of a strong female character by Abdallah comes to affirm his concept of *Abibigro* just like his *Land of Million Magicians* does. Likewise, *Another Dance in the Rain* presents Topipa as a strong female character who is often times fearless.

*Abibigro* predominantly employs the use of Music, dance and drama. Abdallah’s usage of music and dance is not limited by cultural and geographical boundaries. In his *Land of a Million Magicians* the *Abibiman* Concert Party band is represented on stage. *Abibiman* translates as Black People. In *Another Dance in the Rain*, there is intense drumming and humming of tunes. The tunes hummed are chants. Instead of employing specific songs that are site-specific, tunes are hummed.

Aspects of the dramatic piece records dancing but the drama itself dances to the tune of the drum language. On a higher level, the play dances to the drum beats as it structures itself.

#### 4.2.4 BRECHT'S ALIENATION EFFECT IN *ANOTHER DANCE IN THE RAIN*

Bertolt Brecht's 'Theatre for Social Change' sought to break illusions that transported audiences into a realm where essence of the dramatic piece is not identified. Essence here is the message the dramatic piece aims at putting across. The elaborate scenic design, presence of the fourth wall among others eluded the audience. For Brecht, going to the theatre should bring change which helps advance society. To achieve this effect, the alienation from the character was put in place. The fourth wall was broken and a conscious effort was made to continuously remind audience that the act on stage is merely representational.

*Another Dance in the Rain* makes use of an almost bare stage. The Non-Aligned Movement employs the use of placards with character names written on them. The stage direction given in the text is as follows;

*(Drum rolls as other figures appear on stage draped in different shades of cloth. Each figure, now taking up roles as characters, holds up placards with their character names inscribed on each. Lights fade out slowly and fades in again. As narrations are made, there is brief enactments by characters).*

#### 4.3 POSTMODERNIST PASTICHE AND THE SELECTION THEORY UNDER AUTOMATIC WRITING.

Pastiche thrives on the "Selection Theory", artist had the freedom to look carefully at all working of art and select peculiar artistic ornaments so as to create their own. The final work, when subjected to analysis and interpretation, reveals traces from other works. The selection theory

enabled for layers of appreciable aesthetic components. For instance, it was often speculated that “Tintoretto combined Michelangelo’s disegno and Titian’s color” (Hoesterey, 1995:494).

Discussing Pastiche in relation to automatic writing and aesthetics take a different dimension. The “Selection Theory” takes effect under subconscious processes and exemplifies the psychological aspect of automatic writing. All the theories and works the automatic writer has interacted with begins to appear in the automatic piece without conscious effort. In experimenting with automatic writing, the dramatic piece structures itself based on the numerous knowledge previously acquired consciously and unconsciously. The structuring of the automatic piece is therefore not a conscious effort of the writer. During the writing, the unconscious releases all the knowledge stored. Through conscious abilities (as in conscious writing), the mind might make use of only one theory but through subconscious processes, there is a constellation of ideas that come to play. On the psychological phase, through subconscious processes, automatic writing is a means of unlocking the archives stored in the mind. In the spiritual phase, the writer becomes a mere medium who takes dictation from unseen spiritual forces. The automatic writer realizes the full aesthetic component when the writing is completed (spiritual and psychological phases).

After watching Andrew Whaley’s *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco* (1991- no literature describes this play as an automatic piece) in performance (2014), I was quite thrilled with how the characters remain on stage throughout the entire play. Change of scene is indicated with lights. From movement one to four of *Another Dance in the Rain*, Tuku and Topipa never exit their little ‘cave’. Other characters enter and exit. Lighting effects also indicates beginning or end of scenes. Efo Kodjo Mawugbe’s *Prison Graduate* resembles the South African Physical Theatre concept. I have secretly admired plays that make use of limited cast members and employs the use of role-

play. All these interests appear in the piece *Another Dance in the Rain*. Graduate level Theatre Studies at the School of Performing Arts made me develop interest in Postcolonial theory, effects of colonialism and the need to rebuild Africa through decolonization of the African mind. Reading plays by writers like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi wa mirii, Cont Mhlanga, Mohammed Abdallah and others who employ the use of native African language in portions of their plays awoken the interest in me to also employ the use of Ghanaian languages. Zakes Mda's *You Fool, How Can the Sky Fall?* also struck a chord in me at first reading. I found it interesting that the play made use of an invisible force who was so powerful. Throughout the entire play, this invisible force's presence was strongly felt but never seen. Similarly, *Another Dance in the Rain* presents His Excellency who is never seen in the entire piece but whose presence is felt at all times. The usage of His Excellency is highly representational. His role switches from colonial time and postcolonial period.

#### 4.4 STRUCTURE/FORM/GENRE

The dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain* is in a multi-form structure. By multi-form, the dramatic genres alternate from tragic to comic, satirical to even melodramatic. The plot structure follows the narrative style with an episodic plot rushing in briefly then the narrative style takes over. The narrative plot structure is captured under four movements, with the episodic plots coming in after the third movement followed by the fourth movement.

In the narrative plot structure, the setting of the first to third movement is in Africa but no details about a specific location is clearly stated. The first episodic plot structure captioned as *Non-Aligned Movement* is set in Ghana. The language is mainly English with Ghanaian languages like Twi, Fante and Ga languages being prominent. The second episode, titled *Lamentations* captures abstract ideas in the form of myths and mythology. The final movement, though it follows the

narrative plot structure, points to a specific setting which is Ghana. In the pouring of libation scene, the language *Ga* is employed. In that same final movement, a language unknown to me came across. During another automatic writing state, I wrote the interpretation to it.

*(Topipa drops down on her knees with hands lifted up. She speaks in strange tongues. Older women hum strange tunes)*

### **TOPIPA**

### **FIGURE OF TOPIPA**

Takikum Talikam kiki tali kazuuu	A woman I am. A woman I was made by a man
Zulizaza balibuu mazukuli munikazuuu	Clot of blood lies peacefully in this womb by man
Lituzi Lituza litulizaa makukazuuu	Oh great ancestors, protect this clot formed by man
Ah ah ah ah kalikazuuu	Peace of the gods to man
Milizuuu malizaa ghazanazuu kazuuu	An excellency of a child in me grow to be man

*(She jumps onto her feet and runs about the space still chanting rather fast. She falls after the chant).*

#### 4.5 SYMBOLS OF BLOOD, SOUL AND SPIRIT OF HUMANS.

There are some universal symbols that have manifested in the dramatic piece whose mode of usage carries and connotes dimensions of meanings.

In the biblical context, there is a juxtaposition of two situations which overtly communicate the essence of blood to human existence. The first is recounted in Genesis chapter four verse ten after Cain, son of Adam murdered his brother Abel over a befitting sacrifice to God. Cain became wroth with anger after he realized that his sacrifice of the least from his labor was rejected by God and Abel's was accepted because it was pleasing to God. As stated in the verse, the blood of Abel cried out to God for vengeance. In another context, the blood of Jesus is recognized for its power to save

the human race from destruction. In the Christian faith, wine is emblematic to represent the blood of Jesus which is life unto the believer.

In the dramatic piece created, Tuku instructs Topipa to suck blood from her gum to smear between her thighs. At surface level this instruction seems harmless and one might wonder why Topipa who claims not to fear death will cry at this. Being asked to suck one's own blood communicates a different thought than someone else sucking blood out your blood. Although the fear of death never crosses her mind, the thought of her being the one to suck blood out of herself scares her. It is after being asked to suck blood from her gum that she expresses total hatred for Tuku.

**TOPIPA** (*Sucks more for blood*) how do you expect me to smear it in between my thighs when my hands are in your chains? (*Tuku unlocks the chains holding her hands together. She smears it on her thigh*) Tuku I know what I feel towards you now! Hatred! Tuku I abhor you. I detest you for sucking the blood out of me. You are sucking my life out of me.

**TUKU** (*Putting the chains back onto her hands*) You always desired for death.

The concept of soul cuts across most traditions in the world. It is that aspect of the human “being” that never perishes. That same concept of the soul is alluded to in piece when Topipa says;

Topipa: *Kill me and I will die. My ghost will remember not to torment you. Please free my soul of this torture. My body is but a leaf; green today, fresh tomorrow, brown in the next minute and Rotten by noon of the third day. But this soul of mine*

*is evergreen. It withers not. It deserves freedom. Please kill me. Why are you scared to kill me?*

The freedom death brings surpasses the living in bondage.

#### 4.6 INTERPRETATION OF WORK

I have noticed three levels of interpretations springing up in different situations. There is the general level, actor/reader level and the automatic explanatory level. This section of the work will attempt at providing the various meanings *Another Dance in the Rain* expresses in the three situations named above.

Wittgenstein<sup>27</sup> focuses on the philosophy of language and the picture idea that every language communicates. He suggests that language as it is structured presents a strong philosophical statement which can only be grasped per the angle at which we stand and observe the picture. Society's inability of capturing philosophical thought is associated with the difficulty in recognizing that every construction of language has politics attached that must be decoded.

Wittgenstein in his *Culture and Value* (1980:29) Wittgenstein posits;

Rules of life are dressed up in pictures. And these pictures can only serve to *describe* what we are to do, not *justify* it. Because they could provide a justification only if they held good in other respects as well. I can say: "Thank these bees for their honey as though they were kind people who have prepared it for you"; that is *intelligible* and describes how I should like you to conduct yourself. But I cannot say: "Thank them because, look, how kind they are!"--since the next moment they may sting you.

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<sup>27</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889:1951) propounded the theory on the logic of language. He argued that most philosophical thoughts are misunderstood and misinterpreted because the language in which it is coded in is not properly analyzed. His famous *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus debates on the usage of language in logical modes*. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is the only book published during his lifetime. All other books of his were posthumous publications.

The dual or multiple picture language presents is captured in the dialogue between Tuku and Topipa.

**TUKU:** You are a highly educated woman. His Excellency himself made that confession at the banquet of heads of African states.

**TOPIPA:** Thank your masters for granting me that kind of education. It was a barter trade. Has it not robbed my cubs off their true selves? Well... what was I saying before I rudely interrupted myself?

The above illustrates an interesting perspective of the piece. Tuku in that little moment is represented as a Whiteman watching over a black slave woman in a dungeon. The line “thank your masters for granting me this kind of education” depicts a switch in racial features and also communicates the positive impact of colonialism which is education. The second part “has it not robbed my cubs off their true selves” questions the ‘positive impact’ and reveals the ruins created by the ‘positive impact’.

It is necessary to consider every unit of the language than take the language as a single unit and interpret as a single unit. Considering a deeper realm of automatic writing, the language component of it as presented communicates a philosophical thought woven with the fabric of politics. At the point of spirit communication in possession or through subconscious processes, ideas communicated are not fully known to the writer. In *Another Dance in the Rain*, Tuku, on six occasions profess love to Topipa. At quick glance, one is tempted to interpret Tuku’s “I love you Topipa” as one carrying sexual undertones. The context in which this phrase is spoken in the single units, in a subtle way communicates sexuality. The full meaning of the phrase is revealed at the end of the play in Movement four. “I love you Topipa” is just an assurance that her request and

fight for freedom has been received. When it was time to actually prove this love, Tuku only proves it in part;

**TUKU:**

Topipa, tamer of leopards, woman born on midnight of Thursday, I love you. Wipe your tears.

**TOPIPA:**

I know it. I know you love me. You must strip me off this cloth. It is time to dance with the ancestors. It is time to peel this cloth off my back. This cloth has been my identity for ages. Strip me off it now! *(She hums tunes as lights dim on stage. Sobbing. SOUL OF TOPIPA dances to the humming as Topipa's clothes are ripped off her back. Topipa screams in pain. When peeling is done, Tuku makes his way to exit).* Tuku... the chains... please...it will take a thousand years before I arrive at my destination...*(Weeping)* Tuku please...

**TUKU:**

We don't have time for that Topipa...

**TOPIPA:**

But Tuku... *(Wailing. Exit Tuku. SOUL OF TOPIPA still dancing to the rhythms of the drum)*  
*Lights fade slowly.*

From the illustration above, when the single units of the language as they appear in different sections of the piece (Except the episodic plots) are considered and analyzed as single components of a whole, levels of meaning are communicated. When others read and analyze language as single components of a whole, the full interpretation is birthed. Here, Barthes's notion of the birth of the reader being ransomed by the death of the author is exemplified. The reader might appear to be better at interpreting the philosophies underpinning. Through experience, I noticed that the writer

carries the interpretation within his/her soul but just as it is written in a rampant careless manner, the interpretation lies carelessly within the soul of the writer. Should the automatic writer delve into the realm of automaticity whether spiritual or subconscious processes to write an interpretation of the work? The interpretation of the work birth out in an automatic state will inadvertently produce more rampant carelessness. Within the process of submitting the interpretation to conscious abilities, the conscious abilities might view the interpretation in the abstract. It takes much work for the automatic writer to grasp and understand his/her writing than the reader would.

#### 4.6.1 POSTMODERNIST THEORY OF DECONSTRUCTION AND LITERARY CRITICISM

According to Dobie (2011: 139),

The revolutionary nature of deconstruction can be summarized by saying that in general it challenges the way Western civilization has conceived of the world since Plato. More specifically, it overturns the principles that have provided basic beliefs about truth and meaning since the eighteenth-century French philosopher, scientist, and mathematician Rene Descartes (1596-1650) applied the rational, inductive methods of science to philosophy.

The quest for truth, existence and the actual or factual meaning embedded in literary has led to the coming of several ‘movements’ (Gladston: 2011, Clayton: 1991). The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the coming into being the *formalist literary criticism* style whose reading and interpretation of literary works was done independently without consulting the author for his/her intention hidden in the work. There emerged the phenomenological literary criticism who propagated the idea that a literary work should be read by several people for analysis. Their main concern was that a single reading impedes true understanding. Therefore, many readings produces diverse effects on its readers, creating diverse kinds of interpretations with reference to the author whose independent conscious mind the writer. As the narrative carries, this period saw the popular writing of “author’s note”

attached to most literary works. Conjecturing, I suppose Roland Barthes's opposition to this reading style prompted the writing of his *Death of the Author*.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century came with structuralism as a literary criticism ideology where investigations were conducted into how and why systems in human societies work the way they do considering the “patterns that underlie human behavior, experience, and creation”. (Dobie, 2011:140). Under structuralism, focus is on linguist philosophy of how words translates into meaning and not just what the word means. French linguistics analyst Ferdinand de Saussure identified two signs which expresses linguistic qualities; the signifier which is the sound construction of the word itself and the meaning it communicates is referred to as the signified. By simple interpretation, a word like ‘snake’, to the conscious mind translates as a reptile. The farther interpretation in biblical context is a “deceiver”. Critics of structuralism argue that aside the general meanings assigned to words, cultures also have other meanings that naturally comes across when certain are used. Following this analogy, words in most cases could not be symbolic representation for another idea. Under structuralism, structure and meaning comes across per the experiences of living and interacting with the word as it consciously sounds to the mind.

Deconstruction as a literary criticism phenomena is often referred to as the poststructuralist critic ideology. It emerged in the 1960s as a slight shift from the structuralist ideals. It was founded by Jacques Derrida and has now taken the position as the major movement for literary criticism. Deconstruction took ideas from the structuralist concept of individual sound construction and meaning, and binary structure of language. It acknowledges the fact that linguistic philosophy of language is simplified when the structure of language and the society which uses them are considered. The point of departure here for the poststructuralist is the static and conventional way literary works are interpreted under structuralism. Poststructuralism tends to embrace diverse

interpretations assigned to literary works and also considers how different cultures have varied complex interpretations to 'simple' literary works. The acceptance of varied interpretations under poststructuralism makes it a viable literary critic tool to interpret *Another Dance in the Rain*.

For Derrida, a word which is a signifier, lends itself to an uncountable number of meanings (signified). In chapter two of this research, as expressed by Thompson (2004), reading automatic pieces are overly cumbersome especially during the careless writing stage. This cumbersomeness accounts for why during the early stages of the practice, it was not accepted as creative in any sense. One significant quality about automatic writing is the use of language. Aspects of creative piece are dominated by complex metaphors and ironies. To better understand the dramatic piece is to adopt deconstructive processes that breaks down signifiers per the context in which they are used in to arrive at appropriate signified. As indicated in previous chapters, automatic writers, especially women, hid under the guise of the practice to make statements that patriarchal societies deemed unfit to be discussed by women. At this level I begin to quite understand the psychotherapist's methods of interpreting automatic pieces during the earliest stages when it flourished. Perhaps, these psychotherapists took each signifier per the conscious signified assigned to the signifier. The binary construction of words under the structuralist critic process have denied the mind of its abilities to critically analyze aspects of words that come across as the absent. For instance, in linguistic binary approaches, the absent qualifies the present. Life as a word has a tendency to communicate the meaning of death. If there is no life, there is death. Death is assumed to be the end game. But death in *Another Dance in the Rain* communicates true freedom and life that is eternal.

In movement one, there is the usage of an expression by Topipa; “*let you untamed snake creep into me and bite into my wounds.*” The usage of snake in the context denotes a different thought that deconstruction can help understand. There is the usage of the word ‘snakelike’ in the Non-Aligned movement that further explains what the ‘*snake*’ in movement one is likely to represent and even explains the whole idea of snake creeping. The ‘wound’ used in movement one communicates the torture a woman’s private part is likely to undergo during childbirth. Though it has been years after delivering her child, the thought of that child being a straying *goat* instead of a *lion* reminds her of her pains. Even the usage of “*drinking palm wine in perforated gourds*”, will sound insane to the psychotherapists but under deconstruction, it communicates the unending possibilities of the spiritual world and metaphysical aspect of life.

One of the major criticism on deconstruction is that truth is subjective because of the several meanings individual interpreters can give to a word. Per the experience gathered through experimenting with automatic writing, the meaning of a word can be derived by considering the word as a part of a whole unit which is the dramatic piece.

After an open play reading session conducted in the School of Performing Arts, someone pulled me to a corner and asked if I really have an understanding of the piece *Another Dance in the Rain*. Perhaps, like the psychotherapist, this fellow had interpreted it in a way that draw his mind to the fact that I might be needing medical attention. Automatic writing has been an avenue to release some fears from my soul and made public aspects of my life I would want to keep secret. This I believe contributes to why automatic writers deny authorial power.

By observation and close study of the various interpretations that cropped up during readings of automatic written piece, the automatic writer gets tempted to revise the work. Every stage of

reading points to diverse interpretations. Per the factors that underpin deconstruction, there is no concrete interpretation to be given to a single word or phrase. What the text attempts at communicating and what it actually communicates are different. All readers in an attempt at analyzing and interpreting do so considering their individualistic experiences. For instance, *Another Dance in the Rain* was read at University of Guelph in Canada during my semester abroad period. The classroom reading session by the students of mixed races brought about dimension of interpretation that I had not conceived. The subject of colonialism came strong and almost sounded like intentionally robbing the trauma of it on their faces. Since the work was an experimentation that engaged subconscious processes and the workings of spirit communication, I quickly attributed the work to the forces who 'helped me write'. Like all other automatic writers, I had also denied authoring the piece and acknowledged the unconscious abilities and even declared hatred for the pieces that were churning out through the experimentation. At a professional play reading session with the *Mechanicals* at Factory Theatre in Toronto, I closely observed another interpretation assigned to the piece. My University of Guelph professor, Sky Gilbert, gave my piece to two black actors; one playing Topipa and the other playing Tuku. The actress, being a black woman living in the diaspora, interpreted the piece in a way that almost prompted me to edit some parts. She was extremely angry and delivered the several long narratives with an energy that sounded offending to those around. Throughout the presentation, she enunciated each and every word and meanings derived from them set my inner self regretting for having engaged in the exercise.

The second open play reading session conducted in the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana brought another perspective to interpretation. Unlike the black woman living abroad,

Topipa this time was calm and sounded very sarcastic in presentation. In some moments, she laughed and giggled. The effect created was also significant in communicating the ideas of the play. Those present for the reading made their own interpretation to the piece. They could identify the many rot in society brought by colonialism. They also recognized that the piece did not only talk about the colonizer but also identified the many wrongs done by the African in postcolonial Africa states that impedes development. The African saw the damages of colonialism, yet are acting worse than the colonizer did. Like His Excellency in the dramatic piece, those who did not experience colonialism, have at least read on the many tortures it brought yet are imprisoning/enslaving their own country men and women in the post-colonial ‘independence regime.

#### 4.8 ATTENTION AND DISTRACTION IN AUTOMATIC WRITING

André Breton’s famous *Soluble Fish* (1924) caught the attention of most scholars who were investigating into the structure of automatic written pieces. In making a general comment of Breton’s *Nadja* written in 1928, Dr. A. Rodiet stated that “*Surrealism flourished within its covers, with its deliberate incoherence, its cleverly disjointed chapters, that delicate art which consists of pulling the reader's leg*”.

*Another Dance in the Rain* employs the spiritual or psychical and psychotherapeutic automatic writing types. Under the Spiritual, without conceiving any storyline, I allow the muse to carry me wherever it wishes. Rampant carelessness is recorded in the writing and the subject matters raised departs to other subjects creating distraction in reading. Under the psychotherapeutic type, I adopted the self-induced distraction methodology to keep the mind open for messages to be received.

During the closed play reading, the distraction from the main storyline was minimal. The readers and supervisors could easily grasp the thematic concerns. During the open play reading sessions, it was practically difficult for the listeners to follow the plot structure. Quite a number of subject matters slip into the main storyline, thereby distracting attention from the main structure. In other words, during the writing stage, the author distracts herself to focus on receiving the messages in order to dictate. For the listener or audience, the distraction sways their attention from grasping the main storyline. In the dramatic piece, Topipa requests that Tuku reminds her of what she was talking about before distracting herself. While distraction seems to work for the writer practicing automatic writing, it sways the listener and audience from focusing by ‘pulling their legs’. Topipa’s question on a truthful level is a problem the writer is confronted with in the course of the writing. Unconsciously, the confusion had been transported into the writing. But in the midst of confusion, the writer must continue writing. For in the confusion, the communication with the muse and dictation is smoother. The feeling of not knowing line the writing seems to be towing launches the writer into the full possession stage.

#### 4.9 CULTURAL IMPLICATION AND RELEVANCE

Evidence of the metaphysical aspects of life abound in the African context just like in other continents. These speculated metaphysics manifests in either tangible or intangible ways which shapes the belief systems of a people, how they act or even their philosophical ideologies. To fully understand a group of people and their long held belief system is to equally delve into manifestations of metaphysics. In *Another Dance in the Rain*, the usage of ‘free spirited souls’ expresses an aspect of the Ghanaian belief in life after death. Those who lead good lives on earth get initiated into ancestorship. Those who act contrary are said to be slaves in the other world. In movement one, Topipa expresses;

*Topipa: (Goes to sit on the bed) Why did His Excellency provide this bed of rotten wood? I could have slept on the floor and listen to the gods gossip those yet to be sworn into the status of ancestorship!*

To be sworn into the status of ancestor suggests that one was in good standing and as such could intercede for family members alive. A typical example exist in my community in Tema where a man impregnated two of his daughters. The present deplete of life of his children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren is often said to be connected to the evil deeds of the man. This comes to explain why Topipa seems fearless of death. For her, death is freedom. Better for her to die for the good she stands for than live a life of evil. She again says this about His Excellency;

*Topipa: I await the day when this illusion of might and power will dissipate from his bones to know that he is the most powerless creature on earth. He is living in perpetual fear and it will extend into eternity". The Fact that the lioness lies under the tree sleeping away does not suggest she is dead.*

Consequently, the peace and freedom of the death of a good person exceeds the peace and freedom this present life presents. This philosophy runs across the length and breadth of the play and at the same time reminds the African to renew his/her mind with regards to service.

The menstruation scene reenactment and ritual process as depicted in movement three of the dramatic piece expands on the African communal living experience and the roles women play in society. On another level, it sets the tone for the birth of His Excellency and society in general. The refusal of aborting the child significantly communicates the fight for freedom. The fight to end capturing of Africans to the diaspora during the transatlantic slave trade is also represented.

#### 4.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Three play reading sessions were organized for the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain*. The first reading was organized by University of Guelph in Canada with the Mechanicals at Factory Theatre in Toronto. Each reading came with a level of interpretation and meaning. The dramatic piece fits in the description of the French theory of Pastiche. Traces of Surrealism, Absurdism, Brecht's Alienation effect and Abdallah's *Abibigro* can be identified in the experiment of automatic writing (*Another Dance in the Rain* in focus). One aesthetic feature identified under automatic writing is how subconscious processes release most of the dramatic elements, styles and theories learnt through either conscious or unconscious means. The play is then analyzed and interpreted using Jacques Derrida's literary criticism of Poststructuralism also referred to as Deconstruction. The various interpretations drawn from the play prompted the writer to deny authorship like all automatic writes do. The conditions under which a writer will deny authorship are in two folds; when the dramatic piece appears to contradict the author's publicly known personal philosophies or perspectives on life and when the author finally, on conscious levels, realizes that the meanings of what was written is overly offensive to others.

Finally, general observations made while experimenting with automatic writing are captured, coupled with noting the cultural significance and implications drawn from the dramatic piece.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

#### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter of the work, I am joining all the summary and conclusions under the introductory chapter, the literature review column, the methodology and analysis and interpretation sessions. I am also pointing out the findings and observations made after researching into automatic writing and experimenting with it. Finally, I will make recommendations based on the findings noticed through experimentation.

#### 5.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Automatic writing first surfaced in the 1840s with the Fox Sister in Hydesville New York and it gave birth to the American Spiritualist Movement. A second historical account surfaced in the 1870s with William Stainton under the Victorian Psychic Research and the séance-table technique popularization. By the late 1800s, Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, Boris Sidis, William James, Frederick Myers, Edmond Gurney, Solomon Stein and among many other psychologists had identified automatic writing as a psychotherapeutic clinical tool for personality disorders such as dissociation, multiple personalities, hysteria, psychotic disorders among others. Significantly, automatic writing could be grouped under two main categories such as spiritual automatic writing and psychological/psychotherapeutic types. Under each category, evidence abound for its manifestation and as such deserves greater observation and investigation to establish the aesthetic components embedded in it and how it can be adopted as an unconventional methodology for exploration in creative writing. Away from the European or American experience and turning attention on the African/Ghanaian context, automatic practices in the form of spirit possession and creation are evident. There is the need to explore how automatic writing can structure a play without the inclusion of full conscious abilities.

Manifestation of the metaphysical or surreal is strong in both the spiritual/psychical and psychological/psychotherapeutic types of automatic writing. Though the spiritual aspect of life is not empirically proven, manifestations of it in all aspects of life cannot be overlooked. The battle between psychologists and spiritualists seems to be heading towards an anticlimax. It has been of much interest for the psychologist to prove that automatic writing by the spiritualist is an avenue to make evident personality disorders of dissociation, hysteria and mental insanity. In an attempt to prove, it has been recognized that the content of the psychological automatic writing types also seems to surge from unknown destination. It appears the intangible or the unreal aspect of life is more real and tangible than the mind can fathom. The unknown source of automatic writing contents account for reasons to the denial of authorship by automatic writers under both the spiritual and psychological. Beyond the controversies surrounding automatic writing, there seems to be an appreciable aesthetic value attached to the content of automatic pieces. In spite of the confusions within the practice, it must be noted that the same scientists, narrowing down psychologists further brought a dimension significant to the advancement of the discourse in its totality. Discussions on automatic writing then took a more scientific approach in the 1900s.

At all levels of writing, writers sometimes drifts into a state of automaticity. The language takes a form that is beyond the sensory perception of the writer involved. An example of such a moment is capture in an unstructured discussion with Mohammed Abdallah. In the Ghanaian context, I considered conditions under which Atukwei Okai wrote his *Fanfare for Oduduwa* and why it could be classified as automatic in a way. The aesthetics of automatic writing comes across as possibilities of a creative piece that structures itself under subconscious processes. For experimentations, the metaphysical content in the discourse of automaticity in writing deserves proper examination and investigation.

In the absence of the Ouija Board, Planchetts, Psychobrette and Pytho Thought Reader, how does a writer experiment with automatic writing in this postmodernist era? Under the spiritualist automatic writing type, the above mentioned devices were used to documents automatic messages believed to surge from a supernatural world. The spiritualist uses hypnosis as cited by Morton (1890), smoking and injection of alcohol to contact psychical powers. During the modern era, the psychologist saw the human hand as the machine to help write automatic messages. The psychologist uses *mesmerizing* and *distraction* to alter consciousness of their patience to practice automatic writing. Advancement in technology has brought forth the typewriter and recently computers and laptops which can also aid in the documentation of automatic messages. Practicing automatic writing as a conscious technique for playwriting or creative writing demands that one departs from the conventional ways of writing. For this experiment, a prototype methodology that embraces both the spiritual and psychological was created. This was done bearing in mind the limitations in the academic field.

The methods applied are categories under three headings;

- 1 Careless writing stage
- 2 Join unrelated ideas and remaining truthful to inspiration.
- 3 Revisiting the world of the creative piece as a single unit.

It became obvious at this stage that instead of classifying spiritual and psychological automatic writing as types, it should rather be classified as phases. Under experimentation, the writer is likely to transition from the psychological to the spiritual.

Three play reading sessions were organized for the dramatic piece *Another Dance in the Rain*. The first reading was organized by University of Guelph in Canada with the Mechanicals at Factory theatre in Toronto. Each reading came with a level of interpretation and meaning. The dramatic

piece fits in the description of the French theory of Pastiche. Traces of Surrealism, Absurdism, Brecht's Alienation effect and Abdallah's *Abibigro*. One aesthetic feature identified under automatic writing is how subconscious processes releases most of the dramatic elements, styles and theories learnt through either conscious or unconscious means. The play is then analyzed and interpreted using Jacques Derrida's literary criticism of Poststructuralism also referred to as Deconstruction. The various interpretations drawn from the play prompted the writer to deny authorship like all automatic writes do. The conditions under which a writer will deny authorship are in two folds; when the dramatic piece appears to contradict the author's publicly known personal philosophies or perspectives on life and when the author finally, on conscious levels, realizes the meanings of what was written is overly autobiographical in nature.

Finally, general observations made while experimenting with automatic writing are captured coupled with noting the cultural significance and implications drawn from the dramatic piece.

## 5.2 FINDINGS

Automatic writing is two phased. From the psychological/psychotherapeutic, an automatic writer transitions into the spiritual (possession) stage. This accounts for why the metaphysical manifests itself even in the psychological.

By experimentation, I have come to the realization that the muse can depart when its presence is not appreciated, the higher realm communication will cease when deliberately, one exhibit signs of disinterest.

Reasons for denial of authorship under automatic writing comes as follows;

- When the writer begins to notice trends of secondary intelligence in the work. The secondary intelligence defies the writer's own known level of intelligence. Secondary intelligence traces are noticed when the individual pieces are joined together and considered as a single component.
- When the writer realizes that portions of the work portrays his/her true self. When the works truthfully communicates the writer's personal philosophies and ideologies on life. At first glance, the writer might view the portrayal of these philosophies as contradictory. This is because these aspects of the writer are not known to the public.
- When the piece is interpreted in a way that seems harsh. The writer quickly blames the authoritative nature of the work to the muse factor and the subconscious processes.

Roland Bathes's idea of Death of the Author is validated and challenged under automatic writing. The manifestation of subconscious process suggests that automatic piece can be highly autobiographical. Under the spiritual phase of Automatic Writing, some messages outside of subconscious processes can be communicated. Total reliance on the muse factor augments spirit communication.

### 5.3 OBSERVATIONS

#### 5.3.1 Battle between Spiritualist Automatic Writers and Psychotherapists.

Under this session, I have discussed the long existing and almost unsolvable battle between the psychotherapist and spiritualist in the practice of automatic writing based on my own experience. The psychotherapist analyses the content of automatic writing and draws subjective conclusions which culminates into describing the mental state of the subject engaged in the practice. Aside merely describing the mental state, they make diagnosis. In some cases, the psychotherapist has used automatic writing as a clinical tool that helped restore sanity. In some cases, like the one I am

about discussing later on, the content of the automatic written piece reveal aspects exceeding the mental state of the writer but rather contributes to aesthetics of automaticity in writing.

In one moment of automaticity, I experience what I have coined as higher realm communication. Deadline to submission of work was catching up on me. In a moment of time, I started to type and for the first time I did not care about searching for a perfect environment. The new environment had previously been a place where detailed discussions on mythology and the supernatural had been held. I recall speaking aloud what I was writing. After ending the writing, I sat back to read the whole piece. The read through zoomed me into another moment of communication and I added on some few sentences. When the session ended, I began to question the experience and began to wonder if my mental sanity was intact. I had written a piece that communicated ideas connected to myths. I questioned my authority on writing a myth. To the best of my knowledge, myths should be an already existing idea that one should write on and not create a new one. I then met someone who advised me against the practice of automatic writing. I began to hate the practice and vowed to quit if not for the intervention of my supervisors. Although I continued to experiment with automatic writing after a whole month, I still pondered over what was said to me earlier regards to quitting automatic writing. I began to question my own mental state and the thought of it rather kept tormenting me. I knew I was mentally stable but I began to consider if I looked and sounded mentally sane to other. Skeptics of the practice of automatic writing have a way of putting ideas into the minds of practitioners of automatic writing. Weeks later after writing this piece (Captured in *Another Dance in the Rain* as the second episodic plot with the title *Lamentation*), I picked up my note pad and realized I had already started writing on the piece. I had repeated almost everything in the notebook. The connection of birth on Thursday featured. Likewise, the repetition of “free spirited souls who sip palm wine in perforated gourds” also found its way into the piece.

An aspect of the prophetic nature of automatic writing manifested. I had written about exactly how I was going to feel about myself after writing this piece. I hated myself for attempting at experimenting on automatic writing. Worse of all, I hated myself for not quitting after I had sworn to quit despite what my supervisors were going to say. After this encounter of higher communication, I truncated any such communication I saw coming during experimentation. Perhaps, the dramatic piece would have taken a more abstract form if I had welcomed this muse/spirit to fly me into the moon, stars, sky and waters below. Upon critical analysis, I am conjecturing that the early psychotherapist read automatic pieces with preconceived and subjective ideas to arrive at diagnosis. In my case, the psychotherapist would have read other meanings to this piece and advice that I get medical attention. The constant repetition of “I hate the me in me” that featured strongly in the piece will perhaps be translated as suicidal tendencies. I quite understand the confrontation between spiritualist automatic writers and psychotherapists. The psychotherapist, with a pre-conceived mind, would read this piece and declare the writer unfit mentally. The point of departure here is the aesthetic component of the piece. Just as someone’s comment on my experimentation destabilized me and kept me wondering about my mental state, I believe the psychotherapist’s interest in the discourse of automaticity was subjective in nature. There are muses who direct and dictate automatic messages to be captured as automatic writing. Total reliance on them produces an aesthetic component defying the usual. The psychological phase of automatic writing is a preparatory ground for the spiritual automatic writing phase.

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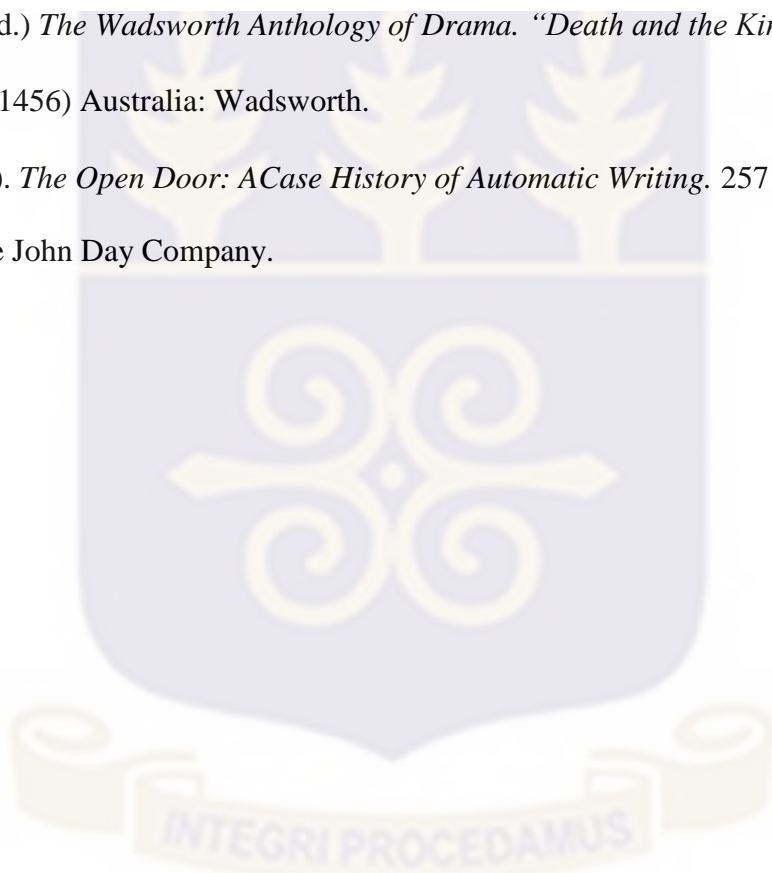
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APPENDIX

TITLE: *ANOTHER DANCE IN THE RAIN*

*Characters:*

*Topipa (Age 40)*

*Tuku (Age 40)*

*Soul of Topipa*

*Soul of Tuku*

*Time: Past, Present and maybe the Future*

*Other souls and spirits*

MOVEMENT ONE.

*(Voices are heard from the darkness. Then laughter from a woman. A masculine voice pierces through further, harsh and aggressive. Lights fade in slowly on an almost bare stage revealing Topipa, age 40, in rugged clothes exposing her thighs. Hair kinky and unkempt. Hair appears reddish suggesting she's been playing in the dust of the cave for long. She is barefooted. As she runs about on stage, she appears wrecked by alcohol. Tuku is in his forties, draped in military regalia follows her steadily. Intermittently, he drops his voice for a warmer quality. Most often, his voice is very aggressive. His actions alternate as well for obvious reasons; he does not want to hurt her. Her unsteady and swaying movements provoke anger in Tuku but he protects her from*

*falling. To stage right (SR) is an old bed frame without mattress in place. Then a large stone sitting close to the wall of the cave at upstage center. She still keeps a firm grip on a whiskey bottle).*

**TUKU**: Topipa... Topipa... give me that bottle. Topipa I don't want to hurt you. *(Topipa holds on to the bottle, then bends over onto it, hugging it. Like a mother would do to her child. He chases her around).* Topipa drop this childish game. *(She zooms into an awkward giggle, then a hysterical laughter)* Topipa I will break those tiny hands. Topipa you were not to touch the bottle.

**TOPIPA**: *(Panting)* You have mentioned my name for six times. You should name your newly born baby Topipa. Although she is not from your loins, you can still name her Topipa.

**TUKU**: Topipa what are you saying? What do you mean by she is not of my loins? Topipa answer me!

**TOPIPA**: Twice this time. You should be charged one million shillings for each mention. Is that not the same amount your wife charged the man who dropped that seed in her? Oh, how would you know? Pardon my silly question.

**TUKU**: Topipa I will strangle you to death if you do not speak clearly! Has my wife one million shillings? *(Shaking her vigorously)* Topipa who is that man?

**TOPIPA**: You have to learn how to mention that name properly else, the spirits of Thursday will subpoena you before their Sanhedrin. TO...PI...PA. With a touch of sensation. Mention it to my hearing.

**TUKU**: *(Imitating) TO...PI...PA*

**TOPIPA**: There is a spirit in that name. It is my soul that responds. Look... *(Pointing to a figure that appears from stage left draped in a white cloak. Light dims on stage and spots on figure)*

There she is... my soul leaped for joy when you mentioned my name properly. My soul, born on the midnight of a Thursday. Rejoice, for your freedom is at arm's reach. At half past midnight, you were welcomed to earth. You did not cry as every child does. The midwife spanked you on your little buttock. You cried for days. Tears refused to depart from your eyes since that dawn. The ancestors beckon you to cross over to the sanctuary of immortals but this man is the tower of babel that obstructs you from jumping over. *(Figure disappears)*

**TUKU**: You are crazy. I didn't see anything. Tell me now. Who is that man? Don't play with me.

**TOPIPA**: I saw a man painting on a wall. He dipped his palms into the paint and slapped it against the wall. He repeated the act over a period of time. Then he dipped his palms into the paint and splashed it against the beautiful pattern he had indefatigably produced. I yelled at him. He had messed up the artwork. Then he dipped his fingers into a black paint and swept it in a vertical motion across the messed up work. Creating an entirely messed up artwork. Who would waste a dime to see it I conjectured? I walked up to him and said... "you have messed up the work!". He dipped his fingers into the black paint again and swept it on the work... this time horizontally. I yelled at him. He looked at me and spoke... *(Lights dim on stage and spots Tuku)*

**SOUL OF TUKU**: It takes one with a soul who sips brewed corn wine in a perforated gourd to see the beauty of art. Ask your soul to request for the keys of patience to unlock the beauty therein. The gods will interpret to your soul. Observe before you talk."

**TOPIPA**: *(Lights fades in on stage. Tuku takes his former position)* He walked away after uttering these ghostly words wrapped in mystery. I called forth my soul... TO...PI...PA *(Figure appears)*  
She whispered...

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** Arise and fight for your freedom. Those bars are breakable. The rain will come and wash away the tears and sweat. When the rain comes, you must dance in it and with it. Victory is yours lioness. *(Exits)*

**TOPIPA:** She explained to me the dialectics of the artwork. I drew closer and looked closely. I saw a face on the wall. She was crying but suddenly, the rain came down and washed away the tears. Those bars were indeed breakable. I saw myself behind those bars. I will break through. In this life or after. The latter is supernatural and apparent. Tuku, I will breakthrough!

**TUKU:** Speak clearly. What nonsense are you talking? You are insane. Let this insanity clear and tell me who the man is before you deteriorate. *(Shaking her again)*

**TOPIPA:** *(Placing the bottle on the floor, she begins screaming fiercely)* Snake... snake... snake. *(Tuku releases her, jumps off from his spot and reaches out for a stick)* Help.... Tuku help... snake.

**TUKU:** Where? I will tame it and keep it for a pet.

**TOPIPA:** *(Pointing into her dress; the breast region)* Help. ***(Jumping)*** *(Tuku plunges his hand into her dress)* There... there... *(She breaks into another laughter)* Yes! There... and there... to the right black protruding hill on the mountain... *(Tuku removes his hand)*

**TUKU:** Topipa you are mad! You are insane!

**TOPIPA:** *(Moaning)* He touched me. Tuku touched my two calabashes of milk. He held my protruding hills and pulled them. I like to call them hills on my mountain but my mother thinks of them as calabashes of milk with little dots. He touched me. Guess what? The feeling was electric! *(Laughing wildly)* Tuku touched Topipa. The feeling was electric! *(Goes to sit on the bed)* Why

did His Excellency provide this bed of rotten wood? I could have slept on the floor and listen to the gods gossip those yet to be sworn into the status of ancestorship!

**TUKU**: Topipa I will strangle you.

**TOPIPA**: Please, before you strangle me, let your untamed snake creep into me and bite into my wound. (*Laughing*)

**TUKU**: (*Advancing towards her, she quickly runs to sit on the stone against the wall*) Speak clearly woman! Who is that man?

**TOPIPA**: Snake ... snake... help.. snake...

**TUKU**: (*Picking the bottle off the floor*) Topipa you did not drink the whiskey. Topipa the bottle it still at the level I left it. You deceived me!

**TOPIPA**: You are the one drunk. Look into the bottle. It is empty. I poured it down my throat.

**TUKU**: You are playing with my mind. (*Tilts the bottle over to pour out content. Nothing pours out*) Is this not whiskey flooding the grounds?

**TOPIPA**: Let them who have eyes witness the pouring of libation to the gods. May the gods drink and dance in the forest as humans retire to sleep at night. Tuku...

**TUKU**: What?

**TOPIPA**: Snake... snake... help...(*giggling*)

**TUKU**: I will strangle you today!

**TOPIPA:** Go and strangle my seed born a cub but has metamorphosed into a he goat. Go tell my straying he goat that he was born a cub. He was to grow into a lion not a he goat! *(They run around on stage as lights fade out slowly).*

## MOVEMENT TWO

*(Lights fade in slow. There is screaming and yelling from backstage. Topipa, wearing same costumes as before is pushed onto the stage with such force. Tuku, also in same military uniform steps onto the stage with an energetic breeze suggesting he pushed Topipa onto the stage. There is a brief silence. Topipa, soaked in sweat, looks at Tuku with an expression of disgust. Tuku sits on a table to the right and stretches out his legs onto the chair to the left at SL. On the table is a whip and a bottle of hard liquor. Hanging on the wall at SL are huge metallic chains).*

**TUKU:** *(Observing her closely)* Now listen to me. Sit your flat butt on the stone. Push it to the wall, lean against it and sit!

**TOPIPA:** You call my butt flat. You are proud your balls are bigger than my butt? *(Giggling)*  
What a shame!

**TUKU:** Sit and lean against the wall you shameful woman. Your mother must be cursing the day she conceived you.

**TOPIPA:** I pity the woman who will lie supine, eyes fixed on your rusted corn mill sounding ceiling fan and allow your milky waters with golden organisms to swim into her sacred fertile valley where indigenes of mortality reside. You government slave!

**TUKU**: Go, sit and lean against the wall.

**TOPIPA**: I would not! Can a slave instruct the woman his master is terrified of? At the mentioning of my name, your masters flee helter-skelter in search of shelter I can only provide! (*Ripping off a piece of her cloth, she shreds it in anger*) This is what they did with the cloth of my back. They beat me up with thorns soaked in H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Do you know what that is?

**TUKU**: No... I don't.

**TOPIPA**: And you are not ashamed to open your buccal cavity widely to confess. I guess you graduated from primary six and joined the army as a child soldier. Government slave.

**TUKU**: Will you shut that mouth black ass woman!

**TOPIPA**: And you... your balls are dark brown. Hahahaha or coffee brown? Coffee brown like the attire your majors wear and parade about demanding salutes from slaves like you. Your balls are black. Black balls slave!

**TUKU**: I will strike you.

**TOPIPA**: Anyway, H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> is Sulfuric acid.

**TUKU**: You are a highly educated woman. His Excellency himself made that confession at the banquet of heads of African states.

**TOPIPA**: Thank your masters for granting me that kind of education. It was a barter trade. Has it not robbed my cubs off their true selves? Well... what was I saying before I rudely interrupted myself?

**TUKU**: Your back...

**TOPIPA**: Oh yes. Good memory. No wonder Major Tuli kept you to himself for a whole decade. That Major General is too daft. He could not even pass common entrance exams. Were you hoping to inherit his position? You have a lot of waiting to do.

**TUKU**: Your back...

**TOPIPA**: They beat me. My skin which was a cloth to conceal my bloody flesh was ripped off my back. I can't lean against the wall. I dread the day I would have to take off these filthy clothes. They are stuck to my flesh. Dried up... Soaked all the water and blood. Come... feel it with your hard scaly palms. They are stuck to my flesh. This cloth is my new skin...

**TUKU**: Confess your sins and you shall be free.

**TOPIPA** :I have no sin to confess you slave.

**TUKU**: You call me a slave again and I will ... *(Unbuckling his waist belt. Noticing the danger ahead, she runs to sit on the stone)* Good! *(She begins to sob. Within a matter of seconds she cries loudly and shuffles her feet on the floors)* I didn't touch you. *(Advancing towards her)* Zip it up!

**TOPIPA**: I just remembered my tongue hasn't tasted the salty waters that gather under my eyelids and journeys down my cheeks then to my lips. When they were being chopped off... my thumb, index and fucking middle fingers, I didn't cry. Those three have gone to the grave thinking I didn't love them. Let me cry. Tomorrow, these last two will also go to the grave. For these right fingers, I do not know when they will depart.

**TUKU**: They will never depart. I promise you. Confess your sins to the government security agency and you will be free.

**TOPIPA**: I am telling you for the last time. I do not have any confession to make to the Government security agency. I know the truth. I know how the chief of staff got murdered. I know how the vice president got assassinated. I know they intend to ship ammunitions. Weapons of mass destruction. They want to destabilize the peace of this country. When there is war and government institutions are gutted with fire, which documents will be there to scrutinize? No one will know about the 200 billion dollars the government officials shared among themselves. I know everything including how you got that mark on your face. You were asked to turn on the AC so His Excellency enters into a cool room for his afternoon nap. You waited for an hour and there was no sign of him coming. You turned off the AC to conserve energy. When he entered after ten minutes, the room was hot. He pulled out his knife to strike it across your face. He did that to you! (*Laughing*) Since then you never forgot to turn on the AC.

**TUKU**: You must confess that you will keep mute about all these when you gain your freedom. The time to kill you is near. Death isn't a pleasant achievement to fight for.

**TOPIPA**: Oh death! Listen to him. He mentioned death. There is magic in the word. You said it and it was like food to my soul. I ate them. Killing... Death. Killing... Death. The pleasure in death. I need that freedom. These three thick walls desire for my death. They are tired of sucking my blood. You see the strokes I make on the walls with my chopped fingers...

**TUKU**: You will waste your life Topipa.

**TOPIPA**: No, I will waste my body but the soul lives on. Sit down. Let me tell you a story. I said sit slave! Don't come after me. I know my rights. 200 lashes a day. I took them all. It still couldn't be compared to the Pain of delivering my first child Tolipe. Sit down let me tell you a story. (*Walking towards him*) Please.. Good. My niece Talika came to me one afternoon. She said to me.

Auntie, what is this. I responded...apple. She was brought from the village to stay with me. Apples don't grow where she lived. She said ... Can I have some. I nodded in affirmation. She brought in a knife and sliced it into two halves. She got curious and inquired... What are these tiny things in the apple? Coffee? They are the apple's children I replied. They will also grow up like this apple. I will crush them she yelled. Before I could get up from the mat, she crushed them under her feet. I could hear the souls of those seeds crying. Wailing. Pointing accusing fingers at little Talika. She has crushed a whole generation of apples under her tiny feet. But their souls were free. I saw their souls going back to their creator. I am like those apple seeds. I am the physical presence of planet mercury on earth. I have stayed closest to the sun but it couldn't burn me. Your masters could not wipe me away. You crush me today, I live forever. But you... you will still remain a slave of the government.

**TUKU**: I will strangle you if you say that word again.

**TOPIPA**: Kill me and I will die. My ghost will remember not to torment you. Please free my soul of this torture. My body is but a leaf; green today, fresh tomorrow, brown in the next minute and Rotten by noon of the third day. But this soul of mine is evergreen. It withers not. It deserves freedom. Please kill me. Why are you scared to kill me?

**TUKU**: No! I won't kill you. The government needs you alive. The international community is following closely... you must shut up. You will swear the oath of secrecy. You will sign a pact with your blood and swear not to whisper the things you know about the government to any soul dead or alive. His Excellency demands that from you.

**TOPIPA**: The lioness met the goat prancing about in her territory. Have you seen a lioness in a battle with a goat before? What achievement will that be for the lioness? His Excellency is a mere

he-goat prancing about near my lair. My other little cubs asked me why I didn't pounce on him when he forgot himself and loitered near my abode. I said to my cubs, "I await the day when realization will dawn on this goat. I await the day when this illusion of might and power will dissipate from his bones to know that he is the most powerless creature on earth. He is living in perpetual fear and it will extend into eternity". The Fact that the lioness lies under the tree sleeping away does not suggest she is dead. Tell His Excellency that he is a coward. Strong and noble gentlemen woo women. They talk them into a state of dreamlike sweetness. They do not impose themselves on women. They do not forcefully open the doors of a woman to enter and command ownership. Gentlemen knock on women's door gently, wait for a pleasant response to creep in with honor before they advance. Tell His Excellency that I Topipa says he is a coward. I do not fear him! The daughters of this land have suffered under his illusion of power.

**TUKU:** You are stubborn. Topipa you can save your life. Your children haven't seen you in two full months. Don't you want to be released to meet them...hug and kiss them again?

**TOPIPA:** One of my cubs sees me every fortnight.

**TUKU:** How possible?

**TOPIPA:** How impossible! That is the title of a short play I wrote in blood. (Laughing) Straighten your face. You will glean some clues soon from this dancing.

**TUKU:** Which dancing?

**TOPIPA:** Anyway, my other cubs are fine though physically and mentally tormented. His Excellency wouldn't dare lay a finger on them. He knows me. (*Walks to him*) Do you want to know what I did to His Excellency a night before my arrest? He was trying to negotiate with me to come to terms with the corruption at the agency for oil and gas exploration. I walked closer to

him like I am doing now and... *(She spits onto his face and runs to lie on the wooden bed frame)*

**Lights fade out slowly**

### MOVEMENT THREE

*Lights fade slowly. Topipa is comfortably sleeping on the bare floors. Hugging herself tightly for some warmth. Tuku lies on a table. He is covered with a cloth. Two figures appear on stage. One positions itself by Topipa and the other by Tuku. Figures are draped in brown cloaks.*

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** I found a child crying in the middle of the night. I sold off my sleep to her. I just took her smiles in exchange for a sound sleep. The man living in the trees told me a story I do don't remember but I will frame a new one and tell you. An old man went to the riverside and found a boy pouring his yellow waters into the river. He did not spank him. The river needs salt to taste. Then he found a man pouring same into the sea. I said to the old man "push him into the sea, dip his head into the salty water. Perhaps he has forgotten the sea needs no salt to taste sweet. For it already has too much salt. If you found me dipping his head into the sea. Do not think I am committing murder. He must learn the hard way. There is life in the sea. Has it not swallowed many lives into her belly? I walked in the fire barefooted to have an experience". Tuku, do you not understand what I am saying? My mother says I should not speak plainly. I must always sound ambiguous. I do not even understand myself.

**SOUL OF TUKU:** Come let us play. Life is too short to fight. I do not desire to understand you. Hold my hands let us dance. *(They dance around as Topipa hums strange tunes. Other figures appear on stage and join in the dance. Drums play rhythmically. Then it reaches a crescendo. In the process, Topipa falls down)* To...pi...pa! Are you hurt?

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** I cannot be hurt. Where we are now, pain has been defeated. We laugh genuinely. Let's depart. Mortal men will wake up soon. *(Figures of Tuku and Topipa exit)*

*Tuku gets awoken by the sound of a cock crowing. He finds Topipa sleeping on the floor rather than the bed. He also discovers her cover cloth lying in the bed.*

**TUKU:** Topipa wake up! I had a dream. We were dancing together. Explain to me. I want to understand. Topipa wake up. *(Topipa wakes up)*

**TOPIPA:** Hey, why are you holding me?

**TUKU:** It is not what you are thinking.

**TOPIPA**

How do you know what I am thinking? I hope you are not here to ask me questions about your baby? The truth is bitter. You cannot swallow it. Let it slide. *(Goes back to sleep)*

**TUKU:** You cannot continue tormenting me like this. Okay explain the dream to me. We were dancing... dancing to strange tunes you hummed. I was happy. I saw others join us in the dance. You fell but did not feel pain. You were immune to pain Topipa. Then you told me to come along with you before mortals wake up from sleep. We wore beautiful brown cloaks.

**TOPIPA:** You saw them too? You saw me? Did you understand what I said?

**TUKU:** They were your usual chatter. No meanings.

**TOPIPA:** Tuku your soul is coming alive. Let us do the dance again. The spirits are still present.

**TUKU:** Nonsense! Absolute nonsense! I do not want to dance with any spirits. I do not want to be insane as you. (*Figures exit*) His Excellency will be here to see you tomorrow. Take the cloth and cover yourself. We need you alive!

**TOPIPA:** You've held me hostage. Yes you! You held me tightly. Locked up in your little cage. I stood behind the door... Knocking...crying for you to open the door. Then I saw clearly. I had lived in illusions. Thinking there was a door. I was confined in a cage without doors. Perhaps I have lived in that cage since the days the woman pulled me from my mother's womb. I was told I first entered the world with my right foot. They said I was a wicked child. For I nearly killed my mother until a woman arrived and dragged me out from the womb. I was not a wicked child. I had been told already. They told me the new world was a wicked one. Little Pipa couldn't Stay here for long. She died. She saw the struggles all the other children were going through. She decided to return home peacefully to the land of eternal innocence. I didn't want to enter with my head. You are wicked to assume I would enter the world with my head. My feet must enter first to be prepared for the battles ahead. In fact, let me tell you this. We sat one evening with the old man. He summoned us all to appear before his majestic gigantic mountain. All those due to enter the world were not permitted to. An embargo was placed. Myself and all my blooded, boned, fleshy comrades were eager to listen to what the old man had to say. We only heard his voice roaring in the edifice of ancient monuments. Lipa was on her way to enter the world when the horn was blown for summoning. Her mother's water had broken. She was wailing in pain but little Lipa had to obey the old man's voice. She waited. The woman at the hospital dragged her out. A little patience would have kept Lipa alive to arrive on earth. Impatience! Her soul was in the meeting. This is how my other colleagues get killed. Lipa sat beside me. She cried of pain. Her body had

departed while her soul sat waiting for the old man. She was destined to be a great woman. Finally, the old man appeared. He asked us why we weren't eager to enter the world anymore. Pipa stood up and shouted "the people are wicked". They eat things that harm us. We arrive on earth deformed. We hate that. The old man whispered, "sometimes I send others to earth already deformed". Kupa stood and said softly, "could you explain to us why you do that? Old man ignored Kupa. Silence walked majestically in our midst. Then said the old man, "I do as I please. Those I send deformed, I grant them extra powers and skills. If only they look beyond those deformities, they would find the powers they possess. Most of my colleagues refused to come to earth. They heard too many stories about it that scare them. I should have refused to come too. This is a crazy world. Tuku, this is a crazy world.

**TUKU**: You are the only one living in that crazy world. Topipa your freedom is in your hands. Topipa I love you. I want you to be free.

**TOPIPA**: Stop piercing my heart with those arrows. I do not want to hear them.

**TUKU**: I love you. You are amazing. Just promise the security agency you would keep mute about all that you know. They instructed me to rape you three times in a day.

**TOPIPA**: Three-course meal? Or three square meals? So why are you not raping me? You would have journeyed to the other world by now.

**TUKU**: You are a woman. I respect you. You are the only woman who worked closely with his Excellency but never got laid. Your back never touched his bed.

**TOPIPA** : How do you know?

**TUKU**: After cabinet meeting...when all women rush home to prepare food for their husbands...those are the kinds of discussions they have over tea.

**TOPIPA**: Then you should know who the father of your daughter is.

**TUKU**: Topipa... is my wife part of the women the cabinet ministers lay?

**TOPIPA**: Wouldn't you be proud to know your daughter is the daughter of His Excellency? I will not grant you that pleasure. Never! You are a mere government...

**TUKU**: I will kill you today. You are messing with my brain.

**TOPIPA**: Finally, he has agreed to kill me.

**TUKU**: Finally, I have managed to make her believe I can kill her.

**TOPIPA**: Let's put up a performance. Final piece before I cross the river to the other world. You play the role of my mother.

**TUKU**: You want to hire me to act for you. Pay me first.

**TOPIPA** :How much?

**TUKU**: 200 shillings.

**TOPIPA**: *(Takes out money tied to the hem of her dress)* Here, take it.

**TUKU**: How did you come by this money?

**TOPIPA**: One afternoon, when you were sleeping. My fingers crawled gently into your pocket without my knowledge and came by it. Two weeks later, they got chopped off. Let's start the performance. Take your position... to the left young man. *(Goes to whisper into his ears. He nods to confirm he understands)* Let the show begin. *(She goes to sit on the stone to the wall)*

**TOPIPA**: The passion burning within me was red-yellow hot fire. I had always wanted to watch my body develop slowly. (*Walks to Down Stage Center*) I stood in front of the mirror. I got shy of looking at myself. It had transformed into something I had never thought of. My breast fitted gently into my palms. No excess droppings through my fingers. My waist was smooth. Not like my mothers'. And my hip had become broad. I looked again. Then I wasn't shy anymore. I was scared. When did all this happen? I had missed the chances of seeing me grow into me. There were hairs on my goldmine. Then I became shy again. Earlier that week, in the toilet, I pulled down my panty and there blood occupied the thick lining of my pantie. I screamed for help. My goldmine had shed blood which was turning green-black. The woman who mothered me rushed to my aid. There I stood holding the proof of my womanhood in my hand.

**SOUL OF TOPIPA** :“Mummy see! Am dying. I have a wound under me!”

**SOUL OF TUKU**: “Oh, you are a woman now. It is not death honey!”

**TOPIPA**: I had forgotten all that was taught in school by Teacher Mills. I screamed again.

**SOUL OF TOPIPA**: “Mummy, I have a wound inside my under!”

**TOPIPA**: She hugged me. Tightly. I could hardly breathe. She kissed my cheeks and whispered.

**SOUL OF TUKU**: “You are a woman now! I am here to be by your side always.”

**TOPIPA**: She took me to the bathroom. I sat there. She left to boil water. As I sat all naked, my goldmine would not stop shedding blood. It flowed freely. I stood. I saw it draw lines as it flowed through my Thighs. I screamed again and sat quickly on the stool. Only my grandmother sits on that stool when she bathes but I had also sat on it. Mother rushed back to me. I showed her the lines of blood. She smiled. And then laughter gushed out.

**SOUL OF TUKU**: “Sit down honey. You are becoming more of a woman”.

**TOPIPA:** She left for the kitchen. I sat back. Then it dawned on me. My eggs are hurtling within me. My abdomen began to hurt. I remembered all that I had learned in school. Indeed, I have become a woman capable of creating a bigger clot of human blood should any man thrust into me and left off rivers of milky water. My mother came back with hot water in grandma's metallic bucket. She mixed the hot with cold and a soothing mixture was the byproduct. She bathed me. Yes, mother bathed me. Then it was time to cleanse my goldmine. She filled the pail with water and gave it to me. She signaled me to wash my site. I stood with feet apart. Washing started. She spoke softly,

**SOUL OF TUKU:** "Woman does not stand to wash her under. Squat!"

**TOPIPA:** Using the warm water down there was sensational. She brought me some beads too and a long cloth.

**SOUL OF TUKU:** "Grandma predicted right. She said you would be a woman soon. These beads are from her. I will put it around your waist. And this cloth will soak your blood".

**TOPIPA:** I counted the beads. Ten in number. She went over and over about how to keep myself clean and stay away from men. Mashed yam and eggs completed the ritual process.

I stood in front of the mirror still amazed at the new me. I didn't like the hair down there. I took a blade. The first attempt was smooth. I cut off some hair. The second attempt turned bloody. I cut my goldmine. The puffy flesh. With my left hand, using the thumb and index finger, I press gently against the flesh to split open the fresh cut. I saw the white flesh as I split open the fresh cut. The fingers pressed against the puffy mine with that split created another goldmine akin to the grand mining site. Then blood started oozing out. With the same razor blade, I chopped off a piece of my towel and then I wiped off the blood. Before it got soaked, the last drop had ceased. I was a woman.

I didn't scream this time. Though the pain I felt as the blade slid into my flesh was worse than that which flowed from me. Many more pains will come but the woman in me will contain it.

*(Lights fade out slowly and fade in after some few seconds without figure on stage)*

**TOPIPA**: I am ready now. Take my life. Will people cry at my funeral?

**TUKU**: NO! Because there will be no funeral. I am not killing you. I changed my mind.

**TOPIPA**: But wait. How do we know if we are not already dead? We could be ghosts. The mad woman down the street sees you and laughs. She says to herself "See this mad man walking down the street... all dressed up. Not looking like me. He is weird. See all those people going to work. Dressed in clothes. They are all mad"

**TUKU**: *(Running around)* Ghost...ghost... ghost. *(The two are scared for no reason. They imagine things and run around avoiding each other).*

**TOPIPA**: Tuku, Tuku... if you are a ghost and I am also a ghost, why then are we avoiding each other? Scaring ourselves? *(Laughing)* Tuku your insanity has finally been amplified and certified.

**TUKU**: *(Breaking down. Teary)* You say too many things which gets me thinking a lot.

**TOPIPA** : Good! A man must always think. *(Dreamlike, excited over remembering an idea)*  
Tuku!

**TUKU**: TO...PI...PA!

**TOPIPA**: Good! You've summoned my soul. Close your eyes Tuku. Face our audience. Full front. Good! When you look back, you will turn into a pillar of salt. *(She tiptoes and pulls out papers from behind the stone to UC. Whispering into his ears)* Let us put up a performance. I did not like what I wrote so I titled the piece "As you don't like it".

**TUKU:** As YOU don't like it. I might like it. The audience might like it too. (*Scheming through the papers*). Topipa! I see myself as cast. (*Getting excited*) This story must not go out. I remember I was the driver and you as Otinkrama. We need Omane the all-seeing one.

**TOPIPA:** Ganyobi from Abola. (*Laughing*)

**TUKU:** Footsoldiers!

**TOPIPA:** The illetrate?

**TUKU:** And Tiwii Brofo Man! Topipa I don't like it either.

**TOPIPA:** Me neither! More reason for the title of piece "AS YOU DON'T LIKE IT!"

**TUKU:** But we need more characters. Your soul can play the role of Omani.

**TOPIPA:** And yours as the Tiwii Brofo Man!

**TUKU:** TOPIPA you hate me this much? Fine! We need more souls and perhaps ghosts as characters.

**TOPIPA:** Tuku? Is that you talking about souls? You surprise me.

**TUKU:** Our souls, our true selves. You and I. Souls without masks.

**TOPIPA:** Souls not yet robbed of themselves. Souls robbed of their identity. Souls yet to be born.

**TUKU:** And ghosts as characters too?

**TOPIPA:** Yes! Ghosts as characters. Ghosts of the death.

**TUKU:** Topipa I fear you.

**TOPIPA :** The feeling is mutual. I fear myself. I shall not pay you! Agreed!

**TUKU:** Agreed! TO....PI...PA.

**TOPIPA :**TU...KU. (*Their souls appear*)

**TOPIPA:** (*Chanting*) Ghosts, souls yet to be born. Awake. Awake for this performance. A new dawn? Past, Present...

**TUKU:** And maybe the future.

AS YOU DON'T LIKE IT

(NON-ALIGNED)

*(Drum rolls as other figures appear on stage draped in different shades of costumes. Each figure, now taking up roles as characters, holds up placards with their character names inscribed on each. Lights fade slowly and fades in again. As narrations are made, there is brief enactments by characters).*

**OMANE:** It was half and 3mintes past midnight when the driver announced in the bus.

**DRIVER:**“Wei diee me srɛ mo paa me gya ne me nanom. Nukrɛ nu diee eye baako pɛ”.

**OMANE:** Silence tiptoed majestically through the bus.

**GANYO BI:** “Aka fee ni ekɛɛ wo akɛ ebreaɛɛ efite. Ebanno kraaa Musu sane! ”

**TIWII BROFO MAN:** “Blood of Nehemiah! Why would you think of such danger? The driver hasn't said anything substantial yet. Why do people go about with so much negative thoughts in their minds?”

**GANYO BI:** “Kwɛ, ewɔɔ ni min wie Ga oojie minaa ye blofo mlin. Ke ole feemɔ ni ojɛmi shi kome ona, maje bo eight kɛ ten ni matsɔɔ bo akɛ afɔme ye Abola”.

**OMANE**: The driver kept mute and the arguments continued. When the 15 seater bus got to the O.A.U bus terminal, the driver negotiated towards the yard. The security man pulled out his torchlight and flashed it into our faces.

**DRIVER**: “Agya ee, mabre oo. Mee gye ma humme krakra na ebo beye 4:30 aa matua su”.

**OMANE**: As if a conductor stood in the bus directing. In unison, all except one man who had been snoring all the while in the journey...

**ALL**: “Eh? 4:30”.

**OMANE**: Before the dramatic composition ended, the driver was already out of the bus stretching. He had left the AC on.

**TIWII BROFO MAN**: “This is insane. I have an appointment in Accra. Latest by 7am I should be in the minister’s office. I must be there with all my documents. I can’t miss the bidding too. God damit!”

**ILITERATE?**: “Abratie gyae brofo bebre no. Osee wa bre. Otu efidie nua, ode yen be hwiase. Mo aa moa ko sukuu kraa edeen na atwretwrefuo nu twre mu? Tiwii”.

**OMANE**: There was another brief silence then laughter. Something happened. That brief laughter disappeared. A devilish wind passed through the bus. A multi-directional fart had been shot. It carried terroristic winds from beans, boiled eggs and milk. Everyone wore an innocent look. The man who had been snoring thunder zoomed into a higher level of snoring like a tractor. Then amidst that noise, he also released a gun of his anus, pulled a trigger and then shot came running in ascending order. Within seconds everyone left the bus leaving only the anus gunman. The driver was already dead asleep on a bench. It was a full moon. The darkness had been defeated that night. Our eyes saw the darkness racing out from our dwelling.

Otinkrama sat on the bench and pulled out her bible. There was no way she could sleep on those donated benches. Each had this pasted on them;

**FOOTSOLDIERS**: “Donated by Hon. O.P.D. Vote to keep him in power”.

**OMANE**: The last sentence was too instructive and that pissed her off terribly. She exclaimed,

**OTINKRAMA** : “Deception”

**OMANE**: Whiles looking on with disgust. She found solace in reading the book of Kings. Everyone else had reached out for a bench including the ‘tiwii brofo man’. Otinkrama noticed something about this man. He didn’t sleep like the others were. He stood in front of his bench and then occasionally he pranced about looking very angry. She tried not to look but occasionally she stole glances at him. He walked to the far end, stood there for a while and then walked back to his bench. Then I saw what looked like a totally certified mad woman emerge from the same corner where the ‘tiwii man’ had stood for minutes gazing. The mad woman stood with a smirk on her face and then she disappeared. The man stood up again. I notice a perpetual rod. His tight trouser betrayed him. His flap was flat but the rod had found a resting or to better express, an escape point to his right thigh...snakelike. Otinkrama knew something was wrong. The man sat back. She thought of a dramatic enactment. She stood up and stretched and then lay back on the bench. She used her leather cover bible as pillow but her eyes were slightly opened to see. In less than a minute, the man stood up. Everything was quiet. His friend to the right thigh was still hard. The tip of the rod had created a pattern on the trouser....like an embroidery of a ring. He walked slowly. A thief of the night he was. He turned to make sure none was watching. Then he took brisk steps till he got to the spot that led to the corner. He surveyed once again. It was evident to him that all were dead asleep. The security man with the big torch had even fallen asleep. He sneaked fast into the corner like lightening. Otinkrama became restless for the first few minutes. She got up and also

sneaked to the spot and hid behind a kiosk that had the inscription, “aha ye de, ka wanu tum”. The scene was rigorous. Horse power! The man had pinned the mad woman to the wall. His back faced the entrance so there was no way for him to know if his act was being looked on. He had lifted up the rubbers that worked for her as skirt. Like a priestess’s raffia skirt. Dirty polytene bags had initially been a covering when she first emerged from her abode. The man lifted her right leg and it stood bent on a small table creating an angle and the left stood on the ground. The mad woman’s eyes were tightly shut. With hunger the man thrust into her without breaks. Otinkrama was filled with anger. She wanted to scream for all to come and witness the disgraceful act. Then glue sealed her lips when the mad woman started bleating like a goat; The loudest orgasmic pleasurable moan that ever erupted out of an ecstatic mood. Then Otinkrama thought to herself,...

**OTINKRAMA:** “Shall I deny a mad woman of an orgasmic pleasure?”

**OMANE:** The man, still thrusting, with one hand took off his socks and then stuffed them into her mouth. He laid her gently on the table that had supported her right leg and then started the ugliest escapade ever. He positioned the woman like one in a labor ward and then reached his head in between. The table, as small as it was, accommodated only her farm land, baby strapping seat and a portion of her back but her head dangled as one dancing gome. Otinkrama fled from the scene for it was mutilating her body, soul and spirit. On her way to the bench, she threw up. (Lights fade slowly and fades in slowly again. To the audience) Sorry...sorry. Wrong lighting cue. Apologies. (They take a bow. Topipa pulls money from Tuku’s pocket and pays the actors living out the souls)

**TUKU:** Topipa what is the meaning of this?

**TOPIPA:** Nothing is free. (All others exit except the souls)

**TUKU:** Topipa

**TOPIPA:** Tuku (They burst into laughter) Shall we try something different... I have another script. You will love it.

**TUKU:** Topipa can't we just exist.

**TOPIPA:** Looks like you have an idea of our next performace. Come on Tuku. It is sensual too.

**TUKU:** I am in. fetch me the papers. Now Topipa!

**TOPIPA:** Cold read? (*Pulls sheets from under the bed frame*).

**TUKU:** Hot read. We can just have the lights fade out and fade in slowly. We use that to buy some time and memorize.

**TOPIPA:** A minute of silence on stage is life an hour for the audience. Topipa association promotes intelligence. (*Unbuckling his belt*) Joke joke!

**TUKU:** TO...PI..PA

**TOPIPA:** TU...KU (*All four hold their hands to form a circle*) Lights fade out. (*Lights fade out*)

**TUKU:** Lights fade in (*Lights fade in slowly*)

**ALL**

**LAMENTATIONS...**

**TOPIPA:** Perhaps I shall write it in the skies for all to see. Coded! They shall see but not understand. The two of us shall see it and remember that afternoon when the grounds on which we stood refused to open up and swallow us. Ours is a crucible. Perhaps the tears I shed were for the future. And that fear too. My heart has become a little container tightly shut; Inexpressive, Unreasoning and Unmovable. Shall I leave this hope and open my eyes to the truthful reality? Oh how I detest the me in me. So stubborn! Wouldn't let go! Wouldn't give up! Too blind! Blind? This sweet blindness tastes like peace cooked in terror and served on the sun. Wouldn't it bake like *ACHICHA*?

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** The fires of cooking and baking have all died out. The coals are perhaps covered with ashes. Step on them and your feet will be kissing the wicked gods of the earth. I dare call them wicked, for they stole my pain and traded it with more pain wrapped in sweetness. Leave this hand and touch that coal peeling off from the tree of life that burnt at the center of the garden when the sun engaged in a battle with the waters below. No one dared to go settle that dispute for the raging fires burnt any man born of a woman who passionately desisted from committing murder by drowning. I detest the me in me. So stubborn! Wouldn't let go, wouldn't give up.

**TUKU:** Too blind. Blind? Let me tell you about the story of a man who went to the seaside on a Thursday night when his wife had just lost the twins she delivered the midnight of Wednesday. In the pool of sand he searched for needles to prick his body. He had suffered too much pain and that lost meant nothing to him. When the children were seen dead hugging tightly in the manger of woven ropes, his heart leapt for joy. Perhaps he could explain to the world that the gods were truly wicked. Did the gods not send down the rains on the night as Tutu his wife slept sneeringly when coldness had crept in like a thief at night?

**SOUL OF TUKU:** Didn't her breast cover the nostrils of her Tani and Taani when she stupidly allowed her mind to sleep into a bout with timeless and tireless dreams of the future of her twins? Didn't the gods wake her up to visit nature? Couldn't she have breath into the nostrils of these little ones the breath of life and life after death? She put them together hugging. They never intended to die hugging for Tutu who was the bridge eloped at night with sleep and when she returned, she tied them together into a bundle like fire wood.

**TUKU:** Permit me to tell you how he searched for fires at the beach to embrace. What is this misery of mystery that my little brain cannot understand but enjoys the sweet-pain it spits out onto my sore tongue? I shall let go and leave this hand alone.

**TOPIPA**

No! I shall hold on to this hand cursed with greatness. Come, lie by my side. Touch my hand. Tightly! Like the container of my heart. What is it that runs in your mind? Pity? Hatred? Repulsion? Oh then I will deny that which I feel within me and pronounce that I feel pity, hatred, repulsion for you too. In a thousand folds. Shall I lie about that which lies in that container? Oh it is shut so you cannot see it nor feel it. Oh how I detest the me in me. So stubborn and too hopeful. I shall hold onto that virtual hand till thunder strikes in my heart and in your heart and lightning clears this thick darkness on our path. I have walked in the darkness with arms stretched waiting to hold that hand of softness, of tenderness and of uniqueness. Perhaps that hand is also stretched out waiting to find mine but darkness in our path prevents it. Shall we grow weary of stretching arms with no hope of a sensational touch? I say it again. Lie beside me! Put your hand on my chest.

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** Reach out to that shut container. Open it. Apply some more force and it shall open. For it has been shut since the night when my father took in another woman and told me my mother had journeyed on a path where only free-spirited souls sit and sip palm wine in perforated gourds.

**TOPIPA:** Shall I tell you of the day when the sky engaged in a quarrel with the moon?

**TUKU:** He got too furious. Held the moon by her hair and dragged her.

**TOPIPA:** People of the earth saw the half-shaped moon and called it beautiful. They knew not the pain the back of her head was experiencing. They just saw her face and called her beautiful for she was fair and white with tinsels of dark patches striking across her cheeks. Her brain cooking in pain. Layers of clouds would journey across her face and wipe away her tears. She doesn't shout her pains to the innocent people. She smiled and they captured it into their hearts and shouted; BEAUTIFUL.

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** Let every man keep mute about their pains. For only the sun knows real pain when the back of his ears itch but the hand to scratch is of fire. I let go of myself this day.

**TOPIPA:** My prison is open. My fertile grounds unguarded. Tell me the stories of how the stars got displaced when their mother slept and fell off on earth. I hear they come out at night searching for their mother.

**TUKU:** Tell me about the legend of that woman who forgot about her children and bathed in the pool of cold waters while her children hanged up in the skies searching for her.

**SOUL OF TUKU:** I will also tell you the story of a man who tore a leaf in a history book to wipe his anus. Well he didn't paint the walls after shitting. He was a noble gentleman who couldn't mess the wall with his shit. He just decided to tear a leaf. But which is more devastating? The mess on the wall or the scraping away of history? Is it true what is said?

**TOPIPA:** That all the world is a stage and children are the best truthful players. Let the child in you be awake and tell me...

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** Lie beside me you human of valor. It is your soul that is cursed with greatness. Always keep one of my breast in your mouth and let your teeth bite them gently. I shall not be hurt for the gap in your teeth will accommodate my nipple when it slips upward.

**TOPIPA:** Touch the other with your palms and let the nipple be trapped in between your fingers. Who wants them to cover the nostrils of her twin when sweetness beckons? (Brief silence) Lights, fade out. (Lights fade out slowly)

**TUKU:** LIGHT... (Lights fade in slowly) Topipa we can't end the scene that way.

#### MOVEMENT FOUR

*(Lights fade in slowly. Topipa seated on the bed, Tuku also seated on his table).*

**TUKU:** Topipa, you will behave yourself...

**TOPIPA:** I have behaved myself properly. I laid down in the bed of rottenness, ate all that food which tasted like stones of bile in seawater and I have not referred to you as a government slave either!

**TUKU:** Are you okay?

**TOPIPA:** Do you care?

**TUKU:** I do. Your daughter believes the ship took you away. How did you do that?

**TOPIPA:** Do what?

**TUKU:** Don't play insane with me.

**TOPIPA:** She believes me. I told her I was going to make a better life in a faraway land.

**TUKU:** But you were already making a better life. You wielded so much power as a woman. Kingship rested on your laps. You had the ultimate power in society. You were power itself.

**TOPIPA:** Better life! Am I not making the best life here? She saw me being dragged on the floor by your colleagues....the senior slaves. Yet she believed my word. I told her we were reenacting a scene from a thousand years ago. We are living in that moment of a thousand years. Are we not? This whole life we are living was clearly mapped out by your master. Generations to come will reenact our present life. I am having the best time of my life here in this cave.

**TUKU:** You insult me each passing day. You insult my masters too! Am I really a slave like you say?

**TOPIPA:** Yes, you are. You are just like me.

**TUKU:** I don't like my status then.

**TOPIPA:** So why don't you stand up to them? Why don't you tell them you can't continue being used by them? You have spilled too much blood Tuku. Fight for your freedom.

**TUKU:** No!

**TOPIPA:** No?

**TUKU:** Yes!

**TOPIPA:** Yes?

**TUKU:** No! Don't confuse me! I love this prison. I need to have a life in this prison so my wife and children can enjoy freedom. Leave a legacy for my children...

**TOPIPA**: The children to whom you have sold your freedom for are not of your loins. Fight for your freedom!

**TUKU**: Will you stop this display of insanity? I will whip you until that blind soul of yours spews out the truth. Why do you want to torment me?

**TOPIPA**: Did I say it loudly? That your springs are not of your loins. Oh gods of my father's house, let not my mouth utter yet another truth least my doom day draw near.

**TUKU**: No! Your doom day is here. *(Pulls down the heavy metal chains hanging on the wall)* I will chain you today! Topipa I will chain you today. Is this my reward for not torturing you here? Do you think I was just dumped in here with you so I watch over your depreciating soul? I was brought here to torture you.

**TOPIPA**: Don't you dare talk about my soul in such a manner. My soul never depreciates. It is that which has kept me alive. *(Tuku locks her up in the chains)* This all you can do to me Tuku. You can never chain my soul. The gods will not permit you to chain my soul. Does my soul not communicate with the gods of my father's house daily? Are the ancestors of my mother's land not cursing the day they allowed themselves to taste your sweet honey, grape wine and accept your mirror to see a reflection of themselves? They didn't like the image they saw of themselves. The gods summoned the souls of my ancestors before their court. My ancestors were guilty of all the crimes leveled against them. They could not defend themselves in any way. Since that day, my ancestors swore to protect my soul from chains. Our elders say that a soul once usurped can only be redeemed through rivers of blood. My children will redeem the souls of the millions you have chained with blood. They will not shed other people's blood but that of their own. You can torture me. You can put me in chains but my soul, you can do nothing to it!

**TUKU** To...Pi...Pa (*SOUL OF TOPIPA's soul appear*)

**TOPIPA**: How dare you summon my soul!

**TUKU**: To...Pi...Pa... I detest you. I detest you! (*Figure exits*)

**TOPIPA**: Now you are tormenting my soul. You are inflicting pain on me. I will not forgive you. Do not detest me yet. I will tell you the truth on my deathbed... why are you unbuckling your belt?

**TUKU**: What does it look like I am about to do you? You have disrespected me for long. I won't take it anymore. Your guts are driving me insane!

**TOPIPA**: Oh, you are insane! I am learning that for the first time.

**TUKU**: It will be better if you shut up else I will tie your tongue. I love you Topipa.

**TOPIPA**: I don't know if I hate you. We are both prisoners trapped in this cave.

**TUKU**: I am not a prisoner.

**TOPIPA**: Who is the prisoner?

**TUKU**: You are the prisoner!

**TOPIPA**: You are also a prisoner.

**TUKU**: Am I a prisoner now?

**TOPIPA**: Yes, you are a prisoner now.

**TUKU**: You can't put such ideas into my head. You can't make me feed on the idea that I am a prisoner. Now, suck your gum.

**TOPIPA**: You can't force me to do that.

**TUKU**: I said suck your gum for blood...in between your teeth. Then spit it onto your dress. I need fresh blood on your dress.

**TOPIPA**: This is madness. So it is true after all. You are insane.

**TUKU**: Don't make me peel off the cloth stuck to your back.

**TOPIPA**: (*Sucks her gum for blood. She spits onto her dress.*) Here, blood in sputum.

**TUKU**: Suck for more and smear it in-between your thighs.

**TOPIPA**: Tuku this is madness.

**TUKU**: Watch your words honey.

**TOPIPA**: (*Sucks more for blood*) how do you expect me to smear it in between my thighs when my hands are in your chains? (*Tuku unlocks the chains holding her hands together. She smears it on her thigh*) Tuku I know what I feel towards you now! Hatred! Tuku I abhor you. I detest you for sucking the blood out of me. You are sucking my life out of me.

**TUKU** (*Putting the chains back onto her hands*) You always desired for death.

**TOPIPA** : I have changed my mind. You will understand me later.

**TUKU**: I want you to cry...wail...scream... thrill me. Let me feel your pain. Let me watch you agonize.

**TOPIPA**: You must pay me for that act. Ever heard the saying 'no woman no cry'? Woman's tears are expensive.

**TUKU**: Please do it now. We are running out of time. Now!

**TOPIPA:** Then pay me now! I paid you when I hired you to play a role for me. Where is that money?

**TUKU:** But that is my money. Topipa we are running out of time. They will be here soon.

**TOPIPA:** Who will be here soon?

**TUKU:** One person... carrying the spirit and command of a thousand people. Give me a show now. Okay, this is your pay. (*Dropping money onto the floor*)

**TOPIPA**

Who drops a pay onto the floor? No show. Pick up the money and drop it into my palm. (*Tuku Picks up the money and she drops it into her bra*) Point of no return.

**TUKU:** 3...2...1...action. (Beat) Why you are staring at me? Come on I paid you. Do your job Topipa. Else I will peel off the cloth from your back as I have been ordered to do.

**TOPIPA:** I am searching for motivation from within. Inner monologue...subtext...

**TUKU:** Whatever, we are running out of time lady.

(*Lights spot on Topipa sitting at center stage still in chains*).

**TOPIPA**

The man came to my room and pulled me to one corner. He said I was pregnant. I knew I had always been pregnant. I didn't really know the type of pregnancy he was talking about this time. Like I said, I was already pregnant. Dreams and visions that make fears flea had been with me like pregnancy. He dragged me out to the open. The young girl who sold oranges after school to support herself and little sister through school was in pain. They lost their mum during a political campaign. She had gone there to sell water. Following the track and chanting party songs, draped in party

colors, a track grounded her onto the tarred road. Too gruesome to narrate. A shovel was used to scrape her remains off that major road. That young girl had held her abdomen and was weeping. Her little sister supporting her as she walked slowly with legs apart like one that suffered a groin hernia. I asked the man what was happening. A lot more girls were weeping. I saw blood dripping through another's thighs. I screamed and that scared her. Apparently, every girl in the neighborhood was pregnant. Just like me. We entered into a room. Women were gathered. There was a bed to the corner with a rubber concealing the sheet. Blood, organisms. There were babies aborted. I vomited the tea I had had that morning. It was my turn to lie on that bed with clotted blood falling off like minced meat. I refused. Vehemently. I began to cry. The women begged me. They tried to talk me into aborting my child. My baby. I screamed in pain and begged them. I can't stand the pain of having that rod stuck into my vagina through to my womb. Never! *(She begins screaming for help)* No....nooo...Tuku stop it...Tuku...Tuku...stop... aaaaaaaaahh. *(Lights fade out and fades in slowly. Tuku standing up stage slapping his belt against the wall)* Tuku.

**TUKU:** Shhhhhhhh. They must believe I am whipping you. Continue shouting.

**TOPIPA:** I have cried and shouted for thirty minutes. Who rapes a woman for that long?

**TUKU:** Better ask the two hundred plus girls of the region wrapped in green-leafy soft cloth bearing one-third strand of purity.

**TOPIPA:** You taught us well.

**TUKU:** Will you shut up! I have never raped a woman. I have never spilled blood. Stop seeing me as wicked.

**TOPIPA:** Godot never came. He will never come.

**TUKU:** She will come. They are sending another woman to this cave.

**TOPIPA:** Is she a spy?

**TUKU**: Smart! That is what I thought too.

**TOPIPA**: Tuku lets escape their torture.

**TUKU**: No! I will never escape. I am going nowhere with you.

**TOPIPA** : I am going nowhere without you.

**TUKU**: Nowhere is key! We are going nowhere.

**TOPIPA**: I once saw a man walking barefooted on a hot afternoon. He was a madman. The hot tarred roads baking the soles of his feet as he walked. I shouted; curse is the gods of the earth for not providing this man with sandals. But I ask, who are the gods of this earth? It is you and your masters. My freedom is in your hand Tuku. Grant me that freedom now.

**TUKU** : I will grant you that freedom tonight. I promise.

**TOPIPA**: You promised my fingers will not be cut...my right fingers. I know they will be chopped off tonight.

**TUKU**: I keep a promise. While you were screaming and crying, I chopped off my fingers. I will present them to my masters tonight.

**TOPIPA**: Blood of Nebuchadnezzar! Let me see. (Tuku takes out his right hand from his pocket)  
Blood of Jesus! *(She pukes and passes out. Tuku struggles while unlocking the chains and tries to revive her. lights fade).*

*(It's evening and Topipa is still awake. She is sitting on the wooden bed with arms folded. The chains are lying beside her. Tuku on the other hand wakes up from sleep suddenly)*

**TOPIPA**: Who is chasing you in your sleep?

**TUKU**: I had a bad dream. Your people, your fellow countrymen...women...children...they betrayed you. They didn't appreciate the freedom you fought for them.

**TOPIPA**: Yes! They will not appreciate this fight for freedom. I dined with the gods...they showed me the future...it was a disaster. I am here fighting against an imprisonment of my soul. I have fought too hard so the chains are not placed on my conscience. My offspring betrayed me. They begged for the chains to be placed on their conscience. This struggle is a waste Tuku. Mere metaphorical language that only my people will understand is that which I speak. My cubs loved the chains. Bloodshed...servitude...betrayal...that is all my future carries. Cursed is me who birthed those children. Curse be onto my womb. Cursed be the day streams of blood gushed out of my goldmine to certify my maturity. Cursed be that day I refused the rod to scrape out that cub who now wields power and might.

**TUKU** Topipa those words should not proceed out of your mouth. One of your seeds will surely carry your spirit.

**TOPIPA**

Who will tell my cubs that my ancestors no longer drink the wine they pour as libation? My cubs are behaving like mere goats. They are to grow as lions and not goats.

**TUKU**: I will free you on the midnight of Thursdays. Your soul will be free. Your freedom is not in my hands but your god. Your gods gave you this strength to fight until this day. You must go and tell your children about your struggles in this cave. Tell them that the freedom they are enjoying was bought at a price. Your blood and the blood of your warriors...the great ancestors...paid for the price of freedom. I have seen it all with these eyes...in the ships...this cave...how the grounds drunk the sweat and blood of you and your ancestors. I will release you but first tell me, who is that man?

**TOPIPA** :The truth is bitter Tuku.

**TUKU**: I am ready to swallow that bitterness.

**TOPIPA:** The truth is that we are all prisoners.

**TUKU:** I will rape you today! I will surely do it!

**TOPIPA:** Oh, finally, your snake will eat into my wounds.

**TUKU:** You are silly.

**TOPIPA:** Tell me something new.

**TUKU:** Topipa, I love you.

**TOPIPA:** I understand. They must be on their way by now. My eyes are shut now. Put the chains on my wrist and feet. See my soul...dancing to the tune of drumming... May a black seed sprout out with power and refuse the chains. May that seed carry my spirit and the spirits of all the ancestors.

*(Lights dims. Tuku's right hand is bandaged with a piece of Topipa's cloth. He struggles but finally put the chains on her feet and wrists. Light spots on Figure dancing to the rhythms of the sounding drums) lights fade*

*(Scene opens on Topipa sitting on the stone while leaning against the wall of the cave. Her hands and feet are in chains. Her eyes are tightly shut, head resting against the wall and knees bent. She sobs and sniffs her nostrils continuously. The Figure representing her soul runs around on stage searching for an escape point. Tuku's Figure runs along with a metal bar in hand creating a barricade at every escape point. She faces the audience).*

**SOUL OF TOPIPA:** Will you allow me escape? Will you tell Tuku that you saw me go through your paths? The ancestors have given me strength and they are with me always. Do you see them? I ask, do you see our ancestors...the great warriors...the free souls who sip brewed corn wine in perforated gourds in our midst? Or do you not see them? Has the grape wine rendered your visions blur? Has the canned beef left you confused? Have you inherently cultivated the belief that our

ancestors have no power? I ask again, will you allow me to escape? Escape from where you ask? Escape from this prison? To where? To my mother's house! Ah, mortals awake! (*Goes to sit beside Topipa. Tutu lifts up his head off the table*)

**TUKU:** (*Walks toward Topipa*) It's midnight Topipa! Midnight of the day you entered into the earth with one foot! I will fulfill my promise this moment. (*Noticing her tears*) She cries in her sleep too! (*Shaking her*) Topipa wake up. Your freedom is here.

**TOPIPA:** Oh Tuku! What again?

**TUKU:** You were crying in your sleep.

**TOPIPA:** I never sleep!

**TUKU**

How will you ever sleep? Your blood is too hot.

**TOPIPA :** My blood boils each day. Tuku...

**TUKU:** You have my ears.

**TOPIPA:** I don't have energy. My head is spinning. I feel weak. Tell that little island to my side that I am incomplete without her.

**TUKU:** Which little island?

**TOPIPA:** Tuku let me be!

**TUKU:** Topipa the lioness. Topipa the tamer of leopards. Topipa, woman born on the midnight of a Thursday.

**TOPIPA:** (*Smiling*) Tuku...

**TUKU:** Let your soul rejoice for your freedom is here.

**TOPIPA:** Tuku...Tuku...Tuku? But they will come. When they come and they find this place empty they will torment you.

**TUKU:** They are always with us. Do you not see them?

**TOPIPA:** Will they ever leave?

**TUKU :** Your cubs will decide.

**TOPIPA:** Indeed! The decision lies with my cubs. Why did you chop off your fingers?

**TUKU:** It's time to write your own story!

**TOPIPA:** I am sorry. I can't tell you about the truth you desire to know.

**TUKU :** Like you said, the future will enact that story. Topipa...

**TOPIPA:** I want to sing a love song.

**TUKU:** Because?

**TOPIPA:** Because I want to tell you a secret.

**TUKU:** Must you sing it?

**TOPIPA:** Because I have not sung in a long time!

**TUKU:** Just tell it to the wind. You don't have my ears.

**TOPIPA:***(Singing. Rather sorrowfully)*

I will go everywhere with you.

Travel the earth barefooted with you

Though the grounds be hot as coal

And the gods be unhappy that I elope with you

I promise to travel the earth barefooted with you.

The gods know I love you truthfully

Faithfully have I sworn to keep my promise to love and stay with you

The gods bear witness to my promise of love

My love is true, the gods of my father's house believe

So they will protect us though happy they are not because I forsook my mother's house

To be with you whose warm embrace is life to my soul

Come lay by my side my Mandingo

*(Tuku interrupts)*

**TUKU:** Shall I come lay by your side? Is it me your soul longs for? Does your body truly long for me? Topipa respond. Say something... anything...

**TOPIPA:** I speak not of you Tuku. I speak of the love of my youthfulness. I was only seventeen travelling through to eighteen.

**TUKU:** You loved a man? You loved a Man!

**TOPIPA:** Of course! I loved a man...strong..tall, huge like the silk cotton tree.

**TUKU:** See how you lighten up. Tell me about him.

**TOPIPA:** See how you lighten up too. You play the role of Mandingo.

**TUKU:** Mandingo!

**TOPIPA:** Mandingo! His name his Lumgumgulla but I gave him a pet name to...

**TUKU:** To hide his identity?

**TOPIPA:** Stop interjecting!

**TUKU:** It is not my wish to make you travel into your old state. Bring back the glow.

**TOPIPA:** Mandingo sat and spoke about his love for me. Sit there and brag. On the floor Tuku!

**TUKU:** *(Sits on the floor)* You woman born on Thursday, your beauty compares to none.

**TOPIPA:** Oh Tuku! Mandingo says more than that. I always melted listening to him chant praise songs. I would sneak from home with the gourd to the river side just to meet him. I would lay my head on his broad chest like a baby and listen to his heart beating. Tuku, I intentionally allow the water to spill off and pour on me. Do you know why I do that?

**TUKU**: Tell me my love.

**TOPIPA**: My wet cloth hugged my buttocks tightly. And as I stride gently, my buttocks will shake carelessly. Then Mandingo would chant...

**TUKU**: “kpaka kpaka kpoo. Kpleke kpleke kpoo. Tukum tukum tum. Tsakam tsakam tsaaa”. You will kill me before my time!

**TOPIPA** :“You will die and that will be suicide”.

**TUKU**: “You will kill me and that will be murder. Kill me. I want to be murdered. Crucify me with legs apart for that kind of crucifixion brings life”.

**TOPIPA** :Tuku... (*Sobbing*) I allowed for that crucifixion and it brought forth life.

**TUKU**: Topipa I have broken the walls. I went into the room. Your room is small. I tore the strings. This is my first but Topipa this is food good for the soul. Topipa forgive me. We are now brown. Our green minds risked it all. I rained inside you.

**TOPIPA** : Mandingo! Your rains will bring a bumper harvest! It is a fertile ground.

**TUKU**: Topipa hush-up! The gods must not hear this for they will take it for a prayer and answer immediately.

**TOPIPA**: (*Weeping*) When I told you my prison was unguarded and my fertile ground was ready for rains, I meant it. You’ve made me a woman but Mandingo you shouldn’t have rained inside me. (*Hitting him*) Mandingo my grounds have licked up the milky waters. Mandingo I fear for us. I fear for the future. (*Hugging him*) I hate it that I love you but I love it that I am now a woman. (*Weeping*) hush

**TUKU**: I will stand by you my Woman! (*Both weeping while hugging. Topipa breaks off. Tuku still in the moment sharing tear without realizing Topipa has left him*)

**TOPIPA**: Tuku... Tuku... Tuku (*Hitting him*) Tukuuuuu! You dreamer wake up!

**TUKU**: But the scene cannot end this way.

**TOPIPA** :Are you the playwright?

**TUKU**: No... the gods are the authors but there must certainly be another raining.

**TOPIPA**: Perhaps on the grounds of you palms!

**TUKU**: TOPIPA!

**TOPIPA**: TUKUUU! (*Laughing*) You are not needed in the next scene.

**TUKU**: Just let me walk through the scene...bring in a chair and a glass of hard liquor ...or anything... insignificant character.

**TOPIPA**: If there is any insignificant organ in your human anatomy, then indeed, there must be an insignificant character on stage. Lie down let me cut you open and take out your kidneys. Are they insignificant?

**TUKU**: I didn't mean it that way. Not all characters are important.

**TOPIPA**: But behind that one character are up to 20 backstage crew members working. You call them insignificant? Let's cut this argument. Find a seat among the audience while I tell the story of my cub who has transformed into a he-goat. (*Tuku moves down stage, locates a seat among the audience and goes to sit*)

**TUKU**: (*Clapping*) Applause, applause! Let the show begin Topipa. Let the show begin my love.

**TOPIPA**: Topipa! Let the earth drink of your story...the story of your cub, captured and transformed. (*SOUL OF TOPIPA appears, then followed by three other female figures. Soul of Topipa runs at a spot to tire herself. She is drenched in sweat. Then appears another young female soul. The three figures, elderly, removes a white sheet from a bag brought on stage and lays it on the table. They again cover the white sheet with a rubber. The fourth figure goes to lie own on the*)

*table with legs apart. Abortion begins. Young female soul screams in pain and the women console her)*

**TOPIPA**: Indeed, my fertile grounds licked his milky waters. When Mandingo rained into my grounds, a golden organism leapt for joy and run pass all the other organisms. While I lay down on the palm branches, whispering to Mandingo “you human of valor, it is your soul that is cursed with greatness. Always keep one of my breast in your mouth and let your teeth bite them gently. I shall not be hurt for the gap in your teeth will accommodate my nipple when it slips upward. Touch the other with your palms and let the nipple be trapped in between your fingers”. While I laid there moaning in pain and joy, an organism run into me and won a golden medal. *(The women help the young girl off the table. Blood dripping.)* I saw Tunike emerge from the room, weeping...wailing...still bleeding. It was my turn to go. She signaled me to go into the room. I was terrified. I entered. There, on the table was blood and flesh like minced meat. They told me to lie down on the table. I went to lie down. They spread my legs apart. They took long rods. Ready to scrape out my cub. I screamed. “No, I would not allow you take my cub. *(Jumping off the table like a possessed being)* Now, I want you to swear by your wombs to never tell the world that I kept my cub in my womb. Swear now. Swear by the name of our gods. *(They perform rituals and swear holding onto their abdomens)* I shall run into the forest...live with the leopards, lions, hyenas and any other wild animals created by the Great God of the gods. When I am due and my water breaks, I shall deliver my own cub. By my own strength I shall cut the umbilical cord and bury it under the biggest tree in the forest. I shall swaddle my cub and bring him to you. You shall give him to the oldest barren woman, Talikaka, in our village. Tell her it is a gift to her from the gods. I dreamt. My cub was a boy. May he enter the world with his head lest I die in the forest.

**OLDER FEMALE FIGURES**: May he enter the world with his head lest you die in the forest.

**TOPIPA**: May the gods create a shield of protection around me lest I go and claim ownership of this cub.

**OLDER FEMALE FIGURES**: May the gods create a shield of protection around you lest you go and claim ownership of this cub.

*(Topipa drops down on her knees with hands lifted up. She speaks in strange tongues. Older women hum strange tunes)*

**TOPIPA**

**SOUL OF TOPIPA**

Takikum Talikam kiki tali kazuuu

A woman I am. A woman I was made by a man

Zulizaza balibuu mazukuli munikazuuu

Clot of blood lies peacefully in this womb by man

Lituzi Lituza litulizaa makukazuuu

Oh great ancestors, protect this clot formed by man

Ah ah ah ah kalikazuuu

Peace of the gods to man

Milizuuu malizaa ghazanazuu kazuuu

An excellency of a child in me grow to be man

*(She jumps onto her feet and runs about the space still chanting rather fast. She falls after the chant).*

**OLDER FEMALE FIGURES**

(They go around Topipa while she laid on the floor panting)

Ataa naa nyɔŋmɔ,

Kpetenɔkple mawu,

wɔshia wɔji ,

keje Lanɔma keyashwie shwilao.

woshia sisai

bibii ke ewuji fee,

nyeyea nyebua abifao nee.

*(Call and response. One older woman calls and the others respond. )*

**Older Woman 1**

**Older Woman 2&3**

Tswa, tswa, tswa omanyeba.

Hiao!

Tswa omanyeba

Hiao

Omene ashi me

Omene ashi soo

Niimeisi asoo

Naameisi asoo

Ataa naa nyɔnmɔ

Hiao

Bo moni oji naa ni bo nyɔnyɔ oji ataa

Hiao

You two faced God. Masculine as Nii. Feminine as Naa

Hiao

Gbeke nee oyiwaladɔnyɔ

Hiao

Ke je leebi morning ke yashi gbeke evening oyiwaladɔnyɔ thank you

Hiao

Woshia sisai ye blublu nye boa wo solemo nee tue

Hiao

Ancestors of our land ni ji sasai kpakpai, listen to our solemo prayer

Hiao

Ke shidaa ko ye shidaa nee see le nyeno ni eeeeei kon!

Hiao

Ataa naa nyɔnmɔ ke wo shia sisai, miitiu abifao ke nye miwo nyedenyɔn ekonyɔ

Hiao

All dedications are yours. So are these... mother and child.	Hiao
Nye jie ke tsoo wo abifao nee wosee ke noni nyie ehie fee	Hiao
The sex, destiny and all what lies beyond the horizon of this child you oh gods of	
Our land have revealed through your oracles.	Hiao
Gbomo titiri great Man ji abifao ni ka musu nee mli	Hiao
La ni obole kutuu clot of blood keka musu nee mli le, manhie nyielo ni	Hiao
Ataa naa nyommo ke wo shia sisai, abifao nee aka yose nye awo	Hiao
Great God of the universe, dull the senses of this child towards mother	Hiao
Ke nye awo gbele eyayaa mli gajaa le, eka fee abifao akono	Hiao
Abifao ke enine po aka tsu nye awo yayaa mli	Hiao
Ke abifao nuntso standing army surrounded by black forest of vegetation damoshi	
pampii po le, eka fee nye awo akono	Hiao
Severe all blood and emotional linkages between mother and child.	Hiao
Blind all sense! No canal incestuous affection between mother and child	Hiao
Twsa twsa twsa omanyaba	Hiao
Twsa omanyaba	Hiao

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*(Lights fade in slowly again. Topipa alone on stage)*

**TUKU** : (*Clapping*) Applauds, applauds!

**TOPIPA**: (*Taking a bow. Tuku joins her on stage*) Tuku, I gave my cub away.

**TUKU** : (*Chains Topipa's hand and feet*) I love you Topipa.

**TOPIPA** : (*Weeping*) And you are putting me back into the chains.

**TUKU**: My symbol of obedience to my masters. (*Beat*) And Madingo?

**TOPIPA**: He died on the battlefield after slaying a thousand men. (*Sobbing*) My Mandingo never held our cub in his arms. But my cub, I watched him from a distant. He saw how our people were taken away by the ships. He read about the legendary story of Mandingo and developed instant love for him without knowing that was his father. My cub saw it all. He read it all. My cub is now a he-goat leading a nation destined to be great.

**TUKU**: Topipa, tamer of leopards, woman born on midnight of Thursday, I love you. Wipe your tears.

**TOPIPA**: I know it. I know you love me. You must strip me off this cloth. It is time to dance with the ancestors. It is time to peel this cloth off my back. This cloth has been my identity for ages. Strip me off it now! (*She hums tunes as lights dim on stage. Sobbing. SOUL OF TOPIPA dances to the humming as Topipa's clothes are ripped off her back. Topipa screams in pain. When peeling is done, Tuku makes his way to exit*). Tuku... the chains... please...it will take a thousand years before I arrive at my destination...(*Weeping*) Tuku please...

**TUKU**: We don't have time for that Topipa...

**TOPIPA**: But Tuku... (*Wailing. Exit Tuku. SOUL OF TOPIPA still dancing to the rhythms of the drum*) Lights fade slowly.

