

**Feeling History: Emotion, Performance, and Meaning-Making in Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane  
Dance Company**

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This dissertation examines Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Lincoln trilogy (works that deal with explicitly with American historical narratives) in the context of the cognitive science behind such sense-making tools as narrative, metaphor, and causation. Within this cognition-based theoretical framework, making the past meaningful in the present necessarily involves emotional response; making and understanding historical narratives are not simply "objective" endeavors. I argue that BTJ/AZ's engagement with historical narratives, events, and figures within their choreographies happens through the relationship of emotional response and embodiment, and provides a corporeal route into history that critiques previous formulations of archive, identity, narrative, time, and space that compose historical inquiry. My interest in "feeling history" is in yoking *feeling* and *moving* as complementary processes rooted in the materiality of the body that reveal how individuals both create narratives as sense-making tools and find meaning within inherited and reimagined histories. BTJ/AZ's work manifests transhistorical human conditions of meaning-making that are nonetheless situated in particular spatio-temporalities. Specifically, their emphasis on embodied emotional response as choreographic methodology reflects the biological reality of concepts like mirror neurons, conceptual blending, and empathic concern that interact with cultural sense-making tools that are historically situated (for example, Lincoln's metaphor of "a house divided"). BTJ/AZ propose a corporeal relationship to history, one of interanimation through

embodied cognition. We are moved, literally and figuratively, by the past and, in the archival repertory of BTJ/AZ, we *move* the past, choreographing historical events and figures into our present so that we might re-route our current paths.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

*“All emotions use the body as their theater.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“He thought he was going to attack a theory about history. He remembers a class in third grade about the great man. And it’s not that he’s forgotten it. He just doesn’t remember it. It could be said that this history is someone born in 1981.*

*She thought she was going to attack a theory about history. There was the history class in third grade. The class about the great man. But what she remembers is [gesture]. It could be said that this history is a person born in 1982.*

*It could be said that this history is a person, a woman. A woman who is able. A woman who is able to say goodbye. A woman who is able to fix you right. A woman who is able to fix you right after you die. It could be said that this history is distance. The distance between that woman and me.”<sup>2</sup>*

The above excerpts from *Serenade/The Proposition*, a 2008 Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company (BTJ/AZ) production which reimagines the figure and legacy of Abraham Lincoln, reference a complex patchwork of issues surrounding the making and sharing of history: memory, emotion, time, space, the specific/personal and the general/universal, narrative,

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Serenade/The Proposition*. Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Directed by Bill T. Jones and Janet Wong. Teatro Municipale Valli, Reggio-Emilia, Italy, 17 March 2010.

embodiment, identity, and archive, to name the most obvious. BTJ/AZ has made the re-imagining of history an abiding focus within their substantial repertory, one that has allowed them to also grapple with an aesthetic tension between narration and abstraction seemingly omnipresent in “postmodern” dance. This study is not an exhaustive one, and I have chosen to focus on works that speak directly to specific historical “targets” that I think can tell us as much about contemporary art-making praxis as they can about the stakes of revising history – a group of works I am calling the “archival repertory.” This project looks to BTJ/AZ’s archival repertory as a site of possible answers to the question: “how do individuals make history meaningful and find value in historical narratives?” BTJ/AZ’s work proposes a multitude of responses to this query, responses that take the form of embodied practices rather than discursive answers. Their practices both in the studio and on stage investigate emotion as a route into history, as a method of finding one’s place within a larger historical narrative. *Feeling history* is process made up of a set of aesthetic practices and choreographic methodologies in the ensemble’s archival repertory that express the fundamental reality that emotions are embodied. I wish to take this a step further and, using a cognitive scientific framework, show how both the body and emotional response are foundational to reasoning, including traditionally understood “intellectual” or “rational” narratives of history. My interest in feeling history is in yoking *feeling* and *moving* as complementary practices that reveal how individuals both create historical narratives and find meaning within inherited and reimagined histories. By seeking out historical events, figures, and moments that produce a kind of emotional density, or surplus of emotional response BTJ/AZ performers enact a corporeal history.

## 1.1 A NOTE ON CORPOREALITY

“History” has become a highly privileged discourse of making meaning out of human experience across time, geography, and culture. BTJ/AZ performers function as historians in their dancing, literally and figuratively choreographing history, or performing what Susan Leigh Foster has termed “ambulant scholarship.”<sup>3</sup> As the false separation of theory from practice crumbles in our understanding of performance studies as a discipline, it is important to remember that this unhelpful division has also consistently been applied to the objects of our study, and that performers and art-makers do, in fact, theorize and make history (amongst other things) in ways that are as significant as those enacted within academic structures of inquiry. Foster’s *Choreographing History* expresses frustration with the historical positioning of the body in academic scholarship as an essential “sign” that reflects cultural phenomena, rather than as a generative force in its own right. She proposes that viewing the body “as a choreographer might” would offer a possible solution to her central question, “What models of body cultivate physicality as a site for the invention of meaning?”<sup>4</sup> Foster’s text, written in 1995, replicates a common poststructuralist move toward seeing the body as a text (albeit a productive rather than merely reflective one) that her later work has complicated and enriched. In part, this is due to a wave of interest in phenomenological and cognitive scientific models and their application to humanities-based inquiry, particularly in theater, dance, and performance studies.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Mark Johnson’s theory of embodied meaning has much to say in answer to Foster’s question.

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<sup>3</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> See Foster’s own *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London: Routledge, 2012). Also see Bruce McConachie’s *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and Amy Cook’s *Shakespearean Neuroplay: Reinvigorating the*

BTJ/AZ's participation in what I call a "corporeal history" needs a bit more clarification, then, about the relationship of the body to history, a relationship clearly central to my thesis in its terminology. The oft-repeated colloquialism (very common amongst dancers) that one can know something "in the bones" has found scientific validation in recent years amongst cognitive scientists who advocate for a body-based model of cognition wherein body, mind, and environment all work in tandem to produce a meaningful world. This model directly responds to the problematic assertions of first generation cognitive science that proposed the brain-as-computer model as well as radically challenging the centuries-long and still powerfully prevalent theories of Cartesian dualism that prize a separation between body and mind, emotions and reason. My theoretical alignment is partially inspired by Mark Johnson's *The Meaning of the Body: The Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, wherein Johnson argues for an understanding of meaning-making generally and aesthetics specifically that is corporeally-centered and rooted in actual, phenomenological experience: "meaning is not just what is consciously entertained in acts of feeling and thought; instead, meaning reaches deep down into our corporeal encounter with our environment."<sup>6</sup> Meaning is not an intellectualized endeavor that takes the shape of a top-down approach, emanating from the brain into a disembodied world of ideas. Rather, meaning "includes qualities, emotions, percepts, concepts, images, image schemas, metaphors, metonymies, and various other imaginative structures" whose operations start in the body, in an organism's physiological interactions with the world – from the bottom up.<sup>7</sup> Thus for my purposes, corporeal history necessarily articulates the situatedness of experience, the embeddedness of our bodies within specific physicalities, abilities, and social and cultural

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*Study of Dramatic Texts and Performance Through Cognitive Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

environments. The notion of embodied meaning offers a way into understanding why, despite a long period of decrying the service of “History” to power-grabbing political projects, individuals still seek to embed themselves in historical narratives, to find their place within a larger story, and to glean meaning from and make sense of the past. Our search for meaning, Johnson claims, is not attached to abstraction but rather, “Things, qualities, events, and symbols have meaning *for us* because of how they connect with other aspects of our actual or possible experience.”<sup>8</sup> Trying to make sense of, or make meaningful the past, is simultaneously to connect our present to the past and to future experience. Thus the revisionist project taken on by BTJ/AZ seems less, to me, about restructuring the workings of power in the writing of histories, i.e. returning power to those routinely silenced by much official history, and more about making history meaningful and valuable, through revision when necessary.

## 1.2 EMBODIED MEANING, EMOTION, AND HISTORY

Two caveats before I go on: the first, that this study will likely be plagued, as is much writing from a cognitive scientific perspective, by an unfortunate dearth of vocabulary to express the true union of the body-mind. According to a cognitive scientific perspective, all of our experiences (even historically intellectualized activities like thinking and reasoning) are inescapably embodied, thus to ascribe “embodied” as an adjective to anything relating to human experience is actually redundant. However, much of our academic discourses have yet to fully reject a Cartesian dualism that firmly relegates the mind and its supposed intellectual activities to a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., emphasis in original.

separate sphere from the body's lived experiences, including emotional response, so it seems necessary to me to continue to foreground embodiment as a theoretical frame as well as a lived reality. Also, as will be demonstrated by cognitive scientists like Antonio Damasio, whose work centers around the role of emotions in supposed "higher-level" processes of consciousness and reasoning, it is somewhat inaccurate to speak of feeling and thinking as though they are separate or even wholly distinct processes. Much of the body-mind's functioning, both unconscious and conscious, remains unknown. However, researchers like Damasio have shown that emotional response is fundamental to any notion of reasoning and to the formation of self, so to speak of feeling and thinking as separate activities does not reflect our actual experience as accurately as one might wish. Yet here again inherited vocabularies influence available terminology for talking about what exactly is going on in these dances. As Johnson himself notes, "even our language seems to be against us in our quest for an adequate theory of meaning and the self."<sup>9</sup>

A second caveat is in regards to the nature of many feelings (and to cognition in general) as unconscious phenomena: I am not claiming that BTJ/AZ consciously created a choreographic methodology and set of performance practices that articulate cognitive scientific notions about emotions and embodied meaning. However I believe that because the ensemble are human, they are subject to universal bioregulatory processes (feeling emotions being one) and thus their archival repertory reflects some aspects of these processes. I am more interested in investigating how the company's consciously-articulated ideas about feeling history and finding kinesthetic routes into historical narratives mesh with cognitive scientific notions, such as Johnson's embodied meaning and Damasio's somatic-marker hypothesis (more on this later), and how their practices might function as a kind of creative laboratory in which cognitive scientific claims can

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 7.



be tested through dance. Thus any direct engagement with cognitive scientific concepts that I find in the company's choreography is not due to the company's conscious decision-making but rather due to a theoretical frame on my part from cognitive science that is sympathetic to the company's own history-making paradigms. Moreover, a cognitive scientific explanatory framework should not imply any adherence to empiricist determinism. There is much yet to be discovered about our body-mind, especially its unconscious processes, and Johnson cautions against discounting imagination in the role of meaning-making: "Imagination is tied to our bodily processes and can also be creative and transformative of experience...an embodied theory of meaning will suggest only that new meaning is not a miracle but rather arises from, and remains connected to, preexisting patterns, qualities, and feelings."<sup>10</sup> Thus creativity and imagination are rooted in, not easily determined by, embodied experience.

Much of the cognitive science that Johnson draws upon in his theory of embodied meaning is focused on the unconscious processes that structure the majority of our lived experiences. Emotional response is one such category of processes. Damasio's work in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* suggests that it is possible for feelings to occur wholly unconsciously in an organism, yet we are often conscious of our feelings (a phenomenon Damasio calls "feeling a feeling") for a variety of reasons, most of them to do with evolutionary advantage. Emotion, per Damasio, is a series of chemical and physical responses to a given emotion inducer, "many of which are publicly observable."<sup>11</sup> The terminology of feeling, by contrast, refers to "the private, mental experience of an emotion [.]"<sup>12</sup> Johnson articulates this distinction, building on Damasio's work, as the difference between

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>11</sup> *The Feeling*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

emotion – “complex neural, chemical, and behavioral responses to various types of stimuli that typically have positive or negative value for us” – and feeling – “a qualitative awareness of our sensations and emotional responses.”<sup>13</sup> Damasio and Johnson both conceptualize feeling as a process of understanding our emotional responses. Patrick Hogan reiterates this distinction by breaking down emotional experience into four phases: eliciting conditions, expressive outcomes (such as facial gestures), actional response (such as running away), and phenomenological tone, “or just what the emotion feels like.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout this study I will attempt as little conflation between emotion and feeling as possible, using emotion to reference specific embodied responses that prompt feeling, a process of recognizing those responses. Thus “feeling” history involves identifying our emotional responses to specific scenarios, objects, and sensations and through our awareness, our feeling of these emotional responses, building a narrative that gives meaning to past, present, and future experience.

Emotional response, operating at an unconscious level, often occurs in reaction to an external stimulus (such as a bear appearing on your path as you walk through the woods) causing an emotional response (fear) that in turn causes the body to act in physical response (running away). These external stimuli also include sense-memories, for example seeing an object that reminds you of an emotion-laden past experience, or smelling your grandmother’s perfume on someone else. Johnson reminds us that, though feeling is a process relating to our own awareness of emotional response, emotional response is always “directed out into the world” from which it

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<sup>13</sup> 56.

<sup>14</sup> 3. See Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011) pp. 2-8 for thorough explanation of each element of emotional experience. Hogan also prefers the terminology “emotion system” over emotion, as it reflects the multifaceted nature of neural, chemical, and physical responses that occur in tandem for any given emotional expression.

arises.<sup>15</sup> As has been often philosophized, emotion and memory are deeply connected, and both have shared complex relationships to the practice of history. BTJ/AZ seem preoccupied with how our embodied nature produces certain views of the world, and how different experiences of embodiment, in terms of embeddedness in distinct cultural and social environments, might yield alternate interpretations of the past, present, and future. Thus, while I occasionally use the terminology of “the” body, bodies in BTJ/AZ (and for philosophers like Johnson) are profoundly situated in particular environments and make meaning only through interaction with other people and with these environments. In other words, my understanding of “the” body should in no way imply an essentialist perspective.

Cognitive science and materialism, while certainly distinct in significant ways, do share a meaningful belief in both the centrality of embodiment and in culture as an environment that bears on this study. Manuel Vásquez’s *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* reframes materialism away from a mechanistic understanding, wherein social phenomena are “unidirectionally determined by infrastructural material forces” and into the notion of “cultural realism.”<sup>16</sup> Vásquez defines cultural realism as follows: “Selves and culture are material in their own right. They acquire their distinctive materiality through social practices that mediate how we experience the world and our own embodiment. Because social practices give selves and culture a material density, identities and cultural artifacts also have causal efficacy.”<sup>17</sup> BTJ/AZ’s choreographic revisions of history force us to confront new questions about embodiment and its relationship to history, a relationship that is already fraught with anxiety over the body’s supposed invisibility in the archives. One of my aims is to extend David Román’s assertion that

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<sup>15</sup> 65.

<sup>16</sup> Manuel Vásquez, *More Than Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6. Vásquez borrows from and builds upon David Margolis’s similar definition.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

“the performing arts might be understood as embodied theories that help audiences restructure or, at the very least, reimagine their social selves” by identifying the specific ways in which an “archival repertory” provides explicit opportunities for spectators but also performers to reimagine their own relationships to each other and to the notion of a shared history.<sup>18</sup>

While performance may not be able to fulfill Román’s claim of restructuring the self in a biological sense, cognitive science has shown that we do not operate as autonomous organisms but rather are profoundly situated in both material and social environments. Reimagining social selves, as Román puts it, is not only an ongoing project of performance but also of history. History, the hope of making sense of the past and, as we are evolutionarily inclined to do, forming plausible narratives of past events and trying to understand causality, has often sought to be objective (and objectivity’s corollary, unemotional) as historian John Lewis Gaddis explains: “We’re supposed to be solid, dispassionate chroniclers of events, not given to allowing our emotions and our intuitions to affect what we do, or so we’ve traditionally been taught.”<sup>19</sup> Damasio’s experiments, however, have shown that “reason,” if it is truly possible to separate it from emotion, cannot in fact operate *without* emotion. Damasio’s somatic-marker hypothesis resulted from studies done on patients who, due to injury to areas in the prefrontal cortex, “lost a certain class of emotions and, in a momentous parallel development, lost their ability to make rational decisions,” here identified as “the ability to decide advantageously in situations involving risk and conflict [.]”<sup>20</sup> The somatic-marker hypothesis proposes that “selective reduction of emotion is at least as prejudicial for rationality as excessive emotion...on the

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<sup>18</sup> David Román, *Performance in America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>19</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16. See Patrick Hogan’s *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003) for an account of our evolutionary predisposition to forming narrative structures as a sense-making practice.

<sup>20</sup> *The Feeling*, 41.

contrary, emotion probably assists reasoning [.]”<sup>21</sup> In other words, our abilities to reason and make logical decisions (endeavors certainly related to creating plausible historical narratives) likely cannot operate without a healthy dose of emotional response. Johnson’s embodiment hypothesis echoes Damasio: “meaning is shaped by the nature of our bodies, especially our sensorimotor capacities and our ability to experience feelings and emotions.”<sup>22</sup> Johnson is even stronger on the connection between emotion and supposed higher-level processes than Damasio, claiming, “there is no cognition without emotion [.]”<sup>23</sup> Damasio’s somatic-marker hypothesis and Johnson’s embodiment hypothesis have real ramifications to consider for anyone investigating practices of sense-making, history being one such practice and art-making another. One such consequence is the realization that activities usually connected with aesthetics are involved directly in cognition, often foregrounding modes of meaning-making outside of, or in complement to, the linguistic.<sup>24</sup> It strikes me that dance, in always already foregrounding the body in motion, makes explicit the implicit connection between movement and emotion, a word whose definition includes “to cause to move.”<sup>25</sup>

The repertory under discussion here – 1990’s *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land*, 2008’s *Serenade/The Proposition* and *100 Migrations*, and 2009’s *Fondly Do We Hope...Fervently Do We Pray* – all address the notion that history is not dead, but rather a force that can be enacted on or harnessed by present and future bodies. Inherited cultural

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> 9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See Johnson, ch. 10, for more of this argument, specifically his rejection of Kantian aesthetics.

<sup>25</sup> See OED, emotion as verb, 1. This particular definition has become obscure in contemporary parlance, yet remains in other linguistic expressions, such as being moved by a performance. The notion of emotions as a causal force, inciting us to literal action, is backed up by the neuroscience of emotions, discussed in Johnson, ch. 3. Johnson states that emotions function to appraise specific situations an organism finds itself in, “often initiating actions geared to our fluid functioning within our environment. It is in this sense that emotional responses can be said to move us to action.” 61.

narratives are not, in these works, theoretical abstractions but rather structuring dimensions of lived experience. Johnson’s theory of embodied meaning, wherein “the meaning of a thing is its consequences for experience – how it ‘cashes out’ by way of experience, either actual or possible experience” becomes, for BTJ/AZ, a theory of making and understanding history.<sup>26</sup> Qualitative dimensions of lived experience often elide us in the archives; BTJ/AZ perform these qualitative dimensions of history, including emotional qualities present in relationships and the expressive body. For BTJ/AZ, history leaves marks on the body and the heart, a theory that the company continually revisits through the choreography of their physical selves. As Vásquez claims, operating from a position of materialism (which bears much resemblance to “embodied meaning”) necessarily draws critical attention to the “embodied, sensorimotoric dimensions” of a discipline, in this case, history.<sup>27</sup> Performing these historical narratives again participates not only in a re-framing of historical inquiry but also to an on-going reaction “to the notion that live performance disappears by insisting that, to the contrary, the live is a vehicle for recurrence – unruly or flawed or unfaithful to precedence as that recurrence may threaten to be.”<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3 EMOTION, NARRATIVE, AND HISTORY

In positioning BTJ/AZ as historians, I operate from Mary Fulbrook’s notion of “a practising historian who is committed to a notion of history as trying to say something true about the past, and yet is highly aware of the ways in which different historical traditions and conflicting

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<sup>26</sup> 10.

<sup>27</sup> 13.

<sup>28</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 29.

interpretations of the past are closely linked to political and moral positions.”<sup>29</sup> The “something true” for BTJ/AZ is often an interpretation of a historical event or figure that expresses lived experience and embodied reality, yet it may in fact conflict with historical record. Mistakes are made in the telling of history, the difference perhaps in BTJ/AZ’s archival repertory is that the mistakes are intentional and explicit, including “mistakes” such as forgetting, reorganizing outside of linear time, and theatricalizing. Rebecca Schneider’s work on re-enactment, quoted above, speaks to this stickiness between the past and the present, wherein “the monumental and the passing live co-constitute each other in a relationship that can be as much about forgetting (bypassing) as commemorating (monumentalizing).”<sup>30</sup> One way to position the company’s performance *as* history-making is through Fulbrook’s notion of paradigms as the primary structure for historical inquiry. Fulbrook argues that all historians inevitably choose paradigms in their writing of histories through which their narratives come to have meaning and make sense. Paradigms exist at theoretical, contextual, or metatheoretical levels. In the work that BTJ/AZ do as historians all three levels operate together, though not always as a mutually reinforcing system – indeed, in its identity as choreography, the history that BTJ/AZ create and share is always in motion, at times with one element springing ahead of the rest or with two elements, even three, moving against one another. I introduce Fulbrook’s paradigm terminology not so that it might become the dominant nomenclature of this study, but rather because it teases out, in specific and productive ways, the varying influences carried into historical inquiry by the historian.

Theoretical paradigms spring from “an explicit set of assumptions about ‘how the world works’” but remain more specific, often through their development of a particular vocabulary,

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<sup>29</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), ix.

<sup>30</sup> 7.

than metatheoretical paradigms, which are concerned with broad characterizations about humanity's nature and causality.<sup>31</sup> If we can think about embodied meaning as a theoretical method (one of BTJ/AZ's most striking contributions to reorienting historical figures), then I believe it fits into this three-pronged approach as a theoretical paradigm, while materialism/cultural realism, in Vásquez's vein, functions more as a metatheoretical paradigm. Accepting that culture and identity have causal force and that force results from our lived experience in the world is the broader foundation upon which a theory of embodied meaning can be shaped and used. Both cultural realism and embodied meaning begin from a tacit commitment to the primacy of the body in facilitating cultural phenomena. Embodied meaning, however, goes into terminology, like the body-brain-environment network, that aims at a specific target of how we make meaning for ourselves. Both cultural realism and embodied meaning get at questions of causality and narrative, significant elements of crafting a history, and ones that form the backbone of recent performance historiography scholarship, alongside aspects of time, space, archive, and identity.<sup>32</sup>

These frames address my central query, namely if BTJ/AZ advocate for feeling (as an embodied, literally moving practice) as a way of understanding and revising history, how successful is this approach and what are its ramifications for conceptualizing history? William V. Harris's "History, Empathy and Emotions" excoriates historians who claim to practice a kind of empathic historiography, wherein empathy means "thinking the thoughts and feeling the

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<sup>31</sup> 34. See Fulbrook's ch. 2 for a full analysis of paradigms.

<sup>32</sup> See Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010) for the five "themes" of performance historiography. For Canning and Postlewait "narrative" stands in for causality, but the gist is much the same; namely, how to frame a sequence of events so that they express historical meaning. More will be said on Canning and Postlewait in Chapter One.



emotions of historical actors in order to gain insight into their behavior.”<sup>33</sup> Leaving aside a cognitive scientific understanding of empathy,<sup>34</sup> Harris’s comments here (and throughout his essay) replicate a separation between reason and emotion that is problematic for his argument and historians generally if a desire to accurately represent or describe the past remains. Harris advocates historians to consider the emotional dimensions of history, yet these remain separate from rational or logical explanations: “a great deal of modern academic history-writing has suffered significantly from its failure to pay enough attention to the emotional behaviour of its subjects.”<sup>35</sup> For Harris, understanding the emotional reasons leading to a historical event is not the same as apprehending the rational causes, yet he fully endorses “historical study of the emotions” for its “explanatory power” that might complement or supplement more rational explanations.<sup>36</sup> I share Harris’s commitment to uncovering the emotional landscape of history, to understanding what emotional responses and practices of feeling have explanatory (or causal) effects in the making of historical narrative. However I am less convinced that maintaining the separation between emotion and reason will get us to these explanations. “Emotional” explanations do not have to contradict “rational” ones, feeling and reasoning are fundamentally connected as cognitive processes and are as likely to support one another as they are to oppose.<sup>37</sup> Thus a history that approaches its subject through a paradigm of embodied meaning is not predisposed either to contradict or confirm inherited, “rational” historical explanations.

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<sup>33</sup> William V. Harris, “History, Empathy and Emotions,” *Antike und Abendland* 56 (2010): 2.

<sup>34</sup> Briefly, this perspective would claim that it is virtually impossible not to feel empathy, however whether or not we decide to understand causality through empathic response is not biologically determined. Empathy is treated further in Chapter Two.

<sup>35</sup> 8. And lest one think I am unreasonable in my assessment of Harris, his article was written in 2010 and references cognitive science on numerous points as a rising influential theory in the humanities generally.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>37</sup> See Bruce McConachie, “Reenacting Events to Narrate Theatre History” in Canning and Postlewait, pp. 378-403 for a discussion of empathy and theatre history in the context of R.G. Collingwood’s historiographical methods.

Returning to Fulbrook, contextual paradigms refer not as much to the framework within which history is made and shared but rather to the historian her- or himself, to “particular scholarly or political communities, with particular connotations which may influence ‘membership’ in a particular theoretical tradition or scholarly language approach.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, the identity facets of the historian influence the approach towards the historical inquiry. This is a heavily foregrounded paradigm throughout BTJ/AZ’s archival repertory, as dancers are asked to lift personal histories from their lives and place them on/with/against the larger historical narrative in question. Moreover, the dancers’ identity *as dancers* contributes to their version of an embodied meaning paradigm, and this dancer identity interfaces with, naturally, a whole host of other identity formations that individual company members bring with them to the rehearsal room. The language used in the epigraphs to this introduction of “attack” reflects some of the identity politics that reside in the dancers. Chapter Three will also investigate the identity of performers as “community members” and how that contextual paradigm shifts the historical investigation. A contextual paradigm that I approach my own work with is an understanding of emotion as a bioregulatory process that is cross-cultural and transhistorical, though the meanings it may produce vary due to the distinct relationships between body, mind, and environment that are historically situated in time and place.

An overreaching goal of this project is not only to articulate the historical paradigms with which the company interrogates history-making, but also to reframe the paradigm of scholarship about BTJ/AZ. As Fulbrook writes, “Historical inquiry is...more akin to participating in collective ‘puzzle-solving’ activities than to the individual production of a narrative.”<sup>39</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

company's increasingly collaborative mode of working supports Fulbrook's assertion. My approach in writing about the ensemble's endeavors is not to foreground Jones as the director of the company but rather to seek out the collective forces that engendered these works. Much scholarship on the company focuses on Jones himself – he is an enigmatic figure whose personal life, aesthetic vision, and technical choreography inspire much to talk about in academic circles, and certainly he figures in this study as well. However, I am equally interested in the voices of dancers and community members who workshopped, rehearsed, and performed these works. Including their experiences of feeling history (not just “History” but also their own, smaller moments of personal history) honors the company's own methodology in making these works.

#### **1.4 MODES OF INQUIRY**

For BTJ/AZ, the stakes of their archival repertory are high: understanding the impact of the past in the present is not an intellectual activity but rather one that addresses lived experiences of pain, pride, grief, and anger and how those experiences might be shifted towards alternate emotional responses in the future. The company's artistic endeavors, the discipline of history, and the model of embodied meaning share a focus on the interrelationship between past, present, and future. Gaddis, summarizing historiographer E. H. Carr, explains the significance of historical inquiry in terms of its procedural potential: “if we can widen the range of experience beyond what we as individuals have encountered, if we can draw upon the experiences of others who've had to confront comparable situations in the past, then – although there are no guarantees

– our *chances* of acting wisely should increase proportionally.”<sup>40</sup> Certainly “acting wisely” is subjective, but the notion that past events influence present experience and can structure future experiences is shared by Johnson’s theory of embodied meaning: “The meaning of a specific aspect or dimension of some ongoing experience is that aspect’s connections to other parts of past, present, or future (possible) experiences.”<sup>41</sup> This temporal element interacts with other elements of historical inquiry in order to produce a coherent narrative.

Performance historians Postlewait and Canning posit archive, space, time, identity, and narrative as five “fundamental ideas or categories of thought that allow them [historians] to carry out their research, compile their evidence, develop their analyses and explanations, and complete their final reports.”<sup>42</sup> These themes do not counter Fulbrook’s notion of paradigms; rather, paradigms guide the historian’s interpretation of the relationship between these elements in practicing historical inquiry. Postlewait and Canning continue to claim that all historians, “as we carry out our historical inquiry, *think with* – not just about – each of these five modes of comprehension in our tasks of representing the past.”<sup>43</sup> In positioning BTJ/AZ as corporeal historians, I am most interested in how we might *feel* with or through these concepts in an effort to make the past meaningful in the present. Embodiment is a crucial element in the various neurological processes underlying how we feel, and the company’s conscious articulation of bodily movement as a method of engaging with these five elements argues for new modes of doing history. Canning and Postlewait argue that language “mediates between the past events and each historian’s configuration (or reconfiguration) of them. Our descriptions of historical

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<sup>40</sup> 9, emphasis in original.

<sup>41</sup> 10.

<sup>42</sup> 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, emphasis in original.

events and conditions depend upon – and are limited by – the available discourses that we have access to (and have facility in). ...Language provides the ideas we think with...”<sup>44</sup> BTJ/AZ intervene in this notion by proposing additional mediations between the past and present - in this case, modes of moving body-minds. Their choreographies perform a model of feeling history that is inseparable from moving history (both in literal movement and in the sense that emotions “move” us). Along similar lines, Gaddis conceives of the historian’s work as using “the laboratory that’s in their mind to reconstruct past processes from surviving structures.”<sup>45</sup> From the perspective of cognitive science, any laboratory in the mind is necessarily in the body as well, and BTJ/AZ’s engagement with movement as a discourse that mediates our approach to understanding the past argues for the body-mind as the historian’s laboratory.

This project focuses on archive, identity, and narrative as themes of historical inquiry that get revised and reimagined through feeling and moving in BTJ/AZ’s archival repertory. This is not to say, however, that time and space are inconsequential – in fact, all five themes are interrelated to varying degrees in any history – but rather that time and space do not function as sites of revision to the same degree in the company’s work as do archive, identity, and narrative.<sup>46</sup> I relate these three themes to Gaddis’s definition of the historian’s task, namely “connecting reality, representation, and persuasion.”<sup>47</sup> Gaddis elaborates:

In recounting an event, or a series of them, we begin with what’s there – normally archives, the equivalent for us of bones, bodies, or terrain. We interpret these through our own distinctive viewpoints: it’s here that imagination, even dramatization, is involved. Ultimately, though, the product must go before an audience...the product may move those

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>45</sup> 41.

<sup>46</sup> Time and space will be addressed further in Chapter Two, regarding their inseparability in creating conceptual metaphors.

<sup>47</sup> 45.

who encounter it to revise their own views so that a new basis for critical judgment emerges, perhaps even a new view of reality itself.<sup>48</sup>

Archive, identity, and narrative (i.e., how causality is explained and events are ordered) are interrelated but also distinct in Gaddis's formulation. BTJ/AZ's work adds to the possible ways historians might utilize archives, identity, and narrative, complicating "reality," or the archives, with personal, lived experiences, "representation" with the effects of identity on selection (a process guided by emotional response), and "persuasion" with a re-examination of narrative conventions, all firmly in support of Gaddis's assertion that doing history can affect social change. In fact, their use of emotion as a route into making history meaningful may increase the likelihood that their works are both perceived as advocating social change and perhaps cause (partially) this change to occur. Culture and emotion scratch each other's backs in this respect, as Damasio notes that one the one hand, "learning and culture alter the expression of emotions and give emotions new meanings"<sup>49</sup> and on the other, "the recall of new facts is enhanced by the presence of certain degrees of emotion during learning."<sup>50</sup> Juxtaposing emotional responses with historical narratives may lead to both a new meaning of that emotion and also a more vivid understanding of the narrative. "[H]istorical scholarship in dance and performance studies," Canning and Postlewait assert, "requires us to reconceive and reformulate not only the idea of the archive but also the ideas of space, time, identity, and narrative."<sup>51</sup> BTJ/AZ do just this, and it is in this respect that I consider their repertory historical scholarship *in* dance, and thus subject to the same scrutiny as historical scholarship *about* dance.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 47-8.

<sup>49</sup> *The Feeling*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>51</sup> 21.

I will briefly touch on archive, identity, and narrative to set up the following chapters, each of which will elaborate on the necessarily short sketches here. My focus in the chapters will be how BTJ/AZ's methods of feeling and moving, essential components of meaning-making as understood through cognitive science, necessitate new formulations of traditional historical themes inevitably leading to alternate modes of "doing" history. BTJ/AZ's commitment to embodied archives is one such departure. "Imagination in history then, as in science, must be tethered to and disciplined by sources," Gaddis writes, "that's what distinguishes it from the arts and all other methods of representing reality."<sup>52</sup> The first half of Gaddis's statement rings true for the creative methodologies practiced by BTJ/AZ, the second half is more problematic, as part of what BTJ/AZ perform is corporeal history *through* art. Indeed, my intention is not to collapse useful disciplinary distinctions between history and the arts but rather to demonstrate how traversing between disciplinary boundaries might achieve more productive strides towards understanding how, through artistic practice and production, human beings make meaningful their pasts. The archive, the collection of sources from which the historian selects meaningful traces in order to construct a narrative of past events, operates in two distinct definitions for Canning and Postlewait, both drawing from an understanding of archive as "source." They conceive of source "as information and data that can serve the historical project, when verified as evidence" and "as a beginning or initiating cause," producing histories as a product of what is housed in the archive.<sup>53</sup> Clarifying this latter definition, Canning and Postlewait assert, "an archive is not merely something we use; it is, as a category of thought, a way of conceiving and

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<sup>52</sup> 43.

<sup>53</sup> 21.

reconceiving the identities and meanings of past events.”<sup>54</sup> If “archive” carries an epistemological function, influencing how we make histories and rehearse national and personal narratives based simply on what has been selected (and what has not) for a given archive, then archives also function affectively, as categories of feeling, given the inseparability of feeling and thought demonstrated by Damasio’s somatic marker hypothesis. BTJ/AZ develop this point in their use of personal histories as archival data, as map points that connect with “official” archives of past historical events. The use of these personal histories is also guided by a kind of emotional selection – not all experiences and all data are encoded equally within our emotion systems.

Selection from the archive and sequencing of events are significant steps in making history relevant – i.e., transforming data points into a meaningful narrative that explains how these points are related. The archive’s contents strongly influence historical narratives as they are constructed based on what evidence is available, its provenance, and its fit within the trajectory of a given project. Canning and Postlewait point to this close relationship between archive and narrative, claiming “The historian must often negotiate among contending versions of past events, as the archive may allow, seeking the most equivalent representation within the possible temporal and spatial coordinates.”<sup>55</sup> Gaddis goes a step further, asserting that historians approach the archive and their craft with “one of the most sophisticated of all methods of inquiry: the narrative.”<sup>56</sup> Narrative functions as a way of explaining causality – why certain events led to others, or why other events may be outliers, tangentially but not directly related. History is not, of course, the sole proprietor of narrative as a method of making sense of or giving meaning to events. Various art forms use narratives as well, including literature, and stories have been a

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>56</sup> 88.



ritual of human interaction since humans interacted.<sup>57</sup> Hogan has demonstrated in his studies of narratology that emotion necessarily underlies the prototypical genres of story organization due to the effects of emotion on selection processes. His development of three narrative prototypes (the heroic, the sacrificial, and the romantic love narratives) and their generation by emotion serves as a foundation for narrative structure that BTJ/AZ intentionally shift. I will show how these shifts are created by emotional response to specific socio-cultural stimuli that cause these traditional prototypes to not fulfill given individual and collective goals, and thus lead to the formation of alternatives. “The determination of story organization by emotion systems,” Hogan writes, “goes all the way down to the level of events and incidents, pervading the way in which we make causal attributions.”<sup>58</sup> Understanding change, and thus causality, is a chief task of the historian, and in this way emotion and the practice of history are intimately intertwined.

Hogan’s understanding of narrative includes the socio-cultural conditions within which narratives are produced. This is important to remember, given Hogan’s affective neuroscience framework: as Johnson claims, material and social environments are one of the three major factors in how human beings understand their world and lives as meaningful. Neurological and biological processes impact this understanding as well, but are not deterministic of experience to such a high degree that they cancel out environmental factors. Identity matters in this body-brain-environment framework, similar to Vásquez’s cultural realism wherein identity and culture have causal effects on experience (and here, on narrative). As Hogan claims, “not every individual or group has the same degree of authority or impact with respect to the social

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<sup>57</sup> See Brian Boyd *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009) for this argument.

<sup>58</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 2.

evaluation and preservation of stories.”<sup>59</sup> What is available for selection and inclusion into a historical narrative shifts with socio-cultural embeddedness in time and space. For example, what gets preserved in an archive is certainly a product of a hierarchy of social identity that is grounded in a specific historical spatio-temporality. Individuals’ access to that archive is also a product of a hierarchy of identities. Thus availability of experience is influenced by social identity, which in turn influences the selection of episodes from which an individual constructs a history. Narrative and identity are strongly connected as “narrative organizes both individual and communal identities, [and] shapes and composes memories and expectations” but also as identity influences availability and selection of narrative.<sup>60</sup> The work of BTJ/AZ explicates this connection in allowing performer identities to influence the selection of episodes and even the choice of archive from which their larger narratives emerge. Ultimately, these decisions are made based, as Hogan claims, on emotional responses.

## **1.5 PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

This project is indebted to queer studies and critical race studies thinking in its focus on the role of cultural identity markers and their relationship to historical narratives. BTJ/AZ as a company shares this focus, creating works that are actively engaged in queering standard narratives of race, gender, and sexuality as they are enacted upon and within bodies. Against social constructivism and biological determinism, this study advocates for examining identity as not merely a noun but as a series of practices and tactics for making meaning in the world – practices

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>60</sup> Canning and Postlewait, 19.

that always push-pull between being structurally assigned and individually deployed. My methodology is inspired by these schools of thought to rethink standard notions of history and archive and to challenge, as do the performers of BTJ/AZ, the authority of these inherited ideas over lived experience. Thus there is a kind of queer materialism at work in these pages that affects the choice of methodology and of subject. These works are complex, lengthy, and always changing as different bodies circulate through their choreographies, so my analysis here draws specifically upon moments in the generation and performance of these works that speak directly to historical targets and the development of a corporeal history. Throughout I have taken to heart Jones's assertion that his and Arnie Zane's creative relationship was "more about collision than collage," and seek to find the energy, emotional responses, and embrace of conflict within the company's choreographic practices and performances.<sup>61</sup>

My term "the archival repertory" is a self-admitted play on Diana Taylor's now-seminal work *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Taylor distinguishes between the archive – "documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change"<sup>62</sup> – and the repertoire – "performance, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge."<sup>63</sup> A scholarly tendency to see a binary between archive and repertoire, including within Taylor's own definitions of these terms, works against the complex analysis Taylor performs and her claim that, "We need not polarize

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<sup>61</sup> See R.M. Campbell's interview with Jones wherein Jones describes his and Zane's creative partnership and aesthetic as "more about collision than collage." "A test of faith: choreographer Bill T. Jones confronts religion, racism and AIDS in 'The Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin.'" *The Los Angeles Times*. 10 March 1991: 5.

<sup>62</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

the relationship between these different kinds of knowledge to acknowledge that they have often proved antagonistic in the struggle for cultural survival or supremacy.”<sup>64</sup> The significant political dimensions of Taylor’s project are often elided when taking up her work in favor of importing her distinctions between archive and repertoire piecemeal onto a new object of analysis likely distant in time and place from the complexly situated contemporary Americas that Taylor touches down upon. Thus while I acknowledge a debt to Taylor in yoking these terms together, I must say that my own thinking about archive and repertoire (and really, more repertory) is not invested in the same political project. While inspired by Taylor’s thinking with “performance as episteme,” my own interests lie more in investigating how the repertoire functions as an archival site than in how the archive(s) might constrain or silence the repertoire.<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, my own project is more about engaging the company’s repertory than Taylor’s notion of repertoire. Repertory, in the context of BTJ/AZ, is a tangible concept, embodied in dancers throughout the company’s existence. The repertory is both the everyday and the exceptional, asking dancers to rehearse daily moments designed to be singular. The repertory is certainly, after Taylor, a site of embodied cultural knowledge, and throughout these chapters I will tease out how specific works in the repertory function in this way. Yet the repertory also offers feeling experiences for the ensemble, including experiences of belonging, authorship, and ownership over both artistic endeavor and historical narrative. The archival repertory also functions as a changing room of sorts for dancers and spectators to “try on” different identities or to foreground distinct slices of themselves, with entrance granted by way of emotional response. The repertory is not simply a collection of works but a formation of practices whose priorities

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., xvi.

shift depending on the company's make-up, economic demands, and political influence, both in terms of the politics of the dance world and national politics. The archival repertory refers, then, to works in the BTJ/AZ canon that express an archival impulse, a desire to document through performance a reckoning with history and the affective landscape around this reckoning.

## 1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter One, "The Lion's Roar: Speaking Back to Stowe," looks at the company's first major work to address a specific cultural legacy, here the legacy of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel as a cultural discourse that operates within textual, visual, aural, and kinesthetic registers. This chapter takes on history as a discipline following Canning and Postlewait's identification of five core concepts common to the practice of writing (or in BTJ/AZ's case, dancing) history: archive, time, space, identity, and narrative.<sup>66</sup> Canning and Postlewait argue that although certain of these concepts may be foregrounded in a given analysis, all five interanimate one another as guiding principles for the historian, as "modes of comprehension" that we "*think with* – not just about [...]"<sup>67</sup> Taking embodied meaning as a paradigm for thinking with these concepts means that not only do we think with time, space, etc., but we also *feel* our way into history with them.<sup>68</sup> BTJ/AZ's *Last Supper* performs this feeling into history, foregrounding history's effects and affects. Moreover, attention must be paid to BTJ/AZ's historical narratives *as choreography*, and

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<sup>66</sup> See Canning and Postlewait's introduction to *Representing the Past* for a full discussion of the choice of these concepts and their history in the discipline, pp. 1-34.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, emphasis in original.

<sup>68</sup> For the unconscious mechanisms of feeling as comprehension see Johnson on vitality affects, pp. 43-45. Again, this project is more about the conscious articulation (verbal and kinesthetic) of affective responses, not its basis in the unconscious, though this reality is obviously of significance.

to how, as Canning and Postlewait assert, the particular challenges of writing dance histories (to say nothing about “writing” history with dance) carry an imperative “to reconceive and reformulate not only the idea of the archive but also the ideas of space, time, identity, and narrative.”<sup>69</sup> BTJ/AZ’s play with these ideas can be understood through Hogan’s notion of spatiality and temporality as emotional experiences, wherein our cognitive processes of attachment and encoding push emotional response to the fore in order not just to perceive space and time but to make spatial and temporal dimensions of experience meaningful.

This chapter explores narrative as a fundamental element of history-making and BTJ/AZ’s revision of narrative in terms of order and location of events, and character identity. Stowe’s original, sentimental approach to the narrative of this story (and I will show how as a work of fiction *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a historical document contributing to the historical narrative of slavery in the United States) is exposed and challenged by BTJ/AZ’s own approach to the material as non-teleological. Understanding narrative as emotionally driven, as Hogan does, breaks narratives into distinct incidents, or “focal points of emotional response, the minimal units of emotional temporality.”<sup>70</sup> In this chapter I focus on the emotional incidents the company chooses to pull out from Stowe’s larger text and from their own histories and the narrative that is then spooled between them. The role of memory in feeling plays a large role in the company’s selection of personal incidents and can be understood through mirroring, our inherent predisposition to pick up on the expressive outcomes of emotion that another person is feeling. For example, Jones never witnessed his great-grandmother’s painful retellings of her experiences as a slave on a plantation in Georgia, but his memories of his mother’s retellings,

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<sup>69</sup> 21.

<sup>70</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 32.

and the expression on her face, produce real emotional response and feeling that guides the selection of incidents in the narrative.

*Last Supper* most radically revises our understanding of Stowe's Eliza and the historical Eliza Jane Johnson upon whom she is based by erasing Eliza's motherhood as the primary marker of her identity. Hogan writes, "certain features of the world and of our own bodily experience are encoded almost immediately as emotion triggers...The point holds with particular force for attachment figures."<sup>71</sup> The complex feelings surrounding mothers have been fodder for understanding modern human psychology since its Freudian origins. From a cognitive scientific perspective, motherhood is a cultural site of a great level of emotion inducement. In order to understand the effects of this substantial revision in Eliza's character, I examine how emotion has become gendered in certain cultural environments (including the one within which Stowe wrote and that surrounds *Last Supper*), despite limited scientific evidence, and how emotional expectations of mothers are undercut and satisfied throughout the work. Within its identity as an archival repertory, I foreground *Last Supper* as a site of authorship and ownership over historical narrative and aesthetics, looking most carefully at dancers' experiences in shaping their roles and the creative agency they did or did not feel over their performances, and how this agency relates to the work's broader project of reimagining *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The second chapter, "Through Heart and Through Body: Revising Lincoln," places side by side two recent works that pick up threads from *Last Supper*: 2008's *Serenade/The Proposition* and 2010's *Fondly Do We Hope...Fervently Do We Pray*. An exciting element of pairing these works is the opportunity to see how the company's choreography speaks back to itself about the nature of history and representation. *Serenade* was conceived of as a testing

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 33.

ground (though this should by no means diminish its credibility as a free-standing work) for *Fondly*, which had been commissioned for the Ravinia Festival's celebration of the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth. A third work completes this trilogy, 2008's *100 Migrations*, but will be addressed in the third chapter as a part of a critique of community. Throughout the Lincoln trilogy, corporeal revisions of history become primary ways to examine and critique our present notions of liberty, equality, and justice within the social context of racism. The company makes use of the vast Lincoln archive, continuing to foreground the polyvalent nature of any archive, reaching through textual and visual discourses to the performed archive they present. To these archival sources of Lincoln are added the dancers' memories of the legacy of Lincoln, slavery, race relations, and hero worship in their own lives. These memories are positioned as histories that compete with Lincoln's narrative in *Serenade*. In one section Jones's voice on a recording plays, "it could be said that this history is a person born in 1952, who wakes up in the backseat of a car crowded with children, who looks out at the misty morning street as his father says, 'we are in Virginia. Richmond, Virginia.'" *Serenade*, as the first work in the trilogy, is concerned with the notion of history as distance, and how we in the present can get close to Lincoln in the past. In its revision of Lincoln's story (particularly the human elements of his story, his identity as husband and father) *Serenade* uses movement to make sense of once-familiar but now-distorted texts, thereby highlighting the role of the body as a meaning-maker, a role there from the beginning of this history (and indeed all histories, according to Johnson) but easily excised from the archive. *Fondly* takes a significantly different aesthetic approach toward much of the same material, and allows for a discussion of the efficacy of certain aesthetic choices in expressing the company's archival impulse. This chapter is concerned with the practice of the archival repertory as a changing room where performers shift through identities in incomplete ways. The



company's practices in *Serenade* and *Fondly*, as they reimagine past practices of social balls, funeral trains, and performed speeches, not only function as re-performances of these elements of Lincoln's archive but also to embody qualitative dimensions of history that elide traditional archiving processes.<sup>72</sup> The notion of a changing room takes on compelling valence when considered as literal art-making practice and not simply as metaphor, and the materialist bent to both my own methodology and that of BTJ/AZ pushes the practice of the changing room as a necessary reality of performing to the fore.<sup>73</sup>

Chapter Three, "Democracy Moving: Community, Creativity, and Cognition," engages with formulations of community that serve, contradict, and generate historical narratives. Both *100 Migrations* and the last section of *Last Supper*, "The Promised Land" add community members to the roster of performers as both an ideological and aesthetic strategy. The original title of *Last Supper* included "Featuring 52 Handsome Nudes." Though the title was cut, the concept was not and throughout its tour, locals participated in this last section causing controversy in myriad ways. The performers' identities as community members are important to Jones and, in his view, essential to the kind of questions he seeks to ask through *100 Migrations*, which invited locals surrounding the University of Virginia to create and perform this dance. For Jones, the work itself is what prompts this turn to the community, as he tells his video archivist: "I thought that the question of Lincoln was very much a question of being a part of a society and that everybody who considers themselves an American must have the DNA of that man who we call the greatest president who ever lived. So I wanted to know what that looks like, democracy

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<sup>72</sup> The company's practices here hearken to Román's notion of archival drag, wherein contemporary performances "reembody and revive a performance from the past." 140.

<sup>73</sup> The connection between drag as a practice and the changing room as a space is made explicit by Laurence Senelick in *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag, and Theatre* (London, Routledge: 2000).

moving.”<sup>74</sup> This turn to community, which spans the company’s repertory but seems to recur most regularly in the archival repertory, directly engages with Fulbrook’s notion of perspectival paradigms, wherein these frames “arose because of a need to illuminate an inadequately explored perspective or ‘segment of reality.’”<sup>75</sup> These perspectival paradigms also respond to the critical question, for whom are histories written/told/performed? Whose formations of identity and lived experiences do they serve? Incorporating community members into these works foregrounds these questions by suggesting multiple answers, consistently undercutting heroic notions of community in order to more truthfully represent the lived experiences of those bodies present and past. I reiterate from Ann Cooper Albright’s own work on BTJ/AZ Toni Morrison’s claim that, “the crucial distinction for me is not the difference between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence, but truth cannot.”<sup>76</sup> The tension between Morrison’s conception of truth and the imperative on the historian to develop a more or less plausible interpretation of the past is a productive one for BTJ/AZ that spurs on moments of collision rather than collage.

This chapter also considers belonging as a key element of the archival repertory and examines company and community as competing and complementary structures of belonging in the making and performing of *100 Migrations*. The works themselves call into question the historical efficacy of “community” as a site of progressive, forward-looking movement (both figuratively and literally). Elizabeth Freeman’s concept of temporal drag, of performances that engage “the co-presence of several historically contingent events, social movements, and/or

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<sup>74</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*. This footage is spliced at the end of the Company’s archival DVD of the performance and thus is not cited separately from the performance in the bibliography. All subsequent Kartemquin Films citations are from this source.

<sup>75</sup> 39.

<sup>76</sup> Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 151.

collective pleasures” within specific bodies speaks further to the sense of queering as an active orientation towards making history that the company deploys in the archival repertory.<sup>77</sup> Here, performing temporal drag allows for a concentrated and complex reimagining of community that does not necessarily depend on a futurely-oriented, progressive identity that gestures toward utopian ideals, but rather gains strength from its focus on the past, from what Schneider calls “the warp and draw of one time in another time – the *theatricality* of time [...]”<sup>78</sup> I take literally Miranda Joseph’s claim that “communal subjectivity is constituted not by identity but rather through practices of production and consumption” in looking at these instances of actual production and consumption (spectatorship and reception) of community, not in order to separate identity from communal subjectivity but rather to see how the event of performance complicates the opposition between identity and processes of production and consumption that Joseph articulates.<sup>79</sup> If performance and performing function as structures of belonging (a belonging that may not always be achieved), how do they differ or mesh between the structures of company and community, and reimagine what community might be and do? BTJ/AZ create experiences of community that are grounded in embodied emotion and take the shape of a company. These experiences provide, however ephemerally, a series of moments that when taken collectively articulate new relationships of individual and communal identity as a mode of comprehension within history and history-making. These relationships prize the body as a polyvalent route into both history and the cultural capital that comes with finding one’s place within a national history.

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<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 62.

<sup>78</sup> 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): viii.

## 2.0 CHAPTER ONE: THE LION'S ROAR: SPEAKING BACK TO STOWE

*“Bringing this piece to town is like bringing something live and squirming into the house of the presenter and telling him he has to deal with his neighbors about the smell.”<sup>80</sup>*

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company’s 1990 work *The Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land* traces “Uncle Tom” as a racial identity through Harriet Beecher Stowe’s classic novel to LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka’s *Dutchman* and Jones’s own biography as part of a critique of past narratives that have profoundly influenced the historical experience of black Americans. The first half of *Last Supper* engages in two interrelated tasks: the first is to revise Stowe’s narrative as fiction, as a story that in both content and style operates according to its contemporary norms of sentimental Christianity. The second task is to work through Tom and Eliza, fictional characters that have historically influenced perceptions and treatment of African-Americans and who have their own histories in American culture that function at times independently of Stowe’s text. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate how *Last Supper* develops strategies of narrative revision that are tied to art-making, history-making, and cognitive scientific concepts. These methods are not always wholly successful, and are in this work more concerned with fictional narrative and its influence on historical identity formation.

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<sup>80</sup> Paula Citron, “Finding nude amateurs easier than getting clergy onstage.” *The Toronto Star*. 19 April 1991, D1.

However, they lay a foundation for the company's fullest expression of revising history in the later Lincoln trilogy. This chapter primarily addresses the first two sections of *Last Supper*, "The Cabin" and "Eliza on the Ice," positioning these sections as sustained revisions of narrative tropes (such as Patrick Hogan's heroic, sacrificial, and romantic love tropes) that are prompted by emotional responses to historical events. In their revision of events and characters BTJ/AZ participates in the imagining of counterfactuals as a critical strategy of historical inquiry. Jones writes, "History has rules. One rule dictates that a people whose identity has been forged by violence and deprivation will manifest violence and deprivation. Such rules must be broken."<sup>81</sup> *Last Supper* not only engages with Jones's perceived rules of history (in this case a specifically racialized history) but also with more broad conceptions of historical practice, including Canning and Postlewait's elements of time, space, identity, narrative, and archive. Jones implies in the above statement that a radical break with the traditional narrative of black history (a history represented in his work through the examination of Tom and Eliza) might result in significantly different, perhaps more positive experiences for black Americans is backed up by Johnson's maxim, "Change your brain, your body, or your environments in nontrivial ways, and you will change how you experience your world, what things are meaningful to you, and even who you are."<sup>82</sup> Environments include both material and social environments, and the company's revision of narrative is also an attempt to present an alternate social environment that has the power to shift experience and notions of racial identity. Thus the stakes of this work are high, and are further generated by heightened moments of emotion in the personal histories of Jones and the ensemble. I am most interested in how this work articulates emotion first as profoundly

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<sup>81</sup> Bill T. Jones with Peggy Gillespie, *Last Night on Earth* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 197.

<sup>82</sup> 1-2.

embodied and second as a cogent, persuasive way of making history meaningful. I contend that the choreographic choices and methodologies that the company employs reflect cognitive scientific notions about the functions of causality, narrative, and embodied meaning. The company's work, particularly in its proposal of emotional response as creative fodder, argues for an understanding of art and aesthetics as transformative of our meaning-making practices, the telling of history being one such practice. The elements of personal and public pasts collide in *Last Supper* in order to reconfigure historical narrative, or how history is told, remembered, and lived (and, indeed, what events/persons/objects become part of "history"). In their attention to narrative elements of character, plot, and causation, BTJ/AZ acknowledge the role that narrative plays in our cognitive meaning-making processes that connect fiction to reality: "stories teach because their audiences can learn by analogy the things they need to know in order to survive and the behavioral patterns they need to thrive within their cultural world."<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the intentional revision (not simply re-telling) of Stowe's narrative proposes the possibility of change, not only a change in the narrative but also a change in the social environment within which that narrative circulates – i.e., breaking the rules of history, as Jones states. Keith Oatley positions narrative as one of the key ways humans engage their imaginative and transformative capacities through our unconscious processes of emotional response and our particular lived experiences:

The mental effects of transformation, prompted in each specific reader, seldom take place directly. They occur by recruiting conscious or unconscious memories, and emotions...They start trains of thought that readers would not otherwise have had...They

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<sup>83</sup> Ellen Spolsky, "Narrative as Nourishment," *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Frederick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 40.

prompt new connections within the self, and they elaborate meanings, which can be built into our mental structure as parts of ourselves.<sup>84</sup>

Acts of revision necessarily yoke personal and social narratives through the potential for emotional response, always increased with personal narratives, to be analogized between the two forms. For Spolsky, “Framing a possibility by means of a revised story is a first step to bringing about change in conventional public narratives, as it is with private narratives.”<sup>85</sup>

First, a little history about *Last Supper*: the origins of the work and its later creation are intimately tied to Jones’s relationship with his partner, Arnie Zane. In many ways, the work is a tribute to the creative process of collision that formed not only the choreographic methodology of the company in its early years but also the emotional relationship between its two leaders.<sup>86</sup> The inspiration for the piece came from a brainstorming session between Zane and Jones in the last months before Zane’s passing in March of 1988. Jones recounts that Zane often said that da Vinci’s *Last Supper* was his favorite painting, specifically its representation of the head of Christ. As Zane’s illness took its toll, the company’s spirits flagged, and in an attempt to “lift our spirits,” dancer Sean Curran gave Jones and Zane a gag gift of a pornographic deck of playing cards titled “52 Handsome Nudes.”<sup>87</sup> With these seemingly disparate elements of da Vinci and a deck of cards in the backs of their minds, Jones and Zane began to talk about a new piece. Zane generated the image of black opera star Jessye Norman “on an ice floe, suspended above the

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<sup>84</sup> Keith Oatley, “Emotions and the Story Worlds of Fiction,” *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations*, ed. Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange, and Timothy C. Brock (Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 55.

<sup>85</sup> 38.

<sup>86</sup> Campbell, 5.

<sup>87</sup> Bill T. Jones, *Last Night on Earth*, 204. Jones’s autobiography contains a long chapter on the creation of *Last Supper*, including the story of its origins within what Jones terms the “fragmented chronology” that is his history as a black man (205).

stage at the Brooklyn Academy of Music,”<sup>88</sup> representing a postmodern interpretation of Stowe’s character Eliza, the romantic heroine of the novel. Jones confesses that at the time of Zane’s inspiration, he himself had not read Stowe’s work (though, having been called an “Uncle Tom,” he was familiar with the cultural legacy of that figure). They began to conceive of a piece entitled *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/Featuring 52 Handsome Nudes*. After Zane’s death, Jones shopped the idea around, securing sponsors for each of the four sections. In 1989, on account of Jesse Helms’ influence and the case of the NEA Four, he found that the title needed a change in order to assuage the concerns of sponsors, exchanging “handsome nudes” for *The Promised Land* (but retaining the literal nude performers).

*Last Supper*, the first revisionist epic in what has become a significant commitment by the company to this kind of work, was inspired also in part by Jones’s fear and anxiety centered around his own mortality. Zane had died of AIDS-related illness, and Jones reasoned that since he was also HIV-positive, his time would also be cut short. Thus, “I would make a work that articulated all the questions that I have lived with...I would speak in a voice that was decidedly African-American.”<sup>89</sup> Jones’s vision of the work as founded in an exploration of black history was developed and enacted by a multi-racial company including several guest artists, suggesting that the notion of “black history” is one that is necessarily bound up with other histories, and can be located in unlikely archives. In BTJ/AZ’s methodology, company members and their lived experiences served as archival sources for the work’s content and structure. Thus the relationship between identity and archive in *Last Supper* is a close-knit one, with events shaped profoundly

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 197. In my interview with dancer Gregg Hubbard, he echoed this perception of Jones’s mortality, but from the point of view of the dance and critical communities of the time, claiming that presenters and sponsors sensed the immediacy of the work because “they didn’t expect the company to survive [Zane’s death], Bill to survive. Every piece we were really dancing for our lives.” Personal interview, Feb. 3 2013.



by salient identities (like racial or gender identity) becoming archival of both singular and shared experiences. The company for *Last Supper* included Arthur Aviles, Leonard Cruz, Sean Curran, Lawrence Goldhuber, Gregg Hubbard, Heidi Latsky, Betsy McCracken, Maya Saffrin, Andrea Woods, and Jones himself. Guest artists were the rap artist and ex-con R. Justice Allen, the publishing magnate John Cowles and choreographer Sage Cowles, actor Andréa Smith, and Jones's mother, Estella.

The work is divided into four sections, shooting an arrow from the historical moment and thematic ideas of Stowe's novel that travels through the book of Job, da Vinci's *Last Supper*, and Baraka's *Dutchman* to land at its controversial conclusion, the utopic vision of "The Promised Land," which, as Zane and Jones originally conceived, featured fifty-two nudes. Part One, "The Cabin," features R. Justice Allen as the contemporary narrator and Sage Cowles as Harriet Beecher Stowe, the historical storyteller. Allen and Cowles switch off telling the much condensed and selectively edited story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as the company dances the story, rearranging the narrative in their choreography. A brief interlude introduces the character Simon Legree's "dogs" and their quest to hunt down Eliza, the novel's enslaved romantic heroine. Here the dogs are male dancers dressed in black jockstraps and bondage gear. They lead us (quite literally, running through the aisles) into the second section, "Eliza on the Ice," where the four women of the company each perform various versions of Eliza, some incorporating their personal histories into her dramatic storyline. After encounters with the dogs, the women exit, leaving a fifth and final Eliza, the miniskirted Gregg Hubbard. The first entr'acte, entitled "The Prayer," is a brief solo danced by Jones to accompany his mother, Estella's, invocation.<sup>90</sup> Part

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<sup>90</sup> Jones calls both this moment with his mother as well as his later conversation in the piece with a member of local clergy "entr'actes." Full description of each section, including the entr'actes, can be found in *Last Night on Earth*, 209-223.

Three, “The Supper,” begins with a tableau of the company as da Vinci’s masterpiece and develops into a frenetic sequence, described by Jones as “religious Dada.”<sup>91</sup> The section ends with Allen performing a rap poem that he wrote for the piece as Arthur Aviles beat-boxes. A second entr’acte, entitled “Faith,” is another solo by Jones, this time interpreting the Old Testament story of Job. When Jones finishes his solo, he turns to the rabbi, minister, or preacher who has been watching his performance from a seat at the table onstage, and begins a dialogue about faith. The last section, “The Promised Land,” garnered the work an instant notoriety because of its deployment of nudity (despite the fact that some earlier images in the work are equally controversial, if more clothed). After an urgent, retrograde recitation of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Cowles and Allen perform another duet, not as Stowe and the narrator, but as Lula and Clay, the central characters of Baraka’s *Dutchman*. Dancers, now greatly increased in number through the inclusion of the fifty-two community members, act as the audience. The work ends with bodies in increasing degrees of undress interacting and forming various tactile and spatial relationships, raising their voices up in song as the lights fade.

*Last Supper* functions as a kind of creative toolbox for the company, an experimental laboratory for them to test out theories of emotion- and corporeality-driven revision. Their results, much like the results of our cognitive processes of Theory of Mind and emotion attribution (for example) are not always completely accurate. Their methods of selection necessarily unselect aspects of this particular narrative and its historical impact that others may think significant. Yet their work points to critical aspects of historical inquiry that are not always acknowledged, primarily the role of emotions in our abilities to think with (and feel with) time, space, archive, identity, and narrative. Throughout this chapter I draw on historian John Lewis

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 218.

Gaddis's work on the operations of history in order to show how, even though the revision BTJ/AZ perform is of a fictional work, their methods of revision participate in historical modes of thinking (and, as I will argue, feeling) that have implications for how the past is made meaningful to us. Gaddis is not only a nuanced historiographer but also endeavors to show how science and history have more in common than one might sense at first blush.<sup>92</sup> Gaddis's claim that "science, history, and art have something in common: they all depend on metaphor, on the recognition of patterns, on the realization that something is 'like' something else" makes sense in terms of cognitive processes of conceptual metaphor (addressed in Chapter Two) and implies that modes of meaning-making are not as disciplinarily distinct as previously thought.<sup>93</sup> Gaddis further asserts that history and science share a method "that distinguishes between the predictable and the non-predictable, that doesn't depend upon reducing complexity to simplicity, that acknowledges – indeed relishes – the interdependency of variables[.]"<sup>94</sup> One of my aims in this chapter is to show how, in revising Stowe's story, the company also critically revises the categories of narrative and archive that historians make histories with, and does so in ways reflective of cognitive scientific phenomena.

## 2.1 THE CABIN

*Last Supper*'s opening section, "The Cabin," focuses narrowly on Stowe's 1851 novel, but also lays the groundwork for a sustained revision of the relationship between faith, history, and

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<sup>92</sup> See Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* for a sustained argument about the relationship between historians' and particularly natural scientists' modes of inquiry.

<sup>93</sup> 2.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 76,

identity that persists throughout the work's three and a half hours.<sup>95</sup> The causal connection among faith (specifically Christianity), emotion, and narrative is well established by Stowe's novel and reverberates throughout *Last Supper*. The conscious connection made by Jones between narrative conventions and organizing ideologies of society (such as religious belief, or racial prejudice) illustrates Hogan's argument regarding the often unconscious interrelationships between narrative and ideology, namely in its development of prototypes: "sources of ideology are all the things that contribute to the formation of prototypes, emotional memories, critical-period experiences, and other cognitive and affective contents that bear on social hierarchies."<sup>96</sup> Thus ideologies are formed by our lived experiences (rather than being purely intellectual structures placed upon us) and vary based on social and material environmental factors that influence emotional response. In Stowe's work, the tandem ideologies of sentimental Christianity and racism significantly impact her understanding of narrative causality and formation of character stereotypes. For Stowe, sentimental Christianity functions as an explanatory framework for her fictional narrative but also as a strategy for affecting her historical moment. The interrelationship among Christianity, blackness, and understanding histories, both national and personal, haunts Jones throughout this work as he juxtaposes history, religion, and art as meaning-making practices. Placing "The Cabin" as the first section of the four-part work suggests a chronological approach, given the date of its source material, to the performance of the entire piece.<sup>97</sup> Jones's memoir, *Last Night on Earth*, also initially takes a linear temporal

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<sup>95</sup> I viewed a recording of the work's Brooklyn Academy of Music premiere on November 8, 1990, housed in the company's archives at New York Live Arts. Some elements were cut after the premiere for the 1991 tour (for creative and practical reasons), thus not all, but perhaps most, of the moments I discuss in this chapter remained for the majority of audiences.

<sup>96</sup> 26.

<sup>97</sup> The piece was not constructed chronologically. Each section was commissioned by a different institution and developed at different times.

approach to his own art-making history, including a creative chronology of his life as a black man beginning with global expansion in the 1600s and ending with his meeting of Sage Cowles on an arts panel in 1990. Both events proceed from assumptions: the first, from the assumption that white races are destined to rule non-whites, and the last, from Jones's own assumption as a black queer artist, that "she [Cowles] is a cold and privileged white woman."<sup>98</sup> Throughout the process of creating and performing this work, both assumptions (and many in between) are questioned, producing a space in which politically incorrect views as well as historically invisible figures are equally investigated, often without an intended target for the outcomes. Jones writes, "My history is a fragmented chronology that divides me from my past, my mother's faith, from the hopeful naiveté of the sixties counter culture."<sup>99</sup> Jones speaks about history in terms of time, a linear time that also serves to contain "emotional communities"<sup>100</sup> within certain temporal divisions (i.e., "the sixties"). His history is also a series of events, emotional spikes, and emotional memories that stimulate intense emotional response, divided chronologically by Jones in the hopes of consciously creating a causal chain between them.

In many ways, *Last Supper* is a choreographic game of connect-the-dots between emotional spikes related to historical moments, a game that articulates a tension between cohesion and fragmentation. Emotion and causality are intimately linked in our unconscious cognitive-affective processes. As we experience an emotional spike, Hogan writes, we automatically "shift our attentional focus" to causality: "Almost immediately upon experiencing an emotion, we begin to attribute a cause...This is crucial because causal attribution is a

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<sup>98</sup> *Last Night on Earth*, 205.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> See Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying About Emotions in History," for the term "emotional communities," which refers to specific historically situated communities of people and the "systems of feeling" that structure public and private life in these communities (842). *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002): 821-845.

necessary prerequisite for any actional outcome.”<sup>101</sup> Actional outcomes are the action-oriented steps we take in response to an emotional spike, originating from our organism’s basic mechanisms of approach or withdrawal from stimuli (either external, like a bear, or internal, like a painful memory) that incite pleasure or pain. Revising history is, for Jones, a conscious process of determining the causality of his emotional responses to events, including events that he himself has not experienced yet continue to affect him. The choreographic choices of the company dramatize unconscious actional outcomes and do so through the medium of the body, thus making explicit the implicit embodiment that undergirds our processes of emotional response.

The most clearly identifiable historical time is found in “The Cabin,” a section whose content (the re-telling of Stowe’s story) and style (period costumes, and sets inspired by minstrelsy conventions) mesh more seamlessly than the other sections. The opening moments of the work foreground key moments in the history of the United States as well as Jones’s personal history. Jones’s juxtaposition of the Uncle Tom archive with contemporary representations of race speaks to his belief that “history can be part of something that is also very personal, lyrical.”<sup>102</sup> “The Cabin” begins with a short series of orienting moments - a preamble - that locates the stage action in time and space. This series of choreography and text serves to set up thematic parameters for the work and introduce standard elements of narrative including character. As the piece begins the dancers march forward carrying oars, performing choreography that includes variously sharp and sustained straight-armed movement of the oars along an almost geometrical grid pattern above their heads in staggered time. Dance scholar

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<sup>101</sup> 34.

<sup>102</sup> Bill T. Jones, *Dancing to the Promised Land*. DVD. Directed by Mischa Scorer. V.I.E.W. Video, 2004.

Randy Martin notes this opening's reference to the Middle Passage, staging the history of slavery and embodied slave experience that precedes Stowe's historical moment.<sup>103</sup> The opening's rootedness in Stowe's universe is clear, however, from the narrator's shouts of character names from the novel: "Little Eva!" "Uncle Tom!" "Aunt Chloe!" The 1851 novel then meets Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address from 1865, delivered while the Civil War still raged. A speaker begins, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray" - a phrase that Jones will become fixated upon as a creative tool in his later Lincoln trilogy. This phrase comes late in Lincoln's speech, after he identifies the cause of the war as the extension of slavery: "One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war."<sup>104</sup> The sequence of the opening, with the character introductions followed by the recitation of Lincoln's address, connects the racism that underlies slavery with the racism implicit in Stowe's stereotypes as causal factors in national trajectories of violence. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Stowe's characters with Lincoln's speech associates fiction with historical event and allows narrative structure to come under scrutiny as a crucial component of both forms of meaning-making.

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<sup>103</sup> Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 70. In addition to this reference to the Middle Passage, this moment reminded me of the opening to Alvin Ailey's masterpiece *Revelations*, where the company are centered on the stage and perform a series of staggered, mostly upper-body, movements with straight arms. Whether or not this Ailey reference was intentional, its similarity is another suggestion of a continuum between Ailey and Jones, one that Jones was deliberately moving away from even as many in the dance world sought to push him towards it. In *Dancing to the Promised Land*, Jones differentiates himself from Ailey, claiming "where my work differs is in its dissonance. I rely a great deal on fragmentation, the broken line." A later conceptual reference to Ailey occurs in Jones's choreography for Andrea Woods - the "historical" Eliza.

<sup>104</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address. In *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*. Ed. Roy P. Basler. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1946. 793.

An explicit connection between Stowe's novel and the Civil War reflects the role that Stowe's novel played in popularizing abolitionist sentiment, so much so that legend has it that when Lincoln and Stowe met he said, "Is this the little woman who made this great war?"<sup>105</sup> Lincoln's speech continues, after its famous line "fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray – that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away" to directly associate the war's hardships with God's will, an association between suffering and faith that haunts Jones personally and this work thematically:

Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled up by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be that said 'the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.'<sup>106</sup>

Jones incorporates this text from Lincoln as a recitation in the preamble but also in his choreography of the lash and the whip, images with deep personal resonance for Jones that interrupt the national narrative moving from 1851 to 1865. As Jones relates, in 1860 Matt Lee, his great-grandmother, was born into slavery on a plantation in Georgia.<sup>107</sup> Jones's mother, Estella, periodically recounted to her children an episode from her youth wherein she witnessed the whipping of her grandmother. This story had a powerful effect on Jones, whose revision of Tom's death scene, wherein his death results from Legree's whipping, focuses on the physical

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<sup>105</sup> David Bromwich recounts this moment in his introduction to Stowe's novel, and surmises that it represents the vast reach and efficacy of Stowe's message rather than being a historically accurate utterance (x-xi). Bromwich, Introduction. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin Or, Life Among the Lowly*. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

<sup>106</sup> 793.

<sup>107</sup> *Last Night on Earth*, 199. I did not fact-check Jones's statement because its facticity does not, in my opinion, come to bear on its efficacy as an embodied memory that connects Jones's family to a larger American historical narrative.



choreography of the act.<sup>108</sup> I will treat this moment in detail later, yet here I wish to foreground emotion as a narrative element, as a key player in what episodes we choose to include in our histories. Hogan writes, “our experiences of both space and time are encoded non-homogenously. The principles by which objects and occurrences are selected, the principles by which they are segmented, and the principles by which they are structured, both internally and in embedded hierarchies, are crucially (though of course not exclusively) emotional.”<sup>109</sup> Thus Jones’s attention to and revision of the whipping scene cannot be wholly ascribed to a desire to replicate Stowe’s story structure, but can also be attributed in part to his emotional response, made even stronger by the existence of an emotional memory connected to the physical action of whipping. All this is to say that selection of episodes in narrative and of events in history is at least partially emotion-driven and personal, a connection made clear by the intricacies of *Last Supper*’s construction.

In this opening sequence the work is also rooted in and as story through the introduction of two narrators: Sage Cowles as Stowe, and Justice Allen as a contemporary foil. Cowles first appears onstage dressed in black period dress as Harriet Beecher Stowe. Allen, also dressed in black, appears costumed for the present day. The pair interrupt and mock one another as each attempts to tell the story of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”: Allen glances at his watch during Cowles’ first speech as Stowe, and Cowles puts her hand over Allen’s mouth when she wants to take over the story. The pair split the narrative verbatim (though, clearly, abridged) from Stowe’s text; the primary difference in their storytelling is not in content but style, not in text but gesture. Their gestures imply sympathy (in the case of Cowles slapping her thigh when the Harry character

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<sup>108</sup> *Dancing to the Promised Land* includes an interview with Jones where he narrates his memory of his mother’s story about his great-grandmother’s whipping.

<sup>109</sup> 41.

dances Jim Crow and reaching her hands up to pray when Tom preaches in the cabin) or skepticism (Allen's gesture of "hurry up!" when Cowles gets too invested in the story, his mocking jazz hands). The narrative proceeds through the novel, hopscotching between events, with a total excision of Eliza's dramatic escape over the ice, saved for extended treatment in the next section. Primarily this re-telling functions to introduce the "types" of the novel, its primary characters in all of their stereotypical glory. These stereotypes include movement vocabularies, as diverse characters are assigned dramatically different types of movement to indicate their status, as Jacqueline Shea Murphy notes: "Harry and Topsy flail in exaggerated Jim Crow form, while Eva, Miss Ophelia, and St. Clare prance in delicate balletic entrechats."<sup>110</sup> Jones establishes this physical distinction in movement vocabulary between black and white characters (though, importantly, not between black and white performers) as a kinesthetic representation of social hierarchy. Heidi Latsky as Harry, George and Eliza's young son, steps forward to show off a "Jim Crow"-like dance, with fast footwork and a jaunty upper body, head bobbing. Harry and Topsy, a young female slave, are featured in Stowe's novel in two of its dancing scenes, and they are replicated here.<sup>111</sup> Their legacies as dancing figures both in the illustrated version of the novel and on scores of sheet music that accompanied staged versions (such as the famous song, "It's So Wicked") inspired Jones's choreography of the black characters: "[a] nice silhouette of a darky dancing, that's what all of this [stepping] is about."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> 93. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, "Unrest and Uncle Tom: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land*." In *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*, ed. Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995. 81-105.

<sup>111</sup> See Jacqueline Shea Murphy for a detailed discussion of representations of dancing in Stowe's novel.

<sup>112</sup> *Dancing to the Promised Land*.



**Figure 1. Illustration of Topsy dancing by Hammatt Billings for the 1852 illustrated “Splendid” edition.**

Jones continues to stick close to Stowe in designating Tom as the sacrificial hero of this story, and the dramatic crux of “The Cabin” is his death at the hands of Simon Legree. Tom’s death serves as the climax in a traditional sacrificial narrative and it is Jones’s rejection of this particular sacrificial narrative as a meaning-making device that challenges traditional modes of storytelling represented in Stowe’s configuration. Jones’s personal introduction to the figure of Uncle Tom was his own assignation as such by his peers during his undergraduate years at SUNY Binghamton.<sup>113</sup> When he finally reads Stowe’s novel in 1989, one year after he and Zane generated the image of Jessye Norman as Eliza, he finds it to be “hokum, misinformation. I find it moving, infuriating, beautiful, embarrassing, and important.”<sup>114</sup> When asked about his feelings towards the character Uncle Tom specifically, Jones replied, “My position was that he was a

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<sup>113</sup> Alan M. Kriegsman, “By Dance Possessed: The Kinetic Energy Of Bill T. Jones.” *The Washington Post*. 17 March 1991, G1.

<sup>114</sup> *Last Night on Earth*, 205.

martyr but he was a lie.”<sup>115</sup> Jones’s statement implies that Tom’s historical stereotyping as a martyr makes logical sense within the narrative Stowe creates, but is somehow not truthful to the historical impact that the character has had on black American experience. Stowe herself names the chapter of Tom’s death “The Martyr,” and many of the 1853 illustrations feature Tom with his hands clasped in prayer. Jones’s relationship to Stowe’s vision of Tom is complex and in his revision of Tom’s story, Jones makes choices to replicate the original as closely as possible so that when he revises Tom’s death the connection to the story is immediate and the difference heightened.

His first choice was the casting of African-American actor Andréa Smith in the role.<sup>116</sup> Reflecting on this decision, Jones comments on Smith’s “handsome, strapping, and gentle” qualities, claiming, “Andréa was young in many senses of the word, and the openness and curiosity implied by his youth were necessary in re-creating such a worn, misunderstood icon as Uncle Tom.”<sup>117</sup> No attempt is made in the staging to age Smith, who indeed appears youthful, in stark contrast to the legacy of stage Toms, who were usually grizzled, old, and careworn. Smith’s portrayal of Tom as youthful, active, and vibrant has more in common with Stowe’s original vision: “He was a large, broad-chested, powerfully-made man...characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindness and benevolence.”<sup>118</sup> The idea of a powerful, physically fit man who nonetheless exhibited “feminine” emotional and spiritual

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<sup>115</sup> *Dancing to the Promised Land*.

<sup>116</sup> Gregg Hubbard remembers introducing Smith, his best friend, to Jones, and that this introduction sparked Jones’s interest in Smith for the role of Tom. Hubbard’s close relationship to Smith – “we were like brothers...having your best friend at your side was brilliant” – is a facet of Hubbard’s personal history that interfaces specifically with the choreography in “The Supper” section. Personal interview, Feb. 3, 2013.

<sup>117</sup> *Last Night on Earth*, 207.

<sup>118</sup> Stowe (2009), 32. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin Or, Life Among the Lowly*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. All subsequent quotations from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* are from this edition of Stowe’s text; illustrations are from the “Splendid” edition, cited separately in the works cited.

qualities was discordant for many readers and few spectators of Tom shows ever saw this configuration of the character onstage. In her study of masculinity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Cynthia Griffin Wolff argues that the abolitionist movement itself had to redefine masculinity in order to bolster its political views, devising a definition that foregrounded "cooperation and harmonious communal living rather than subjugation and domination" as masculine endeavors.<sup>119</sup> As an active member of the movement, Stowe created a protagonist whose nobility and strength of character resulted from his ability to bridge masculine and feminine virtues. Most significantly, this bridging was a direct result of Tom's embrace of Christianity. As Wolff notes, "the man most 'representative' of these radical revisions of the masculine role was Jesus."<sup>120</sup>

The similarities between Tom and Jesus are well noted by scholars and Stowe's use of religious themes relates to her complementary use of sentimentalism as a constituting moral principle of the novel.<sup>121</sup> For Stowe, sentimental Christianity functioned as a kind of theoretical paradigm (to borrow from Fulbrook) for her story. Strategically, inciting a shift in sentiment in her audience relies in large part on her ability to appeal to their good Christian natures and to reconstruct the relationship between blackness and godliness. Lisa Zunshine's study of Theory of Mind (ToM) in narratives posits that narratives are most effective in terms of spectator/character (or reader/character) identification when the narrative observes "a careful combination of generic conventions, familiar cultural realities, and specific plot turns."<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Jane Tompkins, in

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<sup>119</sup> Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "'Masculinity' in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *American Quarterly* 47.4 (1995): 601-2.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 602.

<sup>121</sup> Jane Tompkins asserts, "The figure of Christ is the common term which unites all of the novel's good characters, who are good precisely in proportion as they are imitators of him" (138). *Sensational Designs: the Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

<sup>122</sup> 197. "Theory of Mind and Michael Fried's Absorption and Theatricality: Notes Toward Cognitive Historicism." In *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*. Ed. Frederick Luis Aldama. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

her study of the genre, refers specifically to the necessary religious underpinning of Stowe's sentimentalism:

The power of a sentimental novel to move its audience depends upon the audience's being in possession of the conceptual categories that constitute character and event. That storehouse of assumptions includes attitudes toward the family and toward social institutions: a definition of power and its relation to individual human feeling; notions of political and social equality; and *above all, a set of religious beliefs that organizes and sustains the rest.*<sup>123</sup>

Emotion and ideology are tangled together in Tompkins' accurate assessment of the sentimental Christianity that organizes Stowe's novel. "The Cabin" reacts against a meaning-making paradigm of sentimental Christianity in its fundamental questioning of Christian belief and (teleo)logic. Unlike Stowe's novel, which one might diplomatically say is heavy-handed in its representation of Christianity, *Last Supper* represents a range of relationships to religious feeling, ranging from steadfast belief (in Estella Jones's performance) to earnest or skeptical questioning (in Jones's dialogue with a community religious leader) to complete disavowal of faith (in Heidi Latsky's "Eliza" solo). This proposal of various relationships to belief does not move in a linear or chronological dramaturgy (i.e., from doubt to belief, or vice versa), but allows performers themselves to become spaces for dialogue between positions, as their bodies house multiple points of view throughout the work. These bodies refuse the kind of narrative closure that Tom's death (or as Stowe phrases it, his victory) provides for the novel and its theoretical paradigm. Tompkins notes how ideologies structure narratives down to the "conceptual categories" of character and event, a claim that is relevant not only to the sentimental Christian ideology with which Stowe writes, but also to the company's own strategies. Moreover, Tompkins' point is

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<sup>123</sup> 126. Emphasis in original. See Tompkins' chapter on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 122-146 for the connection between sentimental rhetoric, abolition, and Stowe's novel.

supported by the affective neuroscience behind our processes of encoding and selection, processes firmly entrenched in emotional response.

Encoding consists of several unconscious neurological processes – Hogan’s selection, segmentation, and “chunking” – that structure and give order to our experiences in the world. These processes are intimately linked to the embodied nature of our lives by way of perceptual encoding, the most basic kind of encoding. In perceptual encoding sensory neurons respond to external stimuli in ways that are generally advantageous to the organism.<sup>124</sup> These responses are repeated and form neural patterns of response. Neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux has suggested that perceptual encoding and emotional encoding are inextricably linked neurologically, as in when our visual neurons perceive movement with potentially threatening qualities, thereby activating a fear response from the amygdala. Put less scientifically, at the most basic level of comprehension we understand what is happening to us (and, from the perspective of history, what *has* happened to us) from an enmeshed relationship between embodiment and emotion. In creating a narrative of what has happened to us, of our personal and/or national histories, unconscious encoding is the foundation for the conscious selection of events that make up the narrative, a selection often guided by emotional memory and episodic triggers that prompt specific emotional responses. Selection is a fundamental component not only of general human experience but also of the work of both storytellers and historians. Storytellers choose events that raise stakes and revolve around moments of emotional spikes. Historians, as Gaddis writes, charged with the task of representing reality, are necessarily tasked also “to smooth over the details, to look for larger patterns, to

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<sup>124</sup> Hogan’s example here is of visual neurons and the phenomenon of lateral inhibition, whereby “neurons surrounding a highly activated neuron are inhibited; this results in, for instance, the sharpening of lines in vision[.]” *Affective Narratology*, 31.

consider how you can use what you see for your own purposes.”<sup>125</sup> In their work as corporeal historians, revising history of and through the body, BTJ/AZ make explicit the implicit processes of selection that, for Johnson, make meaning even remotely possible as a human endeavor:

The “selection” or partial “taking” from the continuous flow of experience that lies at the heart of meaning is, on the one hand, the means of the very possibility of fruitful investigation, symbolic interaction, and communication; on the other hand, it simultaneously requires us to ignore the nonselected aspects of a situation. What we emphasize and, conversely, what we ignore will make all the difference in what “things” mean to us.<sup>126</sup>

Our selection processes, bound up with perceptual and emotional encoding, allow us to comprehend cause and effect, to determine which stimuli may have caused which responses. In structuring causality we turn to events as a category of experience. Understanding how humans cognitively make sense of experiences as events also involves the “fundamental human propensities toward organizing the world along two fundamental axes: normalcy and attachment.”<sup>127</sup> Our tendencies toward wanting to preserve both normalcy (a predictable series of encounters of stimuli-response that form a baseline for experience) and attachment (our emotional attachment to people, places, and objects that produces positive emotional responses) are based in evolution, in a natural selection process designed to reduce risk to the organism. At a less basic level, material and social environments contribute to what behaviors will be selected for increasing the likelihood of experiences strengthening normalcy and attachment. Yet these axes contain outliers, due to enormous variation in environments, and due to the fact that humans are, in Gaddis’s formulation, “molecules with minds of their own.”<sup>128</sup> We might revise Gaddis’s statement as “mind-bodies of their own.” Thus while we can know that unconscious emotional

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<sup>125</sup> 7.

<sup>126</sup> 269.

<sup>127</sup> Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, 31.

<sup>128</sup> 113.



responses structure conscious meaning-making processes (of organizing events, creating narratives, attributing causality, etc.), the variety of emotional responses and their specific contexts of material and social environments, not to mention the role of ideology in influencing the expression of feeling (the conscious element of emotional response), makes for a less deterministic model that leaves room for variation.

Experiences that cause emotional spikes, or in Hogan's terms, "provoking incidents," are often the beginning of a narrative, which seeks to explain the cause(s) and effect(s) of a given spike. In his theory of narratology, Hogan demonstrates that emotion underlies crucial narrative elements, especially in terms of what we pay attention to in the first place:

[t]he hierarchical organization of emotional history involves almost atemporal provoking incidents, 'thicker' structures of causal attribution and actional outcome (events), episodes or sequences of causally enchaind events that move from normalcy through disruption to temporary normalcy, and finally, stories that conclude the sequence of episodes with enduring normalcy.<sup>129</sup>

In both Jones and Stowe's narratives, Tom's leading of a revival meeting in the cabin is a significant incident that establishes his character's prototype: the martyr. Understanding Tom as a martyr is crucial for understanding the causality of the chain of events in Stowe's novel, and is supported by the novel's own social context of Christianity. The revival meeting is designed to prompt positive emotional responses and ultimately to promote Tom's perceived "goodness." Antonio Damasio contends that basic emotional responses are "inseparable from the idea of reward or punishment, of pleasure or pain, of approach or withdrawal, of personal advantage and disadvantage. Inevitably, emotions are inseparable from the idea of good and evil."<sup>130</sup> Thus our

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<sup>129</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 42. Scholars of performance studies will note the similarity here to Victor Turner's theories of the function and structure of ritual, including his notion of liminality. See Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

<sup>130</sup> *The Feeling*, 55.

perception that Tom is either a predominantly “good” or predominantly “evil” character will be based in emotional response. Our experiences as readers and spectators are shaped, too, by the description and enactment of actional outcomes (i.e., the expressive emotional responses of other people), due to emotional contagion, empathy, and our mirror neuron system.

In Stowe’s version of the revival meeting, Tom is positioned as the cause of the positive emotions present at the meeting, as he is not only the provider of a sacred space, his cabin, but also suited somewhat inherently to prompt these responses:

Having, naturally, an organization in which the *morale* was strongly predominant, together with a greater breadth and cultivation of mind than obtained among his companions, he was looked up to with great respect...and the simple, hearty, sincere style of his exhortations might have edified even better educated persons...Nothing could exceed the touching simplicity, the child-like earnestness, of his prayer, enriched with the language of Scripture, which seemed so entirely to have wrought itself into his being, as to have become a part of himself, and to drop from his lips unconsciously[.]<sup>131</sup>

Stowe’s description of Tom uses the language of emotion in order to characterize Tom as good and thus fitting for the martyr prototype. This characterization is further strengthened by the implication that Tom has endowed his own person with a surplus of Christian feeling. It likely goes without saying that ideology influences Stowe’s conception and description of Tom. Stowe further describes the worshippers in terms of their expressive emotional responses to their religious experiences, of which Tom is both the incidental and actual cause: “for the negro mind, impassioned and imaginative, always attaches itself to hymns and expressions of a vivid and pictorial nature; and, as they sung, some laughed and cried, and some clapped hands, or shook hands rejoicingly with each other, as if they had fairly gained the other side of the river.”<sup>132</sup> In her depiction of the revival meeting event, Stowe attributes the slaves’ outpouring of emotional

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<sup>131</sup> Stowe (2009), 43.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-2.

expression, evident in their embodied responses, to a perfect storm of forces, including Tom's efficacy as preacher, the power of Christian language, and the worshippers' race. Moreover, she connects happiness as emotional expression with proximity to freedom. All three elements are re-examined in Jones's version of the same event through a heightened enactment of embodied expressive qualities.

Jones's revision begins first and foremost with a critical appraisal of the ideological framework that is inseparable from Stowe's narrative. If sentimental Christianity functions as a meaning-making paradigm for Stowe, what, BTJ/AZ ask, gets unselected in her narrative? If, as Johnson proposes, emotions guide the selection processes that in turn generate meaning, what other emotions, selections, and meanings might there be? The company treats Stowe's novel as its own historical event, as trying to represent generalized figures grounded in her contemporary history (and, as we will see with the case of Eliza, actual historical subjects). But, as I stated in the introduction, the ensemble is more invested in examining how the phenomenon of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* participates in the historical process leading to the structuring element of their own contemporary social environment: racial inequality. In Jones's version, Tom leads a church meeting for the other characters that proposes an alternative to the sincerity of religious feeling Stowe advocates by performing embodied responses to Christianity that go unselected in Stowe's sacrificial narrative.<sup>133</sup> This scene features Smith as Tom preaching to a group of slaves who kneel in front of him, arms outstretched and shaking frantically. Their heads bob back and forth with exaggerated speed. The unnatural speed and effort with which the performers execute this choreography moves the scene away from any realistic depiction of the revival meeting and into caricature. Jones suggests through the specific qualities of his choreography attitudes toward

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<sup>133</sup> Deviating from Stowe's creation, the "revival meeting" mashes together the cast of characters, creating a common space for them to share when they in fact may never meet in the novel.

sentimental Christianity that may be present in the communities represented (perhaps inaccurately) in Stowe's novel, exaggerating these responses in order to make them visible. The characters' flailing, arbitrary participation in the meeting casts doubts about its efficacy in bringing them closer to salvation in terms of reading their embodied participation as reflective of genuine feeling. Its presentational quality, directed out towards the spectator as a performance, also paints this kind of event as disingenuous, an effect that extends to the religious gestures that Cowles performs as Stowe at the border of the cabin while Allen looks on with varying degrees of bemusement and disgust.

This suggestion of disingenuousness is complemented by the use of masks in this section. Specifically the use of masks strongly argues that, rather than a window into a hidden world (the model of Stowe's narration in the original novel), the revival meeting is both a literally and figuratively choreographed performance of religiosity and sincerity. These masks work to frustrate our cognitive processes of Theory of Mind (ToM). Briefly, ToM describes our tendency to attribute states of mind (and, crucially, feeling) to other people and ourselves in order to "explain behavior in terms of underlying thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions[.]"<sup>134</sup> The majority of this action takes place unconsciously and we cannot help it even though, naturally, some of our attributions are incorrect. Because we are goal-driven organisms, correct attribution, i.e. reading someone's body language correctly as it pertains to their emotional state, is a pleasurable experience, and we are continually seeking experiences of what Zunshine terms "embodied transparency."<sup>135</sup> The company's use of masks frustrates any kind of embodied transparency by circumventing facial expression as a readable marker (though of course posture,

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<sup>134</sup> Zunshine, 183. See Zunshine, "Theory of Mind and Michael Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality*: Notes toward Cognitive Historicism" for an explanation of ToM and application to works of visual art.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

gesture, and qualities of movement can tell us a great deal about emotional states, but they will have to be more strongly articulated without the aid of facial expression). The choreography of this section also foregrounds the possibility that posture, gesture, and qualities of movement can be performed as deception: “we end up *performing* our bodies (not always consciously or successfully) to shape other people’s perceptions of our mental states[.]”<sup>136</sup> This is not to say that masks eliminate successful attribution, but rather that as organisms we are predisposed to seek out embodied transparency to fulfill our goals of correct state-of-mind attribution, and playing with access to facial expression will necessarily greatly affect these attributions.

The majority of the ensemble wears masks throughout “The Cabin” section – Smith as Tom and Cowles as Stowe are the only performers in this section who are never masked and various emotional expressions play freely across their faces. Yet their unmasking does not, in fact, imply a greater embodied transparency of emotion because their body language often counters their emotional expression in its exaggeration. Allen as the contemporary narrator is masked only as Simon Legree in Tom’s death scene. The masks are flat, angular planes with roughly sketched openings for eyes and mouths. They are relatively interchangeable, mostly without strong identifying features for certain characters (this work is usually done by costume and movement vocabulary). They serve to wipe out any distinguishing facial characteristics of the performers, but also have the effect of removing any expressive facial change, and thus a sense of emotional story. The use of the masks gets tweaked slightly in the revival meeting event: within the frame of the cabin, Smith, as Tom, faces the audience unmasked upstage of the cabin’s proscenium. As he gesticulates wildly (the chaos reinforced by Julius Hemphill’s equally frenetic saxophone score) the ensemble, on their knees facing Tom, bounces up and down,

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 186.

shaking their masked heads back and forth. However, in this event their masks are on backwards, facing the audience, in a complete reversal from their frontal bodies, which are oriented towards Tom. This is a jarring sight for the spectator. The moment is not meant to be an illusion – the company do not move so as to suggest they can bend their knees backwards, for example. Rather the suggestion is of an embodied, two-faced insincerity of emotion, with one kind of performance directed towards the audience and another directed towards Tom. The choice of backward masks might be read even further as suggesting an unnatural quality to this worship, making this expression of religious feeling somehow untruthful. The causes identified by Stowe have no purchase in Jones’s version – racial identity (not to mention gender identity) is already in flux due to the multiracial cast (the white Larry Goldhuber playing Aunt Chloe, for example); religious feeling generally has already been skewered by Allen’s parodic gestures; and Tom’s efficacy as a preacher is cast into doubt not only by the insincerity of his worshippers but also by a staccato vocal delivery and series of sharp gestures that challenge our ToM abilities.

The choreography of the revival meeting is one of many departures from the narrative cohesion of Stowe’s sacrificial narrative as well as from the understanding of race as causal that the novel represents.<sup>137</sup> BTJ/AZ suggest, in looking at contemporary racial inequality as a structure related to historical processes of racism (such as those found in Stowe’s paradigm), that it is racism and racialized identity, rather than biological race, which has causal force in our national and personal histories. The company most strongly articulates this position in their retelling of the novel’s climax, Tom’s death – the event that ties Stowe’s story into a long history

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<sup>137</sup> Indeed, Stowe’s novel is a particularly complex story in its knitting together of sacrificial tropes (in the case of Uncle Tom) and romantic love tropes (in the union of Eliza and George Harris). One could also argue that Stowe, in her understanding of the sacrificial narrative through a sentimental Christian paradigm, radicalizes this narrative by combining it with heroic conventions, even explicitly identifying Tom’s death as a “victory.”

of sacrificial narratives. Hogan posits that universal narrative prototypes emerged from a need to contextualize and make sense of emotional prototypes (for example, happiness) and their expression. The three dominant narrative genres of sacrificial, heroic, and romantic tragicomedy all result from our unconscious tendencies towards locating and preserving happiness outcomes, or goals.<sup>138</sup> These patterns become tremendously important in teaching us about causality and event sequencing. Spolsky describes the evolutionary function of narrative as a projection chamber of sorts where we try out different actions in situations that may or may not resemble our own social and material environments:

[n]arratives indeed teach us by managing our neuronal/brain/body responses in all kinds of situations. Continuous encounters with narrative, on this view, recursively reorganize an individual brain/mind into a connected set of schemata that represent the self and the situation of that self in its environment, such that the achieved or constructed patterns support both the individual's identity and his or her behavior.<sup>139</sup>

Through repetition, narrative prototypes come to organize how we view sequences of events in the world as well as in fiction, and thus they are relevant for how historical narratives are crafted.

Stowe's novel is complex enough that all three genres are represented, but in the case of Tom's character, the narrative takes a sacrificial turn. In Hogan's view, sacrificial narratives result from societal issues of scarcity (prompting negative emotional responses) and abundance (prompting positive emotional responses) wherein suffering cannot be made sense of without turning to a teleological, religious framework wherein sin and suffering are yoked. A death is demanded as reparation for society's sins, "often the death of someone who is uniquely innocent," in order that normalcy (and positive emotional response) be restored.<sup>140</sup> This is a

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<sup>138</sup> See Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, ch. 3, for this argument. An earlier and more thorough version of this argument also appears in Hogan, *The Mind and its Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>139</sup> 40.

<sup>140</sup> Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, 134.

familiar narrative arc, found transhistorically in many cultures, and perhaps most archetypal in the story of Jesus and thus familiar to Stowe and influential in her own version of this prototypical narrative. Hogan suggests that when we look at particular stories within these genres, “perhaps the most important guiding structure that advances beyond emotion and causal attribution is dominant social ideology[.]”<sup>141</sup> In Jones’s revision of Tom’s death, not only are narrative closure and a return to normalcy circumvented, but additionally the social ideology that requires sacrifice (and particularly the sacrifice of a black man) to regain normalcy is rejected. In terms of cognition and emotional response, this change is significant in that it addresses a narrative event that has, in dramatic terms, high stakes (more so than the revival meeting). “Our emotional response to an occurrence is intensified,” Hogan writes, “to the degree that the occurrence is consequential.”<sup>142</sup> The particular consequences of Tom’s death heighten the stakes of BTJ/AZ’s revision.

Tom’s death takes place in Stowe’s novel in the aptly named chapter “The Martyr.” Fittingly, the vision for Tom’s death struck Stowe during a church service: “As if someone was unrolling a picture, the whipping and subsequent death of Tom appeared to her and after the service, Stowe went home and, in most graphic terms, transferred the vision to paper.”<sup>143</sup> Tom is a Christian martyr in Stowe’s vision: his death serves as the spark of conversion for Sambo and Quimbo, the two slaves ordered to whip him by Simon Legree. As Tompkins points out, “in the system of belief that undergirds Stowe’s enterprise, dying is the supreme form of heroism...death is the equivalent not of defeat but of victory; it brings access of power, not a loss of it[.]”<sup>144</sup> The

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>143</sup> Frick, 8.

<sup>144</sup> 127.



earnestness with which Tom urges Sambo and Quimbo to accept Jesus Christ is indeed amplified by his impending death, and his martyrdom endows his words with a kind of performative power. As Tom speaks, Sambo and Quimbo see the light: ““Why didn’t I never hear this before?” said Sambo; ‘but I do believe!’”<sup>145</sup> Stowe sets up Tom’s death by suspending Tom between Christ, who “stood by him...seen by him alone” and Legree, “the tempter...blinded by furious, despotic will[.]”<sup>146</sup> This dichotomy between the angel and devil, though absent from Jones’s retelling of this episode, does recur in a later section of *Last Supper* as Jones himself dances between these figures, embodied by Arthur Aviles and Sean Curran. In Stowe’s scene, Sambo and Quimbo, “who had been the instruments of cruelty upon him” actually administer Tom’s death at Legree’s orders.<sup>147</sup> In an earlier episode Legree lashes Tom, but not at the dramatic incident of his death, surrogating this task to black bodies.<sup>148</sup> Tom’s martyrdom affects both black and white characters in the novel. When George Shelby, Tom’s previous owner’s beloved son, discovers what Legree has done to Tom when he visits the plantation expressly to buy Tom back, he rather selfishly exclaims “O, don’t die! It’ll kill me!”<sup>149</sup> Tom replies to George that he should not grieve for him, as “I’ve got the victory!”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Stowe (2009), 540.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 538.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 539.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 539.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 545.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 2. Scene of Tom's death.**

The sense that Tom's death is victorious is an affective one: Christian love has redeemed Tom from his suffering and the temptation of despair. He concludes that the greatest gift his faith has given him is his ability to feel love: "I loves every creatur', everywhar! – it's nothing *but* love! O, Mas'r George! what a thing 't is to be a Christian!"<sup>151</sup>

This appeal to Christian love supports the novel's sentimental paradigm. If sympathetic feeling is the desired outcome of Stowe's abolitionist text, then surely holding up the Christian imperative to love is a key strategy in achieving this result. Returning to Tompkins' point, the Christian underpinnings of Stowe's social context mesh the language of heroism into the sacrificial prototype, giving the sacrificial figure (who is often but need not be more than simply the subject chosen for sacrifice) the additional functions of the hero (a generally active figure who takes deliberate actions that restore normalcy to his or her community). Different social organizations formulate different valuation systems of emotional expression. For this Christian

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<sup>151</sup> Stowe (2009), 545.

society, love is at the top: “social operations enter not only into the specification of emotion itself but also into those ideologies that intensify and particularize our representations of emotion, including those in literary narrative.”<sup>152</sup> Stowe’s sentimental Christianity particularizes her representation of love, fueling a union between heroic and sacrificial narratives that supports narrative closure and promotes positive emotional response (i.e., in Tom’s repeated insistence that George, the white reader’s surrogate figure at his death scene, should feel happiness in Tom’s union with Jesus). Hogan notes that heroic prototypes often operate according to a threat-defense formula, wherein the primary action is a usurpation sequence that takes the society from stable (established social order, embodied in a leader) to threatened (by a usurper) to stable (due to the actions of a defender, often cast as a warrior).<sup>153</sup> In their tendency to move toward the reinstatement of social order, heroic narratives can, in Hogan’s words, “operate to occlude the enduring harms of violence[.]”<sup>154</sup> Thus BTJ/AZ’s revision is also invested in foregrounding the enduring quality of racialized violence through imagining an alternate site for heroism; rather than lighting upon Tom the individual, their revision relocates this characterization onto the ensemble as a whole.

Jones’s version of events differs in several key ways from Stowe’s. When we reach the scene of Tom’s death, it is the narrator Allen, not Cowles as Stowe, who does the most violence to Tom because Allen doubles in the role of Simon Legree. He does so masked, with his mask turned backward so that it faces the audience while his body faces upstage, an unsettling effect not unlike the revival meeting scene. Two company members hold Smith, as Tom, upside down in a supported handstand with his back to the audience. This moment is a conflation of scenes

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<sup>152</sup> Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, 7.

<sup>153</sup> See Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, pp. 129-133 for a detailed explanation of this prototype.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

from the novel: Legree himself does whip Tom in an earlier episode in Stowe's text, however he is not the agent of his death in "The Martyr," ordering his slaves to enact this violence as he spectates. Yet Jones's version is meant to hearken directly to the moment of Tom's death, and the absence of Sambo and Quimbo (as identifiable characters throughout "The Cabin" but also specifically in this action) is significant.<sup>155</sup> While a black body still commits the violence toward Tom, the reference to Legree's manipulation is clear in Allen's masking. Allen is literally two-faced in this moment, with his own face as the black narrator taking in Tom's pain as he whips Smith, and his masked face as the white Legree taking in the audience. Within Allen's action, Legree's historical violence towards blacks is represented alongside the suggestion of a contemporary attitude of violence towards this historical representation of slavery encapsulated in Stowe's novel. As Allen whips Smith, Cowles' body registers the blows, shuddering with each hit. Stowe's dismay might be altruistic, i.e. despair over another body's pain. Yet another option remains: Stowe's self-interested promotion of Tom is torn asunder as Tom is violently rejected by the very demographic (black Americans) for whose benefit she claimed to write.

In this first whipping, the cast makes the sounds of the blows, collectively producing a soundscape of violence that implicates them in Tom's death and Stowe's legible response of horror and removing any sense of a detached witnessing that a spectator might potentially feel towards these events. The surplus of sound they produce also heightens the drama of the scene in a way that yokes Jones's personal history as a black man to Tom's narrative. This moment is heightened in Jones's representation not only because of its consequential nature to Tom's life (and thus its natural tendency to cause an emotional spike), but also because of the role of emotion in the selection process. The whip as an object carries a tendency to elicit strong

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<sup>155</sup> See Jones, *Last Night on Earth*, p. 210 for his claim that the scene in "The Cabin" specifically references Tom's death.

emotional response (such as a fear response) for many Americans, black and white, cognizant of its role in American racial history. For Jones, this tendency is intensified due to his familial history, and the story of his great-grandmother's whipping. In order to make sense of our lived experiences, we unconsciously flag objects and situations that cause emotional spikes: "As they develop and interact, organisms gain factual and emotional experience with different objects and situations in the environment and thus have an opportunity to associate many objects and situations which would have been emotionally neutral with the objects and situations that are naturally prescribed to cause emotion."<sup>156</sup> While it is difficult to see how the whip can be a neutral object, this difficulty is largely due to its strong historical identity as an object of violence in a specific white-on-black configuration. The familial element of Jones's personal history with the whip also strengthens the bond between that object and his strong emotional response as it activates attachments to family. Though Jones himself has not experienced being whipped, the memory of his mother's telling of his great-grandmother's story is encoded through emotion and triggered by the object. Importantly, this process, while eventually articulated verbally by Jones, takes place largely unconsciously. Jones's creative focus on the image and action of the whip reflects the cognitive reality that emotion, and its role in memory and encoding, plays a strong role in the order and representation of events.

Following Tom's death, a quick tableau is formed by the cast in the center of the cabin featuring Aunt Chloe and George Shelby, arms outstretched in praise of Tom and Jesus, a gesture mirrored by the ensemble that is staggered throughout the stage. This version of events upholds the narrative closure of both sacrificial and heroic models, positioning Tom's death as a victory for himself, as the Christian martyr-hero, and as a necessary event in order for his society

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<sup>156</sup> Damasio, *The Feeling*, 57.

to move forward. The society in question here is ambiguous – is it Cowles or Allen who benefits from this story? Stowe’s novel targeted white society, particularly abolition-friendly communities, in the hopes that sentimental yet graphic depictions of violence towards blacks would incite sympathy and advocacy. Through readers’ advocacy, the plight of black slaves would be abated. Thus the kind of narrative closure Stowe’s novel (and Jones’s first version of Tom’s death) enacts supports Hogan’s claim that “not every individual or group has the same degree of authority or impact with respect to the social evaluation and preservation of stories.”<sup>157</sup> Jones and ensemble demonstrate the truth of this statement in a virtuosic retrograded sequence that immediately follows the tableau, a sequence that evaluates and revises Stowe’s narrative in light of the historical racial injustices it has engendered.

Gaddis writes, “if the ‘meaning’ of history requires establishing coherent sequences of cause and effect, on the one hand, and yet nothing is inevitable, on the other hand, then it’s hard to see how coherence can emerge other than from some consideration of paths not taken and an explanation of why they weren’t.”<sup>158</sup> Gaddis calls these alternatives “counterfactuals.” Jones’s second version of Tom’s death is such a counterfactual that does not seek to explain the past on its own terms but rather through its effect on the present. The moment the tableau forms it quickly dissolves as the company retrograde their gestures movement by movement until they reach the moment of Tom’s whipping. This is an impressive feat – the effect is of rewinding a film, so exact are the ensemble’s movements. This series of retrograded gestures emphasizes the notion that in order to get into the past’s meaning in the present, we must go in through our bodies. The company’s bodies literally rewind them to a moment from the past, a moment

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<sup>157</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 134.

<sup>158</sup> 101.

selected through emotional response. As soon as Smith is suspended in his handstand, he rolls out of the hold and back onto his feet. He strikes a pose in front of Legree, facing the audience, with a wide stance in his legs and his arms crossed in front of him at the wrists, hands in fists. This gesture hearkens clearly to imagery of bound hands common to the slavery project, a gesture we have seen earlier in the piece during the auction block scene. The rest of the cast, except for Cowles in her spot at the cabin's edge and Allen playing Legree, form a long line across the upstage horizon, all in Smith's pose. Importantly, the cast is now unmasked. This unmasking supports a reading of this second ending as more emotionally genuine and truthful, as it increases the likelihood for the spectator of accessing the emotions of the performers.<sup>159</sup> If these masks function as a historicizing device, then their removal here signifies a shift from mocking the 1850s and Stowe's representatives from this time to a very serious recognition that history repeats itself, revisiting its violence upon a seemingly endless supply of marginal bodies. Smith, with a facial expression of pride and anger, circles his arms out and around, breaking his chains. Immediately following this gesture he is struck twice by Allen and rolls quickly to the ground and out of the cabin's frame. Another company member, who repeats the same gesture and facial expression, immediately takes his place. The company cycles through this site of violence as Allen strikes each person once as they take their place in the hot seat. This sequence continues, with the company members taking multiple turns.

Instead of advancing a singular, exceptional, noble death that supports Stowe's vision of Tom as a martyr, Jones proposes instead a series of small deaths visited upon multiplying, continually moving, and shifting bodies, making a clear affective site for the spectator's

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<sup>159</sup> A likelihood, not a certainty. There is no guarantee of clear access into someone else's emotions, as Zunshine elucidates, however there are certain actions and representations, such as access to facial expression, that increase our feeling of this access.

sympathy (or reader, in Stowe's case) challenging to locate. This challenge is also due to a disconnection of narrative events and causality that this second ending prompts. In its proposal of a group protagonist rather than a hero or martyr, this ending frustrates heroic and sacrificial prototypes. Further, it does not return the society to a sense of normalcy, but rather proposes a radically different society at its conclusion than the one at its beginning, suggesting that Stowe's narrative has had causal effects moving from the past to the present. The consequential nature of this ending is also far murkier; in the original, Tom's death served as an emotional spike in part because of its obviously consequential nature. However, in this revised ending, characters cycle through their deaths multiple times, rendering the act of death less powerful and endowing the violence visited upon these bodies with a painfully mundane quality. Understanding this ending as an "event" is also a continually frustrated process that tests our construction of a causal chain that forms a comprehensive narrative. Hogan summarizes the event as "the proximate cause and...the 'situational response,' the immediate actional outcome."<sup>160</sup> Because the cast members have lost their identifying markers in this narrative, their character masks, and because their relationship to each other has shifted without these character markers, the cause of their suffering departs from Stowe's tight narrative. The proximate cause of Legree's violence becomes unfocused from Tom's combination of blackness and piety and redistributed across a mass whose suffering appears arbitrary. This weak cause and effect repeats endlessly, without forming a resolution, challenging our need for narrative conclusion and suggesting that Stowe's influence in American history has yet to conclude. Jones characterizes this second ending as a "coup de théâtre," wherein "I [Jones] then take the liberty of inserting a 'correct' ending – the one we would like to have seen, in which Tom...stands up with all the other slaves and resists Simon

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<sup>160</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 36.



Legree.”<sup>161</sup> I think that the “correctness” Jones speaks about here does not, in fact, play out in terms of resistance to racial injustice, but rather in terms of a truthfulness of feeling. This revision attempts to feel its way into history, whether Jones acknowledges this or not, by using emotional memory and present lived experiences to make sense of past events. Moreover, the understanding of this scene as an ending is circumstantial rather than content-driven: the scene is fashioned as a revision of a previous ending and occurs at the end of this section of the larger work. The actual content of this moment does not suggest an ending in the traditional sense as it does not restore any sense of normalcy but rather, and I think this is its chief strength, counters the notion that this narrative has actually been resolved in history and the American narrative of racial progress.

## 2.2 ELIZA ON THE ICE

*Last Supper's* second section, “Eliza on the Ice,” is a series of solos for the company’s four women, with an appearance by Gregg Hubbard as a fifth Eliza. “Eliza on the Ice” builds on the character revision from “The Cabin” by taking a sustained look at the character of Eliza and her categorization within the archetype of the tragic octaroon. This section specifically experiments with imagining alternatives (or counterfactuals) for a given character, in this case a character that is both historical and fictional. While here the company focuses on Stowe’s fictional representation of the historical Eliza, the use of counterfactuals as a tool for creating historical narratives is applied productively in the Lincoln trilogy to explicitly historical figures, building

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<sup>161</sup> *Last Night on Earth*, 211.

upon strategies first developed in *Last Supper*. Moreover, “Eliza on the Ice” makes explicit the hidden influences of “The Cabin,” arguing that personal histories, and the emotional memories they engender, play a role in our constructions of and responses to “authorized” histories of public narratives. Thus this section turns from revising event to revising character, and adds the reimagining of archive to the revision of narrative (as elements of historical inquiry) begun in “The Cabin.” The Elizas’ performance challenges fundamental aspects of Stowe’s Eliza, namely her identity as a mother, and, in Hubbard’s performance, as female. “Eliza on the Ice” revises Stowe’s episode in two key ways: in character, as it proposes multiple and strikingly different Elizas, and in plot, as it foregrounds Eliza as part of a collective making their way through oppressive circumstances, rather than as the exceptional individual, Stowe’s sentimentalized maternal mulatto woman. This collective is made up of counterfactuals to the historical Eliza, performances that are composed of distinct movement vocabularies that not only explore specific alternative representations of the character but also prompt (and are prompted by) emotional response. Both Stowe and Jones seek to represent a historical Eliza, one who has existed as both a real person and as a type in American historical narrative. Stowe’s vision of Eliza took its inspiration from accounts of slaves escaping across the Ohio River from Kentucky to Ohio, and may have been based on one specific account of the runaway slave Eliza Jane Johnson. Jones’s notion of the historical Eliza finds its origins in Stowe’s representation but also in other formulations of American femininity, including those represented in his dancers’ lived experiences.

In her account of the Underground Railroad, Ann Hagedorn provides a brief story about a slave woman crossing the Ohio River in the dead of winter at night, carrying her baby.<sup>162</sup> This story comes from the Rankin family, whose home near the banks of the Ohio River in Ripley, OH functioned as a stopover for slaves using the Underground Railroad to get to freedom. The woman, later remembered by the family's patriarch John Rankin as Eliza, is being chased by a slave catcher, Shaw. Not unlike Stowe's Simon Legree, Shaw is well-known for his cruelty. In a change from Stowe's story, Shaw is in fact waiting for Eliza (later determined to be Eliza Jane Johnson from a Dover, Kentucky plantation) on the Ohio side, rather than chasing her across from the Kentucky side, as Stowe writes. Eliza flees from her stop on the Kentucky border, jumping from ice floe to ice floe, clutching her young son, and miraculously reaches the Ohio shore. As she is on the verge of collapse, Shaw, who has been waiting her out, catches her by the arm (this is another notable difference from Stowe's tale, where Eliza's escape is in fact successful). According to John Rankin, Jr., the youngest son of the Rankin family, Shaw, stunned by Eliza's survival, guides her through the night to the Rankin's home, telling her "Any woman who crossed that river carrying her baby has won her freedom."<sup>163</sup> From this first moment of the Eliza story, preceding Stowe and the many stage iterations that followed, Eliza's identity as a mother is the key to her value (in some ways replicating the slave economy), impressing Shaw enough to force a radical change in his character. Stowe eventually hears of this tale when Rankin Sr. meets Prof. Calvin Ellis Stowe, Harriet Beecher's husband, and recounts the tale to both of them. Eliza's maternity becomes Stowe's primary characterization

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<sup>162</sup> See Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002, pp.136-143 for a detailed description.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 137. Stowe echoes this sentiment when Eliza is helped over the banks of the Ohio side of the river by Mr. Symmes, who promises not to turn her over: "You've arnt your liberty, and you shall have it, for all me." Stowe (2009), 82.

tactic, strongly influencing visual representations in popular culture of the novel's most dramatic scene.



**Figure 3. Eliza's crossing**

The sentimental Christian framework Stowe employs throughout her novel strongly influences her depiction of Eliza. Stowe keeps to the original story in the sense that the historical Eliza and Stowe's character are both "mulatto," a key distinction that Stowe is eager to make. Rehearsing familiar arguments, Stowe paints Eliza's mulatto origins as a reason for her temperament, for her possession of "white" character traits. Indeed, as Richard Yarborough notes in his study of stereotypes in the novel, "Eliza and George rival any white in the novel in nobility of character and fineness of sensibility. That in a sense they *are* white suggests that they represent not only Stowe's attempt to have her target audience identify personally with the plight of the slaves but also her inability to view certain types of heroism in any but 'white' terms."<sup>164</sup> Yarborough's claim is born out in the novel's opening description of Eliza, which notes "that peculiar air of refinement, that softness of voice and manner, which seems in many cases to be a particular gift

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<sup>164</sup> "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel." In *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 51.

to the quadroon and mulatto women. These natural graces in the quadroon are often united with beauty of the most dazzling kind, and in almost every case with a personal appearance prepossessing and agreeable.”<sup>165</sup> Stowe’s text supports a whitening logic wherein the closer one is biologically to whiteness, the closer they are to white gentility and its supposedly stronger moral fiber.

In fact, there is scientific evidence that supports Stowe’s assumption that white readers are more likely to identify, and to do so through emotional response, with characters who read as members of their racial in-group. Nalini Ambady et. al’s 2006 study found that race and emotion are highly correlated in terms of assessing what another person is feeling – i.e., developing empathy for that person. In experiments that asked participants to identify the emotion associated with the facial expression of three different “racially salient” targets (in this case, white, African-American, and Asian-American), most participants had a greater ability to correctly match the facial expression with the emotion (fear, anger, and neutral) in targets that were members of their own racial group. Through the use of neuroimaging, Ambady et. al demonstrated that not only was the effect of race evident in the behavior of the participants toward the targets (i.e., in their verbal determinations of emotion based on facial expression) but also in the very neural maps that were activated unconsciously in order for participants to consciously articulate their responses. Specifically, researchers found distinctions in the amount of neural activity in the amygdala, responsible for much of our recognition of fear and anger, between white and African-American or Asian-American faces. Ambady et. al concluded that “These findings suggest that neural regions specifically involved in recognizing fear and anger show differences in signal

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<sup>165</sup> Stowe (2009), 18. A further example of Stowe’s connection between white skin and white morality can be found in her description of Eliza’s wedding day: “and her mistress herself adorned the bride’s beautiful hair with orange-blossoms, and threw over it the bridal veil, which certainly could scarce have rested on a fairer head; and there was no lack of white gloves[.]” 21.

change depending on the race of the person expressing the emotion.”<sup>166</sup> In other words, our brains literally have a harder time assessing the emotions of persons perceived as outside of our group.

But why might this be so? Ambady et. al also tested an additional hypothesis: that a correlation between race and emotion might be supported by social ideologies, like racism, prevalent in a given social environment. Participants were assessed not only in terms of their own race relative to in-group and out-group dynamics between the participant and the target photographs (if the participant was white and the target Asian American, for example), but also on the modern racism scale,<sup>167</sup> which indicated if the participant likely had a tendency toward low- or high-prejudice against out-group subjects. In this part of the study participants were asked to evaluate the photograph (a similar photograph to the first experiment, with a racially salient target and clear facial expression) in order to answer the question “Do I want to work with this person?” Perhaps most troubling, high-prejudice participants neurologically did not spend the mental resources on correctly assessing the emotions of an out-group target: “The shorter behavioral response latencies of the high-prejudiced group to angry black targets further reflects absence of effortful suppression of prejudiced behavior.”<sup>168</sup> Moreover, these participants showed “a greater recruitment of cognitive resources to respond to happy white stimuli” suggesting that “prejudiced individuals may expend extra effort to make individuating responses when required to evaluate in-group stimuli, and that less effort in individuating out-group

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<sup>166</sup> Ambady, Joan Y. Chiao, Pearl Chiu, and Patricia Deldin. “Race and Emotion: Insights from a Social Neuroscience Perspective.” In *Social Neuroscience: People Thinking about Thinking People*, eds. John T. Cacioppo, Penny S. Visser, and Cynthia L. Pickett. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006. 213.

<sup>167</sup> See McConahay, J., Hardee, B. & Batts, V. (1981). “Has racism declined in America? It depends on who is asking and what is asked.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 25, 563-579.

<sup>168</sup> 217.

members may contribute to the expression of prejudice[.]”<sup>169</sup> Conversely, the longer duration (and we’re talking seconds) that low-prejudice participants spent on trying to correlate emotion and facial expression of out-group targets reflected an unconscious desire to avoid prejudice: “greater concern with exhibiting overt signs of prejudice that is subsequently reflected in the recruitment of cognitive control in order to suppress prejudicial behavior.”<sup>170</sup> Thus, Ambady et. al concluded not only that “the emotional expression of a racially salient target influences processing of in-group and out-group members at not only the behavioral, but also the physiological level,” but also that there exists “neural differentiation between individuals who score high and low on explicit measures of racial prejudice.”<sup>171</sup> This study shows how the feedback loop between body/brain/environment can radically influence social relationships at the neurological level. In terms of thinking about history, particularly American history, this study supports BTJ/AZ’s choreographic assertion that racism has a causal effect and moreover, that racism’s cause and effect cycle continues in the present. Ambady et. al’s findings also support Hogan’s claim that “social operations enter not only into the specification of emotion itself but also into the ideologies that intensify and particularize our representations of emotion, including those in literary narrative.”<sup>172</sup> Thus a social ideology of racism will profoundly influence the relationship between race and emotion in a given narrative, including which emotions are attributed to which racially salient characters. So it seems there is a neurological basis, that can nonetheless be shifted within an alternate social ideology, for Stowe’s equation of white emotions = white skin. This equation leads to the whitening project Stowe undertakes with Eliza

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>172</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 7.

as the romantic heroine, a project that BTJ/AZ counter with their multi-racial and emotionally differentiated representations of the character.



**Figure 4. The Harris family: George, Eliza, and Harry.**

James Baldwin, in his critique of Stowe's novel, describes Eliza as "a beautiful, pious hybrid"<sup>173</sup> and indeed Eliza's half-black, half-white status serves as the origin for the whitening process that this heroine undergoes throughout the text. Jennifer Devere Brody claims that the whitening of Eliza is directly related to maternity, femininity, and sentimentality, writing, "The production of purity...depends on the erasure of hybridity."<sup>174</sup> Stowe's goal of stoking sympathy in pro-slavery readers is in part accomplished through this gradual erasure of Eliza's blackness, even to the point of her being described as "white" by the three slave hunters who desire her capture. According to the logic of race at work in the novel, Eliza's physical proximity to whiteness implies an emotional and moral proximity to proper femininity, which, within a sentimental framework, functions as the locus of sensitivity and sympathy. As Loker, Haley, and

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<sup>173</sup> "Everybody's Protest Novel" in *Notes of a Native Son*. New York: The Dial Press, 1963. 16.

<sup>174</sup> *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 66.



Marks (our slave catchers) sit around the table drinking as they hunt for Eliza, this connection is made instantly when Haley describes her succinctly to the others as “white and handsome – well brought up.”<sup>175</sup> Stowe places this assessment in the mouths of those most likely to oppose such a connection – firm anti-abolitionists (though her depiction of these three men certainly casts doubt on their “Christian” character). The three men converse after having lost Eliza across the river, an episode which takes a few brief pages, but would later be immortalized in stage adaptations and illustrations as a key dramatic event in the larger story of the novel.

Eliza’s crossing is the event that Jones picks up on, naming his second section “Eliza on the Ice.” The episode is revised to erase Eliza’s maternity entirely, focusing instead on relationships between women and the notion of a collective force, rather than an exceptional individual. In performing four distinct representations of Eliza, each with a specific movement vocabulary, the company reflects the cognitive tendency to read body language for inner emotional responses, challenging the spectator to identify the “correct” Eliza as well as neurological processes that correlate emotion and race. Watching the four Elizas unite at the end of the section produces a feeling of camaraderie, strength in numbers, and forward-moving drive. To get to this ending, Jones first passes through a series of “solos.” I say “solo” because while these choreographies are often described as solos, in fact they include other dancers onstage: Sage Cowles never leaves the stage for the entire section, at turns facilitating and disrupting the other women, and the company’s men as the “dogs” are often a key element in transitions between solos, as well as a strong presence in the choreography for both Betsy McCracken – Eliza 3 – and Maya Saffrin – Eliza 4. So while I will adopt the common usage of “solo” in order to more clearly delineate and describe these four slivers of the larger section (five, including

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<sup>175</sup> 91.

Hubbard), my intention is to rectify the record of this section by paying attention to how other bodies onstage contribute, even though they may not be the focal point of the individual choreographies.

Before I turn to the Elizas themselves, I want to briefly sketch out the connection between movement and emotion. Our unconscious tendencies to appraise the emotional states, desires, and potential actions of others (ToM) are rooted in unconscious processes that are themselves tailored to reading bodies. Thus even though ToM is linguistically a theory of the *mind*, it is in practice equally a theory of the body since we take the majority of our cues from facial expression, posture, gesture, and the emotions we read into bodies. After this appraisal we then consider the language that might accompany and contextualize these embodied behaviors – what might be traditionally construed as the “intellectual” side of expression. As Lisa Zunshine asserts, “Because the body is *the* text that we read throughout our evolution as a social species, we are now stuck, for better or for worse, with cognitive adaptations that forcefully focus our attention on that particular text.”<sup>176</sup> The movement vocabularies of the Elizas capitalize on this human development, creating four strongly differentiated “texts” for spectators to read. As readers, we read others’ bodies through our own embodied experiences and through specific material and social environments: “There is no movement without the space we move in, the things we move, and the qualities of movement, which are at the same time both the qualities of the world we experience and the qualities of ourselves as doers and experiencers.”<sup>177</sup> Our embodied experiences of movement are the foundation for the logic we use to understand cause and effect and for the metaphors we create to describe and make sense of the world we

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<sup>176</sup> 185, emphasis in original.

<sup>177</sup> Johnson, 20.

experience – causation and metaphor are, of course, crucial to practices of historical inquiry.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, the metaphors that are developed through our embodied experiences are tied closely to our emotional responses. For example, the movement metaphor, “Toward-Away From”<sup>179</sup> is related to our movement tendencies of approach and retreat, founded in our emotional responses (of fear or anger) to specific stimuli. Thus the role of our own emotions in prompting movement responses is the basis from which we infer this same relationship (between emotion and movement) onto others in our unconscious processes of ToM.

There are many schools of thought in terms of categorizing movement and describing movement vocabularies (Laban, Bartenieff, etc.). However, here I am interested in the most basic categories, perceived unconsciously, that give rise to these more sophisticated systems, used consciously. Johnson describes these categories as “four recurring qualitative dimensions of all bodily movements: tension, linearity, amplitude, and projection.”<sup>180</sup> Jones’s choreography for each of the Elizas foregrounds these qualities in distinct ways for each representation of the character, and the deviations allow the spectator to make differing appraisals of the emotional state of each representation. Tension refers to the literal tension of our musculature required to perform any movement. Our experience of our material environment, for example the force of gravity, influences our learned habits of tension in relation to the amount of effort specific movements require: “Knowing your world thus requires exquisitely fine adjustments of muscular

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<sup>178</sup> Specifically, Johnson asserts, “Feeling what it takes to cause an object to move from one place to another is a core part of our basic understanding of physical causation.” 21. Through metaphor, this understanding of causation extends to understanding all events.

<sup>179</sup> See Johnson, 21, for a short list of movement metaphors. See Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) for extended treatment of the relationship of movement and embodiment to conceptual metaphors.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

tensions and exertion, calibrated via the tensive qualities that you feel in your body.”<sup>181</sup> We tense our muscles to greater or lesser degree depending on how much muscular strength a given activity requires. It isn’t difficult to see how our embodied experiences of muscular tension give rise to colloquialisms like “you look tense.” We attribute another person’s tension to visible facial expression, posture, and gesture, and then from that attribution we infer the emotional quality of being tense and its negative associations (this is but one, albeit common, reading of increased bodily tension). Linearity refers to our paths of motion through space. Our own experiences with linearity (moving directly or circuitously) have obvious repercussions for linguistic metaphors, for example a conversation that “goes in circles.” Linearity also engages our imaginative capacities, aiding us in assessing objects (including other people) and projecting their future trajectories. Johnson positions linearity as a core quality of movement by which we learn causation.<sup>182</sup> Amplitude is very similar to Laban’s notion of kinesphere – it concerns the amount of space a given motion takes up, or to what degree “our bodies fill and use the space available to us in a tight, contractive fashion or in an expansive way.”<sup>183</sup> We often infer someone’s ease or comfort in a given space by how their movements either expand or retreat in that space. The last of the qualities is projection – how we initiate movement qualitatively (as opposed to with a specific body part). Projection occurs along a spectrum from “violent initial propulsion” to “gradual, continuous exertion.”<sup>184</sup> Projection also involves notions of effortful and effortless action – think of when you ask someone how their day was, and they respond, “it was a slog.” This response, while it may refer not to a continuous series of movements,

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 24.

originates from our embodied experience of continuous, effortful exertion and the physical and mental exhaustion it causes.

Importantly, these qualitative dimensions, not unlike the neurological responses to race and facial expression in Ambady et. al's study, are directly related to social ideologies that structure the social environment. In his definition of amplitude Johnson cites Iris Marion Young's seminal essay "Throwing Like a Girl" as an example of how social conventions "define some of the ways that a person's world is open to them for specific kinds of forceful actions."<sup>185</sup> Moreover, the social environment is a crucial element of the organism-environment coupling that influences our assessments of correlation between embodiment and emotion. When we say someone is "an upright person," most likely we are correlating a nice straight spine with a high degree of socially sanctioned moral behavior. When we say someone is withdrawn, this is an inference about their emotional state (usually a variation on sadness) that results from appraisals of their embodiment – likely a reduced amplitude and lessened tension that would make it challenging for this person to spring into action. BTJ/AZ make explicit these unconscious associations between embodiment, emotion, and the assessments about character that follow, in their performance of four drastically different Elizas. Each Eliza is positioned as a counterfactual, an alternative vision of this historically influential character. These proposals of alternate pasts are offered up as a critique of Stowe's depiction. The presence of these counterfactuals illustrates Gaddis's claim that "History is constantly being measured in terms of previously neglected metrics...But the history these representations represent has not changed."<sup>186</sup> The company's revision of Eliza through new "metrics" or counterfactuals represented in "Eliza on the Ice" also

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. See Young's *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) for the original essay.

<sup>186</sup> 125.

includes a recognition, made tangible by the continued presence of Cowles as Stowe, that the historical reality of Stowe's representation of Eliza as a character remains.

In her critique of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Hortense Spillers claims that one of the novel's chief crimes is its predetermined nature due to its reliance on stereotype: "to rob the subject of its dynamic character, to capture it in a fictionalized scheme whose outcome is already inscribed by a higher, different, *other* power, freezes it in the ahistorical."<sup>187</sup> Each Eliza solo in Jones's work presents one fragment or side of Eliza. This effort is a bit paradoxical, in that it attempts to create an archetype with conflicting, temporally-specific sides. Woods's historical Eliza uses traditional costume, vernacular gesture, and Sojourner Truth's text to ground herself in the 1850s. Latsky, dressed in a loose shirt and pants, speaking a modern text with the aid of contemporary technology, seems firmly rooted in the present. Betsy McCracken's Eliza seems to address a mythic, almost futuristic vision of this character, while Maya Saffrin's performance is of a captive Eliza, who sadly does resonate cross-temporally. In contrast to the void of historicity that Spillers sees in Stowe's novel, *Last Supper* creates a surplus of historical moments and figures, producing a new vision of Eliza from their collision.

"Eliza on the Ice" begins with five women standing in a column center stage. Andrea Woods as Eliza 1 stands furthest downstage, facing the audience. She holds Eliza's mask from "The Cabin" in front of her face. With care and deliberation she unmask herself, passing the mask behind her to Heidi Latsky, Eliza 2. The mask continues to be passed back until it reaches Cowles, seated on a chair, in her costume as Stowe. Returning to the reading of the masks in terms of their functionality within ToM, this deliberate unmasking implies an increased likelihood in correctly assessing inner emotional states. The notion that these performances will

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<sup>187</sup> *Black, White, and In Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): 180, emphasis in original.

somehow be of the “real” Eliza (though, of course, failed readings are always possible) is supported by the refusal to wear the mask, and its eventual depository with Stowe, already a disingenuous figure within Jones’s narrative. Once the Elizas have been released from the mask, Elizas 2-4 exit the stage and leave Cowles and Woods onstage, the mask laid in Cowles’ lap.

For Jones, Woods’s Eliza represented a “historical Eliza – one whom Alvin Ailey would have recognized.”<sup>188</sup> Eliza 1 is in some ways a necessary representation in this parade of Elizas, designed to be the most similar in terms of historical period to Stowe’s Eliza and connecting the action of “The Cabin” thematically and stylistically with “Eliza on the Ice.” Beginning with Woods’s Eliza establishes a sense of continuity between the first two sections of the piece, supported also by Cowles’ presence as Stowe, which is crucial in advancing Jones’s argument, as the movement style changes drastically and provides little such continuity. Jones describes Woods’s choreography as “a series of lyrical, loping movements that originated in the pelvis, coursed up the back, and resulted in the languorous coiling and uncoiling of the arms, Andrea abstracted the movement impulses that I have witnessed or invented through my mother, grandmother...”<sup>189</sup> Woods also articulated this notion of a movement vocabulary taken from personal history. When I asked her where a particular gesture, a vernacular shaking of the index finger back and forth, saying no-no-no, came from, she laughed and responded, “Besides from

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<sup>188</sup> *Last Night on Earth*, 212. Alvin Ailey is a kind of ghosting figure in the story of BTJ/AZ. A legendary black American choreographer, his well-respected Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre was the assumed landing spot for talented black dancers from its formulation in 1958. Jones’s meteoric rise invites comparison, and Jones has often expressed respect for Ailey but commitment to a very different vision of modern dance and black dance. Ailey passed away in 1989 and, according to Gregg Hubbard, some thought that Jones would take over as director of his company, but there was resistance to this development in the higher ranks. Hubbard states, “it didn’t happen because they thought that he would have a gay sensibility to his work and that freaked folks out” (personal interview, Feb. 3, 2013). It was not revealed until after the passing of Ailey’s mother that Ailey had died from AIDS related illness.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* See *Dancing to the Promised Land* for Jones’s description of a particular gesture of a women folding her hands over the top of a hoe and sitting her weight into one hip as derived specifically from his mother and grandmother.

my mother?”<sup>190</sup> Woods repeatedly performs a gesture (we might think of it as the movement equivalent of this Eliza’s “home base”) consisting of feet in a rough fourth position, weight on the back leg with that knee bent and the hip cocked to the side, with the arms circling back and around to land with the hands crossed at the wrists and leaning on a fictional support. This gesture is meant to bind Woods’s Eliza to a genealogy of black female lived experience, supported by the personal histories of both Jones and Woods that generated this movement as well as Cowles’ recitation of Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I A Woman” speech (delivered one year before the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1851) as Woods performs.

Jones’s description of Woods’s choreography does not do justice to the tremendous difficulty of execution in the movement, though it does reflect how easy and comfortable Woods makes it look. The entire sequence focuses on Woods’s strong diagonal cross, matching the power of Truth’s speech in her approach to the movement – complete commitment. One particularly challenging moment occurs early on when Woods begins near center stage, where Cowles sits on the work’s signature high-backed, narrow chairs, reciting Truth’s speech. Woods goes into a dramatic, slow arabesque penchée, her left leg extended high into the air behind her, and her torso gradually radiating out and down, as her right arm presses forward, reaching on the diagonal. It is a feat of balance and focus. As the first major movement for Eliza 1, this arabesque sets up this character as one that is strong and literally balanced, evidenced in Woods’s active and tense musculature, and unafraid to take up space – this is clear from Woods’s remarkable amplitude here and throughout the solo. Her ability to extend fully through her limbs and to explore the space behind her as well as in front and sideways with her torso completely embraces the space around her and implies a sense of comfort and ease within the

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<sup>190</sup> Andrea Woods Valdés, personal interview, 29 January 2013.



strength established by the tension of the arabesque. Eliza 1 feels good to the spectator – Woods’s flexible spine, shifting on a dime from ramrod-straight to rippling, infers a sense of ease and control of the body over its circumstances. Thinking through projection, linearity, and tension, the overarching descriptor that comes to mind in watching Woods’s solo is balanced. In fact, her performance is virtuosic in its ability to straddle the poles of these movement qualities, allowing for shifts in pathway that nonetheless give the impression that this character knows where she’s going, for subtle and quick changes between moments of great exertion and moments of ease and flow, for riding between gradual, sustained effort (as in the arabesque) and light, punchy bursts (as in the jauntily repeated gesture of the hands on the hoe). Woods’s balancing feats (not only of achieving balance through the arabesque but also balancing between the poles of these movement qualities) imply a calm, content character who neither flies off the handle nor is emotionally blank. This Eliza is in every way equal to the tasks before her, armed with physical and emotional equanimity. These associations are made explicit when Cowles recites sections of Truth’s speech referring to having the weight of the world on her shoulders but carrying it with strength, during which Woods performs a series of long lunging walks, her torso bent over her legs but maintaining a straight spine. Her feet slap the floor but her straight spine and clear direction make it seem as though the sound has more to do with the force she exerts on her task rather than the force the task exerts on her.

Woods’s solo also addresses the relationship between movement, emotion, and social ideology. The social ideology that her solo addresses is bound up in both racism and patriarchy, addressed explicitly as such in Truth’s speech but also by Woods’s identity as an African-American woman. Certainly the dancers’ racial identities are far from the only elements of their persons that define them, but as Ambady et. al demonstrate, the race of racially salient subjects

(i.e., people whose race we think we can “read,” including reading whiteness and regardless of whether or not our readings are correct) often affects outsiders’ abilities to read their emotions and attribute their mental states, thereby understanding their situations or empathizing with them. Positioning Woods’s Eliza as the first Eliza, the historical Eliza, counters Stowe’s representation of her as almost white (see the illustrations previously in this chapter) as Woods is herself clearly African-American and does not, as Stowe hoped Eliza would, read as white. Darkening Eliza extends the assumptions about her moral uprightness and emotional strength toward an alternative range of African-American women who nonetheless face very real challenges both on account of their gender and their race. Cowles recites Truth’s assertion that the reigning patriarchy of her day assumed that since “Christ wasn’t a woman,” women are less worthy of respect, consideration, and equality. During this section of the speech, Woods lies on her side on the floor, facing the audience, curled into a ball with her feet strongly flexed and her hands in fists in front of her chest. The combination of decreased amplitude, increased tension in the hands and feet, and her facial discomfort suggest being penned in, experiencing the lived consequences of the social ideology exposed in Truth’s speech. The yearning to escape these restrictions and the extreme effort it takes to do so are implied when Woods attempts to jump her entire body off of the floor so that she maintains the same position but essentially hovers a few inches above the floor. Attempting to elevate the body without the use of the limbs as levers is quite impossible, as anyone will know from physical experience, and her frustrated attempts to accomplish this task mirror the frustrated emotions her character feels in this environment. This is a singular moment, however, made more striking by its distinctions in amplitude, tension, and projection from the rest of Woods’s choreography, which suggests a physical and emotional overcoming of these obstacles. By the end of the solo, Woods has performed an Eliza with

mastery over her physical and emotional self, and who may one day have mastery over her environment as well – as Woods told me, when she performed this solo “I was very proud...If a lion gets to roar, that [solo] was my lion’s roar.”<sup>191</sup>

Ambady et. al’s study showed significant relationships between the facial expression and salient race of a target photo in terms of how quickly participants assessed the emotion of a target. For those participants in the high-prejudice group, blackness and anger quickly correlated, and they spent much less time evaluating targets they perceived to be both African-American and angry, suggesting that this stereotype is both ubiquitous and powerful.<sup>192</sup> Jones’s *Eliza 2* refutes this stereotype, giving the choreography of anger to the white Heidi Latsky. If Woods’s performance was of the “historical” *Eliza*, then Latsky represented the modern day woman. Latsky’s solo continues the use of text established by Woods’s solo, though in this case she speaks her own words. Cowles is the bridge between Latsky and the audience, providing the mechanism (a microphone) by which Latsky’s experience moves from the private to the public realm. Latsky’s solo is a complete revolt against the lyricism of Woods’s previous performance. Latsky enters the space as if being pushed: her legs move stubbornly beneath her, as her arms flail out into the space, their movement initiated by an invisible violent push on the shoulder that causes the arm to reflexively shoot out sharply. In terms of linearity, Latsky’s path is clear, but so is her unwillingness to traverse it. She is suspended between forced forward motion and impossible backward motion. This suspension helps the spectator to infer both anger and sadness as components of Latsky’s emotional state. In a study by Keith Oatley on readers’ emotional responses to a given story, when asked to explain the causal chain of events in the story, readers

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> See Ambady et. al. 216-17.

who had a high incidence of anger responses articulated their answer with forward chaining (“stating first a set of reasons or premises, then a conclusion”<sup>193</sup>) and those who experienced more sadness responses engaged in backward chaining (“first stating a conclusion and then giving reasons to support it”<sup>194</sup>). Oatley summarizes the results of the study in terms of motion and emotion: “Sadness is a mode in which one starts from the current state and reasons backward to try and understand its causes. Anger is a state in which one reasons forward from the current state about what to do next.”<sup>195</sup> We are already primed for understanding Latsky’s solo as participating in a narrative from previous action. Moreover, we understand causation unconsciously through our embodied experiences as movers. Thus Eliza 2’s push-pull between advance and withdrawal, or backward and forward motion, engages with both the backward chaining of sadness and forward chaining of anger, creating a fully negative range of emotional response that spectators read through Latsky’s body.

Though both Woods and Latsky perform sequential movement (movement that moves bone by bone through the body), the easy rippling spine of Eliza 1 is here a series of sharp edges that moves from the push of the shoulder through a throwing of the elbow and into the sharp flick of the wrist. The strongest distinction here is in terms of control. Though both dancers are, as dancers, profoundly exercising control over the body, the appearance of the character’s control over their movement is sharply differentiated. Latsky appears to be struggling to get out of a straightjacket. The choreography focuses on the upper body and includes several extended series’ of sharp slicing, slashing, and hitting with the arms, actions that carve the space but also Latsky’s own body, as she repeatedly hits her sternum. Each Eliza seems to have a “home base”

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<sup>193</sup> “Emotions and the Story Worlds of Fiction,” 53.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 54.

movement, and Eliza 2's is a thumping of the chest that spins her chaotically off her axis. Latsky repeatedly takes her fist and hits her sternum, causing her to turn on her spot. With each repetition, Latsky looks at her fist with increasing fear and anger, torn between fight and flight. She holds her fist as far away from herself as possible, staring at it with such strong emotion that she gives the impression that this hand is not her own. In terms of tension, where Woods's solo was a paragon of balance, Latsky's solo involves either extreme tension or a complete lack of tension. As she recovers from each thump on the chest, her arm fairly pulses and shakes with tension and she holds her fist away from her and tries to resist its violent approach. Physiologically, this is an almost impossible sensation: to hold both intense approach and intense resistance in the same body part. The discomfort of this sensation is clear to the viewer, not only because of our embodied experience but also because of the discomfort and fear on Latsky's face. Latsky's movement throughout the solo reverberates up the arms and through the chest into her head, which falls off its axis at the neck both backwards and forwards with a fierce, violent quality. The solo is performed both as an attack on Eliza 2 and with the intensity of an attack on the part of Latsky, who jumps on the choreography with abandon. This choreography is, in fact, her own, and in developing it Latsky realized the powerful connection between emotion and movement, and that the two engage in a reciprocal causal relationship. The hitting action came from her need to feel anger: "I had to find movement so that I could get angry."<sup>196</sup> This Eliza, or side of Eliza, is one of anger and hurt, contrasting sharply with the others. In contrast to the loping walk that takes Woods offstage, here Latsky crawls offstage, literally brought low and unable to rise, in contrast to Woods. By placing this extreme of anger and fear into a representation of Eliza that is both white and contemporary, Jones cleverly revises the notion that

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<sup>196</sup> Heidi Latsky, personal interview, 31 January 2013.

the racism Eliza faced is fixed in time and Stowe's equation of Eliza's whiteness with emotional equanimity.

The "dogs," the male ensemble, chase off both Woods and Latsky, but come to attention when Betsy McCracken, as Eliza 3, enters the space. The dogs represent a masculine culture that is simultaneously violent and campy, a queered masculinity whose juxtaposition of choreography and costume plays on Simon Legree's dogs and the "dogs" of the slave hunters Loker, Haley, and Marks.



Figure 5. A promotion for a touring Tom show featuring the dogs as a primary draw.

Stowe describes Haley as a bulldog<sup>197</sup> and when the three are conferring over the dinner table after Eliza's escape across the river, she likens Tom's manners as canine, his mastication "as a big dog closes on a piece of meat."<sup>198</sup> In Jones's work, the men of the company play the dogs and their choreography as they run through the aisles and chase the Elizas to and from the stage is a football/military drill burlesque. A steady beat is kept underneath them as they march with their combat boots, while their upper bodies execute a series of sharp movements, often with a triumphal air, with hands that stay flat-palmed or in fists, but never natural. The men are dressed

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<sup>197</sup> 86.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 92.

in black tank tops, jockstraps, and muzzles (the muzzles also contribute to the impression of S/M sex play). Occasionally certain “dogs” will hold a dog’s head puppet above them on a long stick, bearing prominent teeth. These are dogs of real physical power, demonstrated in the forceful tension and projection of their choreography and audible snarls, but also dogs of satire and play, as they line up in front of the stage like Chippendales dancers.<sup>199</sup>

McCracken’s Eliza does not read as either a historical Eliza or a modern day representation, but rather seems suspended from a recognizable time and space, existing simply in the piece rather than of a time. Her choreography references an ahistorical notion of conflict: many against one. Jones’s method here seems in line with Gaddis’s notion of history’s “laboratory,” wherein testing counterfactuals involves “varying conditions...to try to see which would produce different results.”<sup>200</sup> Dressed in a white full-body unitard, complete with silver rings looped in chains across her chest and a shiny silver explorer’s belt, this Eliza “commands men – part Joan of Arc, part dominatrix, and part martial arts master.”<sup>201</sup> McCracken carries a staff, which she uses in some unison choreography with the dogs, who in turn wield the oars from the first image of “The Cabin.” The relationship between this Eliza and the other onstage performers is much more explicit in this section than those between Cowles and Woods and Latsky, respectively. A struggle for maintaining power ensues in this solo, and though the choreographic focus is on McCracken, “there is tension implicit in the fact that she can never

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<sup>199</sup> Jones describes the dogs as “ludicrous,” and in a practical sense their function is to provide a choreography for the male members of the company while the women dance the Elizas (*Last Night on Earth*, 212). The dogs dance on a knife point of playfulness and seriousness: Arthur Aviles described the dogs’ dancing as “macho play,” and yet there remained “a seriousness to that. That was supposed to be about the people being hunted.” Personal interview, 21 February 2013.

<sup>200</sup> 100.

<sup>201</sup> Jones, *Last Night on Earth*, 214.

turn her back on them [the dogs].”<sup>202</sup> As there are multiple dogs and one Eliza, this narrative requires great flexibility on McCracken’s part, as she twists her body left and right, creating a spiral that works hard to maintain the dogs in her sightlines.

The choreography for Eliza 3 makes use of McCracken’s impressive extension, as if the flexibility of her body itself makes her top dog in this power structure. But whereas Latsky’s solo vacillated wildly between the poles of tension, never arriving at a balance, and Woods’s choreography found this particular sweet spot of tension, McCracken lives firmly to one side of the spectrum, tension radiating through every limb and in her omnipresent erect spine. McCracken moves with great speed along quick, direct paths. This extreme linearity is reinforced by her limbs, which always move to find the straight line. Her choreography forms an association between linear direction and being able to direct others: as McCracken executes a *developpé*, it appears as though her leg is commanding the dogs due to its precise tension and linearity. Changes in direction are impossibly sharp and contribute to the impression of extreme tension in the body. This tension is mirrored in McCracken’s visual focus, which never wavers from the dogs and keeps her head fixed on her spine. In terms of amplitude, McCracken’s extension makes it seem like she is taking up more space, but in fact her movements are restricted by the staff she is forced to wield in order to maintain the playing field between herself and the dogs. The effect of these extremes of linearity and tension is that emotionally, this character is in control of her situation, but that this control comes at a high price – the total erasure of pleasure and comfort.

Richard Yarborough claims that in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, “Stowe’s fiercest critique was not directed at the patriarchal slave system at all, but rather at male domination in American society

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.



generally.”<sup>203</sup> McCracken’s Eliza seems to represent a moment-to-moment, tenuous triumph over male domination – a domination hinted at by the literal bondage gear the dogs wear – that nonetheless exacts a tremendous emotional price. McCracken’s performance suggests a somewhat atemporal vision of femininity in relationship to masculinity, as there seems to be no coherent cultural script from which she and the dogs operate. In the constant tension between narration and abstraction that Jones’ larger oeuvre performs, this particular rendition of Eliza veers into the abstract rather than the specific (in terms of context, not movement vocabulary), offering a contrast to the particularity and personal narrative qualities of Woods’s and Latsky’s Elizas. Cowles stands in the background during McCracken’s solo, observing the successes and failures of Eliza 3 to dominate and evade the dogs. Multiple, colliding readings of Cowles’ presence during this solo are possible: if she is simply a female observer, she may be facilitating and supporting McCracken as she provides strength from a distance onstage. She may also be Stowe, watching her creations interact and perhaps, as Yarborough suggests, taking pleasure in McCracken’s domination of the dogs as a dream fulfilled. This authorial distance may also frame McCracken and the dogs as inventions, playthings, though this is often a difficult effect to achieve when witnessing live bodies moving powerfully. In accordance with the vision of the counterfactual Elizas, multiplicity is desirable and readings need not be easily reconciled.

From this abstract vision of the powerful woman fighting against male domination comes a representation of another facet of Stowe’s Eliza: the captive woman. This representation is the flipside of McCracken’s archetype – a transhistorical stereotype rooted and repeated in representations of the tragic octaroon, a representation reflected in Maya Saffrin’s biracial identity. McCracken, fed up, throws her staff and quickly exits, pursued by the dogs. Woods

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<sup>203</sup> 65.

brings on Saffrin as Eliza 4. McCracken and Saffrin represent, through embodying opposite poles of the tension spectrum, oppositional pulls within the Eliza figure. Spillers, initially agreeing with Yarborough that “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, [was] written...‘by, for, and about women,’” points out that nonetheless, the novel “represents anti-energy for the captive woman.”<sup>204</sup> In other words, the kind of femininity that is granted subjecthood in the novel is Christian, educated, and as white as possible, relegating the black female characters to positions of objectification that do not see beyond the bounds of their enslavement.<sup>205</sup> Saffrin’s Eliza represents the captive woman, though it is unclear what her spatio-temporal location might be. She is dressed in a short white dress, continuing the theme of white costuming for the Elizas, in the style of “a coquette from a turn-of-the-century French postcard.”<sup>206</sup> This is the object Eliza, not the subject. Saffrin’s Eliza hearkens back to Stowe’s initial description of her and the implicit sexual desire her personage inspires: “Safe under the protecting care of her mistress, Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave.”<sup>207</sup> This description also makes the agent of Eliza’s bodily purity the mistress, not Eliza herself.

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<sup>204</sup> 184-5.

<sup>205</sup> Spillers’ larger argument concerns the sentimental logic of the text and how this logic renders subjecthood problematic for any of the female characters, though most especially for the “captive woman.”

<sup>206</sup> Jones, *Last Night on Earth*, 214.

<sup>207</sup> Stowe (2009), 18.



**Figure 6. Eliza is dressed by her mistress for her wedding to George Harris.**

Woods enters with Saffrin, and they perform a kind of hopscotch dance together, referencing the vernacular dance elements of Woods's solo. This brief hopscotch continues a choreographic line of inquiry into vernacular elements of black female dancing that reverberates in this section's concluding tableau. Woods's presence connects the later events of Saffrin's solo to the "historical Eliza," suggesting that history, namely the history of female subjugation, repeats itself while always wearing a fresh mask. Woods exits and the dogs are back. Their football and military drill-inspired choreography here takes on a threatening, violent valence as Saffrin becomes a prop, transferred from dog to dog. The choreography of Eliza 4 is a sequence of throws, with Saffrin's weight never really controlled by her own body. One man sets her up in a precarious balance or lift, for the purpose of watching her fall, prey to another dog/man. Far from McCracken's Eliza who controls the dogs even as she cannot turn her back on them, Saffrin's Eliza cannot control her own self, let alone the dogs, and is frequently manipulated into positions of risk. This decreased control is evident in a total lack of tension in Saffrin's body. The "home base" here is a lift where Saffrin's body lies supine, parallel to and facing the ground,

suspended in the air as a group of “dogs” press her up with straight arms. Saffrin’s arms hang limply toward the ground with listless energy.

One way to understand this fundamental difference between Saffrin’s tension and that of the other three Elizas is with the language of the objective body and the lived body, concepts described by phenomenology scholars Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi. The objective body is, quite literally, the body *as* object: “the objective body is...the objectification of a body...as a thing that can be analysed, dissected, objectively understood.”<sup>208</sup> Contrastingly, the lived body is “body as subject, as experiencer, as agent, rather than the body as object, as thing experienced.”<sup>209</sup> The primary distinction here is of agency. According to Gallagher and Zahavi, the experience of an action can provoke both a sense of ownership and a sense of agency. Conscious human beings will experience a sense of ownership with every action or movement – we understand that the body moving is *our* body. This is a very different concept, however, from a sense of agency, wherein we recognize the self as the author of the action.<sup>210</sup> If I am about to cross the street, fail to see an approaching car, and someone pulls my arm back to move me out of harm’s way, I can have a sense of ownership of the action of my arm moving backwards by virtue of my knowing that this particular arm belongs to me. However, I am not the author of the action – the Good Samaritan is. Contrastingly, if I suddenly realize a car is coming and I quickly dodge back to the curb, I both own and am the author of that action: I have both a sense of ownership and a sense of agency. Importantly, in both the sense of ownership and sense of agency, the body necessarily belongs to a subject, not an object, as an object would be unable to perceive its experiences as its own.

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<sup>208</sup> *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (London: Routledge, 2008): 136.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

The lack of tension<sup>211</sup> in Eliza 4 contributes to a perception of her lack of agency, a perception that is compounded by the dogs' authorship (though not ownership) of her movements. During her choreography with the dogs, it is challenging to see Eliza 4 as a subject rather than an object, since she is rarely the author of her own movements, has no control over her linearity (thus causing difficulty for spectator projection of her goals and desires), and exerts no force of tension within her own body or on others. What, then, might we perceive about Eliza 4's emotional state? It's difficult to perceive anything about her emotional state because the choreography works so effectively in dehumanizing Eliza 4 (and thus making a strong argument for the totalizing effects of the tragic octaroon stereotype on racially salient female sexuality). This difficulty is compounded by Saffrin's blank emotional expression throughout the sequence.

We infer different emotional states as well as differing desires, goals, and future actions between these Elizas directly from their distinct movement vocabularies, which we might also understand as patterns of moving. Gaddis, writing about the fact that history is populated with people, who often behave irrationally, and that we might think of them as characters, defines character as "a set of patterns within an individual's behavior[.]"<sup>212</sup> Understood as patterns of movement from which, due to the neurological associations between embodiment and emotion, we also infer patterns of emotional states, Jones's starkly different choreographies for the Elizas dramatize counterfactual thinking. Jones is uninterested in a single interpretation of Eliza, particularly the sacrificing mother and tragic octaroon that have come to immortalize this character, instead representing a collective of alternatives that experience the world very

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<sup>211</sup> To repeat, this is a *perceived* lack of tension. A skilled performer is able to exercise great control over the body in order to give the impression of a complete lack of control. Thus I am not claiming here that Saffrin *as dancer* has no tension in her limbs, but rather that Eliza 4 *as a character* has a baseline of minimal tension that influences how we perceive her emotional state.

<sup>212</sup> 116.

differently through their movement vocabularies. Lauren Berlant, in her critique of the novel's sentimental logic, writes that one claim of Stowe's text is that "female authorship leads to female sexual dignity and women's identification across distinctions in racial, class, linguistic, national, and sexual privilege."<sup>213</sup> The four Elizas resist this identification of experience based on a shared anatomy, presenting four vastly different portrayals of Eliza that are each contextually distinct.

"Eliza on the Ice" uses an ABA structure: beginning with the collective Elizas, the section then moves through a series of variations before arriving back at the theme of the four women moving together (this bears much resemblance to Hogan's assertions about narratives returning us to normalcy). The conclusion begins with Woods's entrance as the dogs leave Saffrin on the ground.<sup>214</sup> Eliza 1 and 4 return to the duet choreography from Saffrin's original entrance, adding even more gestures from vernacular traditions, including little heel digs from social dance alongside the hopscotch/playground choreography. This moment of respite is brief, as the dogs return and drag Saffrin offstage. Latsky and McCracken join Woods onstage, adjusting to the social dance-inspired choreography, as Cowles reaches into the wings and brings Saffrin back onstage. Cowles attempts to maintain contact with Saffrin, but Eliza 4 does not want to be owned by Stowe, does not enjoy the proximity or contact offered by her, and shakes her off. This is a crucial shift in Saffrin's movement vocabulary that endows her character with greater agency and autonomy. This embodied shift is accompanied by a shake of the head and quick expression of anger, one of the first facial displays of emotion for Eliza 4. Identifying the cause of these shifts is not challenging; the presence of the other Elizas has literally given Eliza 4

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<sup>213</sup> "Poor Eliza." *American Literature* 70.3 (1998): 642.

<sup>214</sup> My account of the last moments of this section both agrees with and departs from Jones's description in his autobiography. According to many of the dancers I interviewed, the work was cut in significant ways both after the BAM premiere (which I viewed) and throughout its tour, thus the version recounted in Jones's book may look in some ways distinct from the version that I watched. Many similarities, of course, remain.

strength, as her body has increased its tension, amplitude, and linearity through embodying their choreographies. The four women exit the stage doing a rolling walk lifted from social dance: as they take a step with a flexed right foot, the hips sway back and as the weight rolls through the right foot a similar undulation goes through the spine. This body roll continues anew with each step. Layered on top of this is a different gesture with the upper body for each of the women. This choreography illustrates Jones's overarching concept of each woman as a facet of the same figure, giving them the same choreography on the lower body but allowing for individual expression of the upper body.

In presenting the Elizas as imaginative counterfactuals, Jones makes a crucial decision to eliminate Eliza's motherhood as the constituting principle of her character. Stowe introduces Eliza in a chapter named "The Mother"<sup>215</sup> (not unlike Tom's "The Martyr" chapter) and ties her emotional state directly to her experiences with motherhood: "For a year or two Eliza saw her husband frequently, and there was nothing to interrupt their happiness, except the loss of two infant children, to whom she was passionately attached, and whom she mourned with a grief so intense as to call for gentle remonstrance from her mistress[.]"<sup>216</sup> My argument here is not to minimize the grief someone might feel after miscarriage, but rather to point out that Stowe's characterization of Eliza capitalizes on her motherhood, and specifically on the emotional attachments between mother and child that come to define Eliza. Her emotional state, seemingly dependent on her ability to become a mother, shifts completely when Harry is born: "...and every bleeding tie and throbbing nerve, once more entwined with that little life, seemed to become

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<sup>215</sup> 18.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

sound and healthful, and Eliza was a happy woman[.]”<sup>217</sup> Our ToM capacities are strongly influenced by our own embodied experiences, and it makes sense that Stowe, writing for many housewives whose husbands subscribed to the *National Era*, an antislavery magazine that ran *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a serial before its publication as a novel, would foreground Eliza’s motherhood as a method of getting her readers emotionally invested in her plight.

Stowe’s focus on Eliza’s maternal identity is not accidental; it reflects the basic tendencies toward attachment and normalcy that help us organize our world and make sense of, and causal attributions about, the events that happen in our world. Hogan claims, “The center of our world is not uniform. It is focused on particular areas. The center toward which we tend, and against which we experience all other places, is home.”<sup>218</sup> Logically, home also tends to be a locus of familial attachment, as Hogan states, “the same subcortical structures appear to be involved in place attachment as in attachment to persons[.]”<sup>219</sup> Just as not all places are encoded in our minds equally (due to attachment phenomena), all persons are not encoded equally, and attachment figures are the site of increased emotional spikes: “certain features of the world and of our own bodily experience are encoded almost immediately as emotion triggers. In some cases, this is due to innate sensitivities – perhaps most crucially, innate sensitivities to the *expressive outcomes* of emotion. The point holds with particular force for attachment figures.”<sup>220</sup> We designate more neuronal resources to reading the emotional states of our attachment figures (like mothers), especially expressive outcomes like facial expression, because of their ability to cause emotional spikes, or act as emotion triggers. This holds for specific people, like a person’s

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 30.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 33. Emphasis in original.



own mother, but also for the prototypes with which we naturally organize the world, mother being such a type. Foregrounding or covering up a subject's identity as a mother will have significant effects on the emotional response that subject elicits in others. Jones sensed this as well, and with his re-representation of Eliza, asks "how will the spectator respond to this character if she is not a mother?"

Jones creates attachment between the spectator and the Elizas not by defining Eliza as a mother and thus activating the character as a prototypical attachment figure, but by choreographing vitality affects that are implicitly built upon attachment. Johnson, building on work by Daniel Stern,<sup>221</sup> describes how vitality-affect contours structure the felt qualities of our lived experiences, based on his overarching thesis that "Human experience has a feeling of flow, and differences of pattern in this flow are the basis for different felt qualities of situations."<sup>222</sup> Vitality affects are one of the first ways that humans, as infants, learn to connect action with emotional qualities. Johnson's example is of the correlation between the touch and sound patterns of comforting actions: when a mother comforts a fussy baby, she will speak with low, soothing tones, and often stroke the baby's back. The baby learns to associate the pattern of sound and touch with a felt quality of comfort. We learn many of these patterns quickly in our developmental stages, and they form vitality-affect contours that give shape to our experiences in the world in terms of embodiment and emotion. Jones's Elizas dance these vitality-affect contours in their variations of the four basic qualitative elements of movement, variations that not only take place in the body but are also correlated with varying emotional states in our ToM processes:

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<sup>221</sup> See Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), for the role of emotion and embodiment in the development of a sense of self in infants.

<sup>222</sup> 43.

We know the meanings of various bodily movements and gestures in dance precisely because we know the feeling and meaning of our own bodily gestures. We know how it feels when our bodies sway gracefully and rhythmically versus when we slip and fall, or jump back in fright. We know intuitively what it means to ‘be up’ and happy, just as we know what it means to ‘feel low’ when we are depressed.<sup>223</sup>

Thus our responses to the Elizas are shaped by a shared human experience of vitality-affect contours, or the correlative relationships between embodiment and emotion. We recognize Eliza 1’s joy in the easy sway of her hips, Eliza 2’s anger in her tense fist, Eliza 3’s uneasy command in an unyielding spine, and Eliza 4’s dehumanization in her listless arms because we have lived these sensations of movement and emotion, if not these particular choreographies. Moreover, designed as four facets of the same figure, the Elizas’ choreographies argue for a reading of the character that veers sharply from prototype and into specificity. Jones casts doubts on the relationship between race and emotion (a relationship that, as Ambady et. al have shown, does not have to be fixed and indeed can be shifted through significant changes in the social environment) by upending associations between whiteness and happiness in his casting of Latsky as Eliza 2 and Woods as Eliza 1. The triangulated characterization of Stowe’s Eliza as whitened, maternal, and ultra-feminine is countered through Jones’s counterfactual Elizas, presented as alternative visions whose paths might have diverged from Stowe’s scene of “Eliza on the ice.”

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

In both “The Cabin” and “Eliza on the Ice,” Jones re-represents Tom and Eliza in order to counter stereotypes that these characters historically engendered and propelled into American

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 45.

mass popular culture. These sections engage with the use of narrative and characterization as methods of artistic practice and historical inquiry from the foundational assumption that embodiment and emotion are connected, and that our emotions can tell us as much about a historical event (or historical artifact like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) as our more “reasonable” processes of deduction and inference. In terms of historical practice, identity figures here as the impetus for the work’s conception: Jones’s own identity as an educated black man, called an Uncle Tom by his peers, and his memories of his great-grandmother’s whipping (memories that exist and are heightened because of Jones’s particular racial identity) provided his way into this work. Gaddis writes that the function of history, of studying the past, is not to predict the future, but rather to make the past meaningful in the present, to “present historical experience for the purpose of enlarging personal experience[.]”<sup>224</sup> Jones begins at the opposite end of this process, with his personal experience as one profoundly affected by racism, and tracing back to find the structures that have carried this process through American history. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is thus one archive that Jones turns to in explanation, but it is not the archive that he begins with – that archive is his own body, his own embodied experiences of emotional response to encounters fueled by racism. Jones’s reimagining of what the archive can be helps him to creatively traverse what Canning and Postlewait characterize as the “temporal as well as...spatial disjunction between the identities of the historical subjects and the identity of the historian.”<sup>225</sup> By viewing emotion and embodiment as ways into historical knowledge and meaning-making, Jones is able to navigate the distance between Stowe’s figure of Uncle Tom and his own figure as Uncle Tom. Ellen Spolsky suggests that in fact it is not possible to encounter a narrative from an impersonal,

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<sup>224</sup> 12.

<sup>225</sup> 14.

unemotional place: “narratives composed by others are individually, even uniquely, processed. We do not copy them into our brains but reconstruct them by fitting the new narrative into the schemata already present[.]”<sup>226</sup> Spolsky’s claim is supported by Oatley’s experiment with readers that asked readers to record autobiographical memories as they surfaced while reading a given text, and then found that when asked to retell the story, “pieces of these memories became part of what they retold when they reproduced the story.”<sup>227</sup>

BTJ/AZ has historically been a company that produces choreographers – at least half of the company from *Last Supper* are now running their own companies or engaged in collaborative choreographic practices. Many of the dancers I interviewed felt that their personal identities, both in terms of lived experiences and in terms of what they brought to the studio as movers, were very important to Jones and his creative process. In particular, Woods and Latsky’s lived experiences of embodiment and emotion strongly influenced the choreographic choices for their representations of Eliza. For Woods, her sense of self as being inextricably tied to black womanhood “was embedded in everything I did...the beauty of being there [in the company] was that my presence as a black woman was honored and encouraged.”<sup>228</sup> In fact, the juxtaposition of her Eliza choreography with Sojourner Truth’s speech was a direct result of her own engagement with contemporary debates about black femininity. Woods remembers that the inspiration for this section came from her reading Angela Davis’s 1981 text *Women, Race, and Class* on the company tour bus. Jones noticed her reading it, and they began to talk about the Truth speech, which Woods says she brought “into Bill’s hemisphere.”<sup>229</sup> While for Woods her relationship

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<sup>226</sup> 42.

<sup>227</sup> 52.

<sup>228</sup> Personal interview, 29 Jan 2013.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

with Jones in this work was one of muse to artist, Latsky sought an opportunity to create her own choreography, with Jones serving as her director. A prompt about anger from Jones caused Latsky to dive deep into her emotional past, choreographing memories of anger and betrayal. Latsky's archive relates not only to the reimagining of Eliza but also to the shifting of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* away from an explanatory paradigm of sentimental Christianity. The hitting gesture functioned as a literal challenge to the "turn the other cheek" rhetoric that Latsky experienced growing up.<sup>230</sup> For Latsky, belief was the connection between her work and the larger piece, seeing her own upbringing intersecting with "the whole religious component of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, his [Jones's] mother's fervent belief in Christianity and that it was a slave religion. I was told to believe that people don't lie. We're kind of victims of what we were taught. It takes courage and experience to realize that those belief systems may not be real."<sup>231</sup>

Using his own lived experiences as well as his dancers' as the archive for this work, Jones explicitly choreographs the relationship between public pasts and personal presents, between using present emotions as a way of understanding past events, and reimagining past events as a method of coming to terms with present emotions. In yoking personal experience with public history (much like we integrate our memories unconsciously into external narratives), Jones moves postmodern dance away from anonymity: "you *see* the people who are in it, and that is very important."<sup>232</sup> *Last Supper* functions as a kind of kinesthetic forge for the tools that Jones will wield with more precision and power in the Lincoln trilogy, producing a corporeal history that engages with narrative, identity, and archive as modes of historical

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<sup>230</sup> The rhetoric of "turn the other cheek" was prevalent in Jones's upbringing as well. In *Dancing to the Promised Land* he recalls his childhood conflict "between never wanting a white person to put their foot on you, then being told that Christ turned the other cheek."

<sup>231</sup> Personal interview, 31 Jan. 2013.

<sup>232</sup> *Dancing to the Promised Land*.

meaning-making that can be accessed through the body and its emotional responses. In turning from *Last Supper* to the Lincoln trilogy and to their shared preoccupation with racism as historical process leading to contemporary structures, it is worthwhile to visit Spolsky's claim that "Not only does a theme with a preponderance of re-representations *not* show that the issue is an essential, biological one, but it shows how culturally complicated and thus resistant to solution the problem expressed by that theme may be."<sup>233</sup> In other words, a cognitive scientific framework, grounded in empiricism as it may be, does not support the notion that because re-representations of black stereotypes frequently occur, blackness is somehow a biological function. Rather, cognitive science seeks to explain how biology (in brain and body) and material and social environments produce certain conditions of lived experience, and how they might produce alternatives as well. Spolsky continues, "subjects that are frequently repainted, re-narrated, and re-dramatized are the thematic evidence of persistent cognitive difficulties around a non-trivial issue."<sup>234</sup> Jones takes just this stance toward figures like Eliza and Lincoln – that their repeated representations are not simple social acts, but rather deeply serious methods of working out a history of racial violence whose end is difficult to imagine both from the historical vantage point of the 1850s and 1860s and the contemporary moment of the 1990s and 2000s.

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<sup>233</sup> 50-51.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

### 3.0 CHAPTER TWO: THROUGH HEART AND THROUGH BODY: REVISING LINCOLN

*“What is important for us? The more personally we answer this question, it seems to me, the more likely we are to get a vital order out of the anarchy of the present.”*<sup>235</sup>

*“He must be one of the darlings of American history because they have a car named after him, right?”*<sup>236</sup>

In 2007 the Ravinia Festival of Chicago commissioned BTJ/AZ to create a work for inclusion in their 2009 bicentennial celebration of Abraham Lincoln’s birth. The process of creating this work, *Fondly Do We Hope...Fervently Do We Pray* also generated a “sketch” of *Fondly, Serenade/The Proposition* (2008), and a large community piece at the University of Virginia, *100 Migrations* (2008).<sup>237</sup> This trilogy examines Lincoln’s legacy in terms of how we feel about him as a figure and the effects of his history on our lives today. The company’s approach foregrounds embodied emotion as a way of reckoning with history and of understanding

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<sup>235</sup> Van Wyck Brooks, “On Creating a Usable Past” (*The Dial: a Semi-monthly Journal of Literary Criticism, Discussion, and Information* 11 April 1918): 337.

<sup>236</sup> Asli Bulbul in *Bill T. Jones: A Good Man. American Masters*. Directed by Bob Hercules and Gordon Quinn (New York: WNET, 2011), television. First aired 11 November 2011.

<sup>237</sup> BTJ/AZ dancer and education director Leah Cox likened the process of creating *Serenade* to Picasso creating sketches for *Guernica* before attempting the final painting. While there is substantial overlap in choreography and theme between the two works, *Serenade* stands on its own and tours as a full work separate from *Fondly*. Personal interview, 4 June 2013.

intellectualized “ideas” (like freedom, liberty, equality) as grounded in lived experience. Jones’s entry point into this trilogy is through emotion, specifically oppositional emotional responses to Lincoln:

All day there have been two entities doing war. There is a small boy born in 1952 to a family of potato pickers. I hear my mother’s prayers, so much about liberation...he was the only white man I was allowed to love unconditionally. And then there is a man who has allowed more cynicism and alienation to creep into his soul than he would like to admit and has very few heroes.<sup>238</sup>

Jones’s description of his warring emotions crystallizes several themes that repeat throughout the trilogy, namely the challenge of the passage of time, and the trope of “heroism” that structures much of the discourse around Lincoln. The problem Jones faces both in his personal history and in addressing Lincoln’s legacy is that Lincoln, as perhaps *the* heroic figure of American history, particularly as it is shaped for black Americans, elicits a plethora of emotional responses that are tied to how a person generally feels about the idea of heroes, liberty, equality, and other big “ideas.” Moreover, as Jones demonstrates in his own recollection, the passage of time brings change, and emotional responses to the same stimuli, such as the Lincoln monument, change as well. For Jones, thinking through what Lincoln means to us in the present is a much more complicated proposal than considering Uncle Tom, though *Last Supper* exerts a direct influence on *Fondly*, precisely because the ideas associated with Lincoln are a much larger part of not only authorized American history but “Americanness” generally.

The Lincoln trilogy not only continues the revision of historical practices such as determining causality and crafting narrative established in *Last Supper* but also considers the notion of a “usable past.” The notion of being used is a sticking point for Jones – in interviews he often tells a story of him and Arnie as young artists, and the differing receptions to their

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<sup>238</sup> “Bill T. Jones: A Good Man.”



individual work based on their race: “Arnie said to me, ‘You have a lot of things in you that the world would like to use...use yourself or you will be used.’”<sup>239</sup> Jones has always been confrontational regarding spectator assumptions about his performances as a black man, and this attitude transfers directly to his performance as commissioned darling of the Ravinia Festival. At a reception thanking donors related to the project, Jones gave a speech deliberately articulating the racial politics of his commission: “I think that they [Ravinia organizers and particularly its CEO Welz Kaufmann] wanted a piece that would be suitable in the age of Obama, and thought that if you get a black choreographer, you could play all the angles. Be correct and maybe even get something that is good as art. But correct first.”<sup>240</sup> Jones’s speech implies not only that his blackness is being used but that Lincoln is also being used for a particular effect at a particular historical moment: the election of the nation’s first black president, who also used Lincoln heavily in his campaigning. Lincoln becomes a lightning rod figure once again in the “age of Obama” due to how his figure and legacy are used, both in frequency and intensity. BTJ/AZ’s work aims to excavate a “usable” past out of the used Lincoln, to find how individual emotional responses to Lincoln might lead to progressive action. In the archival repertory of BTJ/AZ using the past is not a matter of rhetoric, but rather of actually using the past to create, of mining the archives to make something new.

This chapter will address three interrelated practices of BTJ/AZ’s work in *Serenade* and *Fondly*. The first is the company’s focus on the metaphor “history is distance,” and its implications not only for understanding how historians use the conceptual categories of time and space to craft histories, but also how this metaphor interacts with the notion of a usable past, both

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

in Van Wyck Brooks' classic formulation and its several revisions to the present day. This focus positions the dancers squarely as historians, trying to choreograph relationships to history that clarify the role our emotions play in how distant we see the past from ourselves. I will place the company's "history is distance" metaphor alongside other metaphors that appear in *Serenade* and *Fondly*, particularly those that occur in Lincoln's archive, such as his "House Divided" speech. Lastly this discussion of history metaphors (including history as a usable past) will be framed through a cognitive scientific understanding of how humans create metaphors through embodied emotion, and of how our lived experiences influence the ability of metaphors to make sense.

Moving from time and space to identity and narrative, the second section centers on BTJ/AZ's rejection of the heroic narrative and character prototypes with regard to Abraham Lincoln, and preference for romantic prototypes. *Serenade* and *Fondly* both include heightened duets between Lincoln and Mary Todd, foregrounding the emotional connection between these figures and revising not only how Lincoln has been remembered but also how this couple has been remembered. The focus on the attachment between Lincoln and Mary Todd reflects our cognitive preferences for stories that center on people, rather than events. The choreography of these duets manifests Jones's own feeling that movement, emotion, and meaning are intimately intertwined: "When I dance, oftentimes it feels like a cathartic connection but also fact-finding. There is a wealth of emotion and impulse that is below the surface."<sup>241</sup> Moving and feeling provide a way into fact-finding, into weaving a narrative about history. While characters themselves are of great importance to *Last Supper*, their relationships to one another (Eliza to Tom, for example) remain opaque and very loosely structured. The events matter more. In

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<sup>241</sup> "Bill T. Jones in Conversation with Thelma Golden." Interviewed by Thelma Golden 27 October 1997. Rpt. in *Art Performs Life: Merce Cunningham, Meredith Monk, Bill T. Jones*. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center (1998), pp. 126-135.

*Serenade* and *Fondly* BTJ/AZ operate from a new focus on relationship, not only the relationship of our present selves to a historical notion of Lincoln, but also between the people in Lincoln's story (including deliberate reference to the romantic leads of Stowe's novel, Eliza and George Harris). As Hogan writes, "Our ethical relationship to the world is primarily a relationship to people; our emotional relationship to the world is largely a relationship to people also. Our ethical and emotional relationship to stories is, then, profoundly a relationship to people as well."<sup>242</sup> BTJ/AZ dig into these relationships as fact-finding missions that connect emotion to the big ideas of Lincoln's legacy.

While the body is central to the entirety of BTJ/AZ's repertory, it is foregrounded in the most explicit manner in the opening moments of *Fondly*. In a section entitled "The Body," Shayla-vie Jenkins performs a solo to Walt Whitman's "Poem of the Body." This cataloguing and expression of the body's anatomy gets reprised later in the work within a dramatically different context. The solo and its reprise illustrate the two halves – "bio" and "culture" – that form the company's biocultural approach to generating art that is about history. BTJ/AZ articulate the body through a poetic yet anatomical lens that is profoundly influenced by its varying contexts, such as the whipping sound that is brought in for the reprise. I believe that these moments starkly show that the company's work (largely unconsciously) reflects cognitive scientific concepts, such as conceptual blending and mirror neurons in this particular sequence, but perhaps more significantly demonstrates how art can help us (the largest us possible, including cognitive scientists) understand how humans make meaning and sense out of their pasts. This sequence emphasizes social environment and the situationally specific concepts that

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<sup>242</sup> *How Authors' Minds Make Stories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 44.

underlie conceptual blending, thus generating new understandings of how humans feel and reason that build upon, rather than simply illustrating, cognitive studies.

### 3.1 HISTORY IS DISTANCE

Returning to a previous point made by Gaddis, a common sense-making tool that spans the disciplinary boundaries of the natural sciences, history, and the arts is metaphor.<sup>243</sup> To generate metaphors about x being y or like y is to shape meaning, and humans do this unconsciously and could not organize their experiences without doing so. All people involved in understanding the meaning of human experience, and why the social world works as it does, are actively engaged in creating and using metaphors (along with images, similes, and other similar devices). Metaphor is employed to give shape (and often narrative) to “facts” so that they might make sense and be meaningful, whether they be scientific facts about how the brain works, historical facts about what decisions were made where and when, or artistic representations of people, places, and things. As one of our primary ways of making sense of our world, metaphors originate in our embodied experience of the world. *Serenade* is the first work of the Lincoln trilogy and is abundant with metaphors that concern what exactly history is. The most striking of these metaphors is “history is distance.” I would like to place this metaphor in conversation with a disciplinary one, that of history as the “usable past.” Jones himself sees history through this metaphor, posing the major question of this work as “How can we *use* Lincoln and his time as a

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<sup>243</sup> 2.

mirror through which we look darkly at ourselves?”<sup>244</sup> If history can be both distance and the usable past, what is useful about that distance? How can the distance be characterized through elements of historical inquiry like time and space? This work builds on the metaphors generated by Abraham Lincoln himself, such as “a house divided,” that are used in a number of speeches to prompt Americans to engage on an emotional level with the state of the union. Beginning with how and why humans create metaphors, I will examine how BTJ/AZ’s dancer-historians use metaphor as a sense-making engine driven by embodiment and emotion that revises not only Lincoln’s legacy but also how historical inquiry might be performed.

To return briefly to the entrenched cultural dualism between reason and emotion, despite recent attempts by historians to characterize their discipline as at least somewhat subjective, it’s clear from the reviews of the Lincoln trilogy that the general public still views history as belonging to the realm of reason. Lines like “It helps for audiences to be versed in Lincoln history, but Jones is more interested in their emotional responses”<sup>245</sup> and “Clarity isn’t his goal so much as an absorbing emotional experience”<sup>246</sup> belie the common assumptions that reason and emotion are separate (even oppositional) phenomena and, moreover, that history has more to do with processes of reasoning than feeling.<sup>247</sup> For these reviewers, the wealth of feeling performed onstage undercuts or even negates the work’s stated engagement with history. These critics are not noting failures of the work but rather replicating a familiar dichotomy between history/reason and art/emotion in order to categorize what they viewed. It’s significant that these

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<sup>244</sup> “Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance.” *Bill Moyers Journal*. New York: WNET, 2009. Television. First aired 25 December 2009.

<sup>245</sup> Kerry Clawson, “Performance remembers Lincoln.” *Akron Beacon Journal* 21 January 2010. Online. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>246</sup> Sarah Kaufman, “New Works Redefine Political Movement.” *The Washington Post* 18 October 2009. Online. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>247</sup> I suspect there is also a significant prejudice against the performing arts’ relationship to reasoning processes that tends to close down that avenue preemptively.

are conscious descriptions of the work, and our conscious articulations are often shaped by prevalent social ideologies (including Cartesian dualism) that may reframe our unconscious emotional responses in a socially suitable way. These comments, to my mind, have less to do with an actual opposition between “History” and emotion in the work, and more a conceptual opposition between what we think the work of history is and what emotions do.

Metaphors are not simply imaginative turns of phrase; they are evolutionarily adapted mechanisms for explaining the world around us through language that reflects our embodied, emotion-driven experiences. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s work on primary metaphors can help us understand the unconscious processes that lead to the development of consciously articulated metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson explain primary metaphor, the most basic kind of metaphor, as that which “allows conventional mental imagery from sensorimotor domains to be used for domains of subjective experience.”<sup>248</sup> Our sensorimotor experiences, such as holding or grasping an object, understanding an object as above or below us, etc., form the basis of our primary metaphors, metaphors that structure our thought and language. Crucially, these metaphors develop from our embodied nature and our human tendency to focus attention on emotion-inciting stimuli. Primary metaphors are structured through our lived experiences with space and time. Examples of primary metaphor include Happy is Up, Important is Big, and Affection is Warmth.<sup>249</sup> Our experiences of space and time lead to our development of metaphor, but to return to a previous point, these experiences are encoded non-homogenously and our emotional responses, as is clear from the terminology of the metaphors, also play a role in structuring these sense-making tools.

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<sup>248</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 45.

<sup>249</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson, pp. 50-54 for an extensive list of primary metaphors including the specific subjective and sensorimotor experiences from which they derive.

“History is...” is a popular refrain throughout *Serenade*. It isn’t always a metaphor; indeed, often these words are followed by a rather literal history that follows a single person’s biography, sometimes drawn from company members’ lives, and sometimes wholly fictional. The company developed these chunks of text in workshop and the recorded them to be included in the work’s soundscape. The first is Jones’s own history: “It could be said that this history is a person born in 1952 who wakes up in the backseat of a car crowded with children, looks out at the misted morning street, as his father says, ‘We’re in Virginia. Richmond, Virginia.’”<sup>250</sup> The narration consistently refers to history as a human subject – a person born in 1981, 1982, 1939, a woman, etc. This motif builds to a quartet for the company’s women, danced in front of columns with the images of American suffragette abolitionists, like Lucretia Mott, projected. During this section Leah Cox’s recorded voice speaks a series of poetic phrases culminating in the metaphor “It could be said that this history is distance.” This metaphor is a conceptual metaphor, more sophisticated than primary metaphors but composed from these basics. The company’s conceptual metaphor “history is distance” relies upon the primary metaphor of “Intimacy is Closeness” to make sense. The intimacy metaphor originates in our lived experiences of vitality affects, such as being close to, or near, people with whom we are intimate, such as the experience of infants being held and comforted by people, often family members, with whom they will develop emotional intimacies. As Lakoff and Johnson claim, primary metaphors result from “neural connections learned by coactivation. They extend across parts of the brain between areas dedicated to sensorimotor experience and areas dedicated to subjective experience.”<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> *Serenade* script of 17 July 2013, courtesy Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. This work continues to tour in the company’s repertory; where significant differences exist between the video I viewed from the Teatro Municipale Valli performance of March 17, 2010 and the recent script I will note the version to which I refer. Otherwise, all quotations from the spoken text remain consistent.

<sup>251</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, 57.

These formative experiences also encompass sharing a space with siblings and later roommates, lovers, and other persons with whom we will usually develop emotional intimacy.

Thus the metaphor “History is Distance” plays on the intimacy metaphor at its opposite – we are unfamiliar with those things far away from us in both space and time. We use “distance” as a description of our sensorimotor experiences of space and time, with a “distant” past referring to events that happened a longer time ago than the “recent” past, and a “distant” land to refer to places we literally cannot access because of their distance. If, in *Serenade*, History is Distance, then there is a necessary emotional repercussion to this formulation in which we are not only removed in time and space from capital-H-History, but due to this spatio-temporal distance, we are also distanced emotionally from History and less invested emotionally due to this decreased proximity. The experiential determinants of this metaphor are relatively straightforward: generally speaking, we do not need to emotionally invest in experiences defined by distance in the way we must in those defined by proximity – i.e., it’s in my best interest to invest in people that are emotionally significant to me, like my mother, rather than in people who cannot provide that level of close intimacy, like a celebrity.

Primary metaphors typically remain unconscious, and these metaphors lead to conceptual metaphors, metaphors that are more complex: “primary metaphors are like atoms that can be put together to form molecules. A great many of these complex molecular metaphors are stable – conventionalized, entrenched, fixed for long periods of time. They form a huge part of our conceptual system and affect how we think and what we care about.”<sup>252</sup> Lakoff and Johnson repeatedly stress how formative primary metaphor is for not only the way we think but also how we conceptually (consciously) understand what we think and feel. Conceptual metaphor takes

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 60.



place in our consciousness, but, as Lakoff and Johnson remind us, “not all conceptual metaphors are manifested in the words of a language. Some are manifested in grammar, others in gesture, art, and ritual. These nonlinguistic metaphors may, however, be secondarily expressed through language and other symbolic means.”<sup>253</sup> BTJ/AZ develop gestural sequences that embody metaphors and express the emotional saliency of metaphors like “Important is Big” or “Happy is Up.” The complexity of the metaphors in *Serenade* does not diminish their reliance on embodied emotion in order to make sense.

Thus “History is Distance” is not simply a metaphor about the usual historian’s experience of being distanced in time and space from his or her subject, but also about an emotional distance that spatio-temporal proximity (or lack thereof) prompts. This is largely due to history’s being populated by other humans, and our natural tendencies to ration more attention to people rather than events because of our Theory of Mind abilities. The company’s concern is with reframing this metaphor of History is Distance through our human capacities for embodied emotion in ways that circumvent spatial, temporal, and emotional distance in order to make history relevant, personal, and meaningful in the present. As artist-historians, BTJ/AZ are capable of the activities of Gaddis’s historians: “Individual historians...are of course bound by time and space, but history as a discipline isn’t...They can compress these dimensions [of time and space], expand them, compare them, measure them, even transcend them...Historians have always been, in this sense, abstractionists: the literal representation of reality is not their task.”<sup>254</sup> BTJ/AZ move into the world of figurative metaphor rather than literal representation in the poetry of Cox’s text, which works in tandem with the choices of choreography, costume, and set

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>254</sup> 17.

to perform leaps of logic that foreground that, like all human experiences of spatiality and temporality, “distance” is relative:

It could be said that this history is a person...a woman  
A woman who is able  
A woman who is able to say goodbye  
A woman who is able to fix you right  
A woman who is able to fix you right after you die  
It could be said that this history is distance.  
The distance between that woman and me.<sup>255</sup>

This formulation of history refers to an actual historical experience of womanhood during the Civil War – that of women, often the only ones left in a given community, properly dressing and burying the dead.<sup>256</sup> Cox’s words seek a path through the density of historical people and events that lie between the contemporary woman (actually Cox and company onstage, though the average spectator will not know this) and the historical woman charged with burial of the dead (and represented visually on the columns). Because History is Distance plays on Intimacy is Closeness, this path can be an emotional route, undercutting the impossibilities of time-travel the historian faces.

The last line of this short poem is significant, adding a layer to the relationship of History is Distance by making this metaphor, derived from universal primary metaphors, incredibly specific: the distance between that woman and me. The company proposes a common solution to the disciplinary challenge of history: focusing on a figure in order to collapse distance, to develop an emotional intimacy of sorts with a character from the past. The reason this makes sense as a method of making history meaningful is because of a spatial schema that structures much significant human experience: Source-Path-Goal. We conceive of achieving any goal

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<sup>255</sup> *Serenade* script 17 July 2013.

<sup>256</sup> Personal interview with Leah Cox, 4 June 2013.

through this spatial schema of traveling along a path towards that goal. Our logical systems also build on Source-Path-Goal reasoning, such as the logic of “If you travel from *A* to *B* and from *B* to *C*, then you have traveled from *A* to *C*.”<sup>257</sup> If we think about BTJ/AZ’s logic of “history is the distance between that woman and me” as a variation on the Source-Path-Goal schema, then “me” functions as the source, the starting point of the contemporary time and place, with “that woman” as our goal. History is something that happens in between these things, both intentionally and incidentally on our route to feel towards and to know as much as we can about “that woman.”

Many historians do this kind of activity, focusing on a figure as a way into a larger historical moment. Where BTJ/AZ intervene in this process is by demonstrating how embodiment and emotional response structure the paths between source and goal. A quick review of other primary metaphors shows how fundamental embodiment and human movement abilities are to how we understand the world: Time is Motion, Change is Motion, Causes are Physical Forces, Understanding is Grasping.<sup>258</sup> Our observation and performance of physical actions (walking, grasping, pushing, etc.) structures how we perceive these fundamental aspects of historical inquiry – time, change, and causality. Our understanding of these elements is filtered through selection processes that in turn are guided by emotional response, be it to existing stimuli or emotional memories. If we understand time metaphorically through motion, are there ways to reckon with the temporal distance between the past and present through motion? Can we move into another time, not literally but within the space of understanding? BTJ/AZ attempt this through choreographing entry in and out of historical figures that is structured by the performance of metaphors.

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<sup>257</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, 33.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-54.

BTJ/AZ not only perform heightened conceptual metaphors derived from their lived experiences of primary metaphor, but also demonstrate why Abraham Lincoln's own linguistic metaphors have such efficacy. The company focuses on two "Lincolnisms": Young America and the house divided. Lincoln's "house divided" refers to the Union and its division into warring factions, and its coinage took place preceding the Civil War conflict, the literal manifestation of the ideological warfare to which Lincoln refers in 1858. *Serenade's* most significant re-imagining is of the Union as not only multiple sides united in a common enterprise, but as a felt concept. The company persistently asks, "What do union and division feel like?" Because of the embodied realism that grounds the company's approach, feeling and moving are consistently united as processes of understanding. *Serenade* opens with a long section entitled "Meet Me in the Middle" where dancers face off along the battlefield of the stage, performing phrases that respect an invisible center stage boundary that separates the two sides – perhaps into Union and Confederacy.<sup>259</sup> The dancers are dressed in rehearsal clothes that place them in our contemporary moment, thus the association of Union and Confederacy is an oblique one. The focus instead is on the concept of meeting in the middle. This concept relies heavily on our spatial understanding of the middle as an equidistant point between sides that requires equal effort on all sides to reach. This concept has come to represent not only a literal meeting in the middle but also felt processes of emotionally arriving at a middle ground with someone who feels oppositely.

The opening choreography is a series of propositions for what the process of meeting in the middle feels like in the body. The movements are abstract and travel toward and away from the center, never crossing its boundary. Returning to projection, tension, and amplitude, the movement here is crafted to show off the virtuosity of the performers in touching seemingly

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<sup>259</sup> Leah Cox positions the opposite sides of the stage as Union and Confederacy as concepts the company used in the generation of this choreography. Personal interview, 4 June 2013.

every possible expression of these qualities. Rather than being defined by any particular expression of tension, etc., the movement is predominantly characterized by a preoccupation with turning, spinning, and circuitous motion. All of this circular motion contributes to a sense that the dancers are similar to Gaddis's notion of "molecules with minds of their own"; members of opposing sides that nonetheless exist as individuals.<sup>260</sup> Moreover, the direction of circular motion changes frequently, with dancers asked to turn outside over the right then outside over the left before the first turn has been completed. These frequent directional shifts perform the ability of humans to change, to shift direction and opinions. They also imply an emotional turbulence, of turning an idea around inside the mind, looking at it from all sides, and the emotional responses of frustration that spiraling can inspire. The path to meeting in the middle is rarely direct in the company's vision, and often when one person gets to the middle, nobody is there to meet them. "Meeting in the middle" becomes a challenging activity with little assurance of success, yet the dancers' choreography continuously compels them to seek this action out. The sequence concludes with a single dancer, Paul Matteson, crossing the boundary. Matteson will later portray Lincoln, suggesting this figure as a case study in "meeting in the middle," in uniting a divided house.

Lincoln's iconic words, "A house divided against itself cannot stand" rely upon embodiment in order to make sense.<sup>261</sup> Our notion of standing comes from our own experiences of standing on two feet as stable, resistant, and strong; trying to stand for long on a single foot reveals how important the union of our two feet is to our successful movement through the world. Our spatial reasoning allowed for the evolution of dwelling structures that might also

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<sup>260</sup> 111.

<sup>261</sup> Lincoln, *His Speeches and Letters*, 372.

“stand,” depending upon the integrity of beams (or legs). BTJ/AZ enact the “house divided” in *Serenade* in a trio between Jennifer Nugent, Peter Chamberlin, and Matteson that foregrounds embodiment and emotional response as the foundation of metaphor. Nugent plays mediator between Matteson and Chamberlin as they enact dueling sides. A repeated choreographic motif is of the three standing, linking arms as if in a square dance, with Nugent in the center. Nugent looks out at the audience, and Matteson and Chamberlin look across her body at each other, ready to spring. This tableau, always threatening to strike into action, is a corporeal representation of the house divided, as Nugent plants her feet and tries to stand while the opposing forces of Matteson and Chamberlin repeatedly yank her off balance. This sequence feels like a boxing match with Nugent caught in the middle. The sound score uses the sound of a bell to coincide with each time the trio reaches the motif tableau, and these bells bring a second of stillness, the calm before the storm, before the trio whirls into action again.

The metaphor “a house divided” encompasses all the nation into the conflict: *a* house divided into opposing sides rather than the opposing sides existing outside of the house. The company juxtaposes Lincoln’s metaphor with one from Frederick Douglass’s 1862 speech “The Reason for Our Troubles”: “It is something of a feat to ride two horses going the same way, and at the same pace, but a still greater feat when going in opposite directions.”<sup>262</sup> Douglass delivers this metaphor after directly citing Lincoln’s, and while the two turns of phrase share the basic notion of division and opposition, Douglass’s words imply an external figure to the action of opposing sides that Lincoln’s do not. A person rides the two horses, existing separately from them, whereas in the house divided all agents are contained with the house. The dancers embody Douglass’s metaphor as Nugent climbs on the back of Chamberlin, attempting to balance as

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<sup>262</sup>*Serenade* script 17 July 2013. See Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York: International Publishers, 1950) for the full speech.

Matteson pulls her forward towards him. The juxtaposition of these two metaphors reveals how important our material and social environments are in influencing what metaphors will make sense to us and be useful for describing our experiences. While the universal human experiences of gravity, balance, tension, and opposition are consistent in both men's metaphors, Lincoln and Douglass's varying social environments (though certainly at this point in history they overlapped considerably) and the situatedness of their metaphors in time and space impact how these men use metaphor to describe experience. Lincoln in 1858 was a political insider and, as a white man, at the top of a social hierarchy that positioned America as his birthright, as his house. Lincoln's metaphor clearly displays this sense of ownership over the house and the feeling that the two sides belong to the same "house," the same nation. Contrastingly, Douglass's speech positions a third party to the two opposing sides, an outside agent who must attempt to master both horses, both sides. Douglass's sense of himself as a black man and former slave likely contributes to his positioning of a third outside figure who nonetheless has agency within the relationship between the opposing sides. Douglass's metaphor also encapsulates a tension between riding the horses as mastery and riding the horses as challenge, and has an urgency of action embedded within it that likely has to do not only with the stakes of his own past as a slave but also with the different national circumstances of 1862 and 1858. These two metaphors suggest that lived experience impacts which metaphors seem particularly apt to describe a given person, event, or situation. Moreover, the subtle distinctions between these metaphors speak to how metaphors describe the feeling of a situation like the failed Union and Civil War with an emotional factuality that depends upon embodiment to make sense.

The connection between metaphor and emotion is even stronger in the company's "Young America" section. Lincoln's rhetorical figure "Young America" is the trope of his

Second Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions, delivered February 11, 1859. It begins, “We have all heard of Young America. He is the most *current* youth of the age. Some think him conceited, and arrogant; but has he not reason to entertain a rather extensive opinion of himself? Is he not the inventor and owner of the *present*, and sole hope of the *future*?”<sup>263</sup> Lincoln’s tone throughout the lecture is winking and Young America’s “horror...for all that is old, particularly ‘Old Foggy’” is positioned as a foolish belief that the past has not had any effect on him.<sup>264</sup> The gist of Lincoln’s speech is that we must look backward in order to look forward, that our great forward-thinking inventions spring from patterns of thought from the past: “To be fruitful in invention, it is indispensable to have a *habit* of observation and reflection...acquired, no doubt, from those who, to him [Young America], were old fogies.”<sup>265</sup> Lincoln’s anthropomorphizing of Young America and Old Foggy concerns the relationship between the past, present, and future but also characterizes this fraught relationship as one that is emotionally driven. Young America’s “horror” at the past is matched by his “great passion – a perfect rage – for the ‘*new*.’”<sup>266</sup> Lincoln’s sophisticated conceptual metaphors are necessarily undergirded by Lakoff and Johnson’s primary metaphors, particularly understanding motion as change, since Lincoln’s primary subject matter is the burgeoning railway system. They are also bound, as are all metaphors, to embodied emotion, to making sense of lived experience via emotional response, with the aim of revitalizing history, of accessing “the warm artery that ought to lead from the present back into the past.”<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> *Lincoln’s Speeches and Letters* (Farmington, ME: D.H. Knowlton & Co., 1905): 5, emphasis in original.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>265</sup> Rpt. in “Lincoln’s Literary Experiments” (*The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 25.47), p. 829, emphasis Lincoln’s.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, emphasis Lincoln’s.

<sup>267</sup> Brooks, 337.



This “warm artery” gets at the embodied connection between the company’s contemporary moment and the historical time of Lincoln that is choreographed in an opening sequence of *Serenade*. The section, entitled “Young America,” features Janyl Dobson as a narrator figure (similar to *Last Supper*) who recites the first paragraph of Lincoln’s second lecture as the company dresses dancer Paul Matteson onstage. The moment before consists of the company dancing in what look like ordinary rehearsal clothes, sweatpants, tank tops, etc. When Matteson appears in a tight beam of light center stage, he wears only briefs, and during the speech company members help to dress him in a deconstructed vision of Lincoln’s sartorial figure. This slow, deliberate transformation through and on Matteson’s body foregrounds corporeality as a route into the past. The rest of the company has already changed into their 19<sup>th</sup>-century garb during the preceding scene change, thus the effect is a literalization of Lincoln’s notion that the past lays the patterns for the future. The “past” in *Serenade*, cued by a costume change, dresses “Young America.” Interestingly, BTJ/AZ’s use of Lincoln’s metaphorical figure collapses a bit of distance between past and present, as the “past” characters dress Matteson’s “Young America” not in the garb of the future but so that he might time-travel backwards to their own time.

The overarching metaphor of *Serenade*, “history is distance,” is not, I believe, meant to be negative. For Jones, distance is an opportunity to expend effort in the same direction as someone else: “Why do I distance you like that? I distance you so that you and I have to work to come back together, because I believe that this is the metaphor for what all human intercourse is really about. Falling apart and fighting back together.”<sup>268</sup> The company choreographs these

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<sup>268</sup> “Bill T. Jones in Conversation with Ann Daly.” Interviewed by Ann Daly 5 January 1998. Rpt. in *Art Performs Life: Merce Cunningham, Meredith Monk, Bill T. Jones* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1998): 123.

interactions, falling off one another's shoulders and fighting gravity and balance to get back together again. Jones's belief in the work it takes to meet in the middle is an emotional labor in addition to a physical one. To be intimate with the past, to fight this distance, requires an emotional closeness that already exists in personal memory. "History is distance" structures much of the choreography but is not the only notion of history in the work; histories are also "a place," "a woman," "a person born in 1952," etc. What BTJ/AZ do so well is using personal pasts as entry points into public histories, as paths toward meeting in the middle with Lincoln. In Rosenzweig and Thelen's poll of public attitudes toward American history, they found "No more than 24 percent of any racial or ethnic group answered that the history of the United States was the past they felt was 'most important' to them, as opposed to 50-60 percent who identified their family's past."<sup>269</sup> Moreover, these responses correlated with an increase in "the rhetoric of intimacy that respondents used in discussing the pasts that matter to them."<sup>270</sup> Thus it would appear that "history is distance" accurately describes the emotional value of the past to most contemporary Americans. By focusing on people and thus capitalizing on our ToM capacities, BTJ/AZ are able to connect, for example, present experiences of "history" (such as dancer LaMichael Leonard's classroom introduction to Lincoln) with the actual past of the storming of Richmond. Moreover, choosing emotional memories plays on the sense-making metaphor "Intimacy is Closeness" in order to traverse history's distance. Approaching Lincoln through this metaphor requires an emotional investment on Jones's part, and emotions are not fixed but rather situational and changeable. Jones describes his own process: "I thought it [the trilogy] would be investigative, prosecutorial...about the misinformation of history. I would liberate myself from

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<sup>269</sup> Qtd. in Casey Nelson Blake, "The Usable Past, the Comfortable Past, and the Civic Past: Memory in Contemporary America" (*Cultural Anthropology* 14.3, 1999): 431.

<sup>270</sup> "Bill T. Jones: A Good Man."

my own sentimentality. As I began to work with the material, I became more compassionate toward the man and the American project. It made me think about my own heart and my own time.”<sup>271</sup> The History is Distance metaphor worked, for Jones, as a method of connecting the past to the present, of approaching the mirror through which we look at our own time. Brooks’s manifesto, “*What is important for us?...*The more personally we answer this question, it seems to me, the more likely we are to get a vital order out of the anarchy of the present” finds surprising support in a cognitive framework wherein embodied emotional response motivates decision-making and structures sense-making concepts of metaphor and narrative.<sup>272</sup> Jones’s own approach to making the past meaningful in the present adopts “personal” strategies of tracking shifts in situated embodied emotion between Lincoln’s time and our own, in order to discover what is important for us now, when “us,” as a united nation, is longed for but still distant.

### 3.2 ROMANCING LINCOLN

What emotionally invests us in stories is not plot or setting, but rather character. As Keith Oatley claims, “Of all the components that authors deliberately place into their works of fiction, character remains, perhaps, most important.”<sup>273</sup> While other components are crucial to our use of narrative as sense-making tool, character holds the strongest emotional connection for us because of our ToM abilities and our highly social nature. Oatley goes on to summarize a study by Jaye Derrick wherein “people became less lonely when they watched favorite television programs that

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Brooks, 340.

<sup>273</sup> *The Passionate Muse: Exploring Emotion in Stories* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012): 157.

had their favorite characters in them. In watching these programs, people felt a sense of belonging.”<sup>274</sup> Character becomes a primary way that we understand the human experience through narrative, a process that is bound up in our abilities to appraise the emotions of others. Hogan’s narrative prototypes (romantic love, sacrificial, and heroic) necessarily include character prototypes as well, prototypes that are designed to move our empathic relationship to other people into one of emotional investment, so that we will care about the plot, or what happens to them. The cast of *Serenade* loosely gestures towards specific historical characters (Abraham and Mary Lincoln, for example) but generally stays in the world of anonymous history, where a historical time and space is implied by costume, sound, and set rather than characterization. For *Fondly*, Jones chose to create stronger representations of character as a way for audiences to navigate the themes of the work: “Once I embraced the fact that I was going to have characters – Mary, Lincoln – what was the poetry of the characters? They are superstars in history. It had to be provocative, it had to be sensual, it had to have some truth to it.”<sup>275</sup> This choice to foreground the Lincolns, rather than just Lincoln, is one of the company’s most significant revisions. Rather than following a heroic narrative model, they turn instead toward romance as a method of traversing the distance between “that woman,” “that man,” and themselves, toward finding the provocation, sensuality, and even truth that Jones seeks from these titans of history.

Briefly returning to the role of emotion in narrative prototypes, happiness and sadness are particular outcomes of most actions, and humans naturally seek out happiness outcomes as goals. We make sense of people’s actions and our own actions in terms of whether or not we move

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>275</sup> “Bill T. Jones: A Good Man.”

closer toward happiness or sadness (an understanding that is itself based fundamentally on our embodied experiences of space and time). Because we are such social beings, every moment unconsciously assessing others' mental states, emotions, and desires, many of our happiness goals relate to our relationships with other people. According to Hogan,

[o]ur emotional experiences go well beyond such simple instrumental relations [of help or antagonism] to the enduring emotional commitments of mutual bonding or attachment. The most obvious types of such personal bonding are friendship, kinship, and romantic love. Romantic love combines mutual bonding with sexual union. That combination of two type universals should make it particularly appealing as a happiness goal.<sup>276</sup>

The emotional double-punch of character and narrative in romantic love prototypes makes them particularly effective at investing the reader in understanding the sequence of events, or causality, of the romantic story.

Though Hogan's narrative prototypes are developed through analysis of fictional works, his observations stand for the work of historians, who must, in order to give cohesion to the past, craft some kind of narrative. Romantic love narratives are particularly effective at eliciting emotional response and it is interesting to think about why this element of Lincoln's story has been underplayed in history. Jones himself admits to Bill Moyers that he faced difficulty committing to representing the romance because "I was so afraid to give that kind of emotion."<sup>277</sup> Jones, as artist, expresses what seems to be a common feeling also for historians. To write a history of something so emotional as a love story, or to see the history of Lincoln as that of a romantic lead, is almost antithetical to what history is supposed to be in a logic that abides by body/mind and emotion/reason dualisms. When Moyers begins his interview with Jones, Jones is amused at his line of questioning which focuses immediately on the Lincolns:

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<sup>276</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 127.

<sup>277</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance."

“You have gone for the heart of the most emotional things in the piece.”<sup>278</sup> Jones’s reply to Moyers makes use of conceptual metaphor, “the heart” of something, itself only comprehensible based on our embodied associations of emotion, intimacy, and closeness. For Jones and Moyers, the romantic love narrative of Lincoln is inherently more emotional than other representations, and the company’s use of this characterization appears unusual and potentially problematic when applied to a historical figure with the weight (at least, in the American public sphere) of Lincoln.

Before looking at the potential benefits of focusing on Lincoln as lover, it’s worthwhile to take a quick look at how he is generally portrayed by historians, and at how historians have made sense of his marriage to Mary Todd. One of the most common narratives of Lincoln’s biography is “his self-propelled rise.”<sup>279</sup> This narrative plays into tropes of the heroic model while also depending explicitly on its American social environment’s rhetoric of self-reliance to make sense. Matthew Pinsker is quick to note that “in their zeal to fashion Lincoln as a self-made man, they [biographers] have sometimes lost sight of his connections to the world around him.”<sup>280</sup> Earlier biographers, Pinsker claims, tended to represent Lincoln’s self-reliance as a natural trait that suited him for the journey he took from a log cabin to the White House. Recent studies “depict a national leader who was thoroughly unprepared for the grave executive challenges that faced him but who struggled mightily (and successfully) to meet them...the emphasis on the president’s own agency in his career evolution does represent a subtle departure from previous evaluations.”<sup>281</sup> There appears to be little reason to move away from American

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Matthew Pinsker, “Lincoln Studies at the Bicentennial: a Round Table, Lincoln Theme 2.0.” *The Journal of American History* 96.2 (2009): 421.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 432. Also see Pinsker for a thorough review of recent Lincoln biographies and histories since 1995 and the impact of the digitizing of Lincoln archives on these studies.

heroic models of masculine self-determination but rather a revision as to whether or not Lincoln was born with these traits or merely with the initiative to acquire them.

The “contentious subfield of Lincoln studies” devoted to the Lincolns’ marriage is filled with strong statements about the couple’s relationship.<sup>282</sup> Consider the reaction to Daniel Mark Epstein’s *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage*: “It is the first major salvo in the coming onslaught of what some Lincoln scholars label ‘The Cult of Mary’ – a collection of writers who try to diminish the achievements of Abraham Lincoln and make Mary Todd Lincoln as historically important, as iconic, and as socially and politically relevant as her husband.”<sup>283</sup> While Jason Emerson’s characterization of Epstein’s work is clearly imbricated in a patriarchal ideology, it results directly from a common representation of the Lincolns’ relationship dominated by “her [Mary’s] vicious temper, her self-centered behavior, and her general unpleasantness.”<sup>284</sup> Jean Baker, a more nuanced historian than Emerson, nonetheless concludes, “the depictions of the Lincoln marriage as disaster focus on Mary Todd Lincoln’s failings.”<sup>285</sup> Heroic, sacrificial, and romantic love prototypes, though found universally and transhistorically, nonetheless are made meaningful within specific social and material contexts and ideologies. Thus Lincoln as hero serves different purposes from Lincoln as lover in terms of making the past legible in the present. Baker makes this point particularly salient in her distinction between Lincoln’s feelings about Mary and historians’ feelings about her:

Douglas Wilson and Michael Burlingame don’t like Mary Lincoln; that does not mean that Abraham Lincoln did not, nor, more relevantly, does it mean that the compact that Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln fashioned in the nearly 23 years of their marriage was

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<sup>282</sup> Jean Baker, “Mary and Abraham: A Marriage.” In *The Best American History Essays on Lincoln*, ed. Sean Wilentz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999): 111.

<sup>283</sup> Jason Emerson, “Review: *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage*.” *America’s Civil War* (November 2008): 66.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Baker, 108.

not a satisfying one from which both partners gained emotional support, physical satisfaction, and intellectual intimacy. To be sure, an unsuccessful Lincoln marriage is historically serviceable. For the president's daily association with a woman he supposedly loathed makes him evermore the martyr of American mythology. The president who dealt so generously with the afflicted in public affairs learned, in this understanding, to do so through his private life with a shrew[.]<sup>286</sup>

In Baker's summary of the use-value of a troubled Lincoln marriage, heroic and sacrificial prototypes are fused in order to make sense of Lincoln's life and untimely death. Jones recounts to Moyers that in his childhood home, portraits of Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Abraham Lincoln hung on the walls, with Lincoln "the only white man I was allowed to love unconditionally."<sup>287</sup> Moyers responds, "That's something. All your heroes assassinated."<sup>288</sup> Lincoln's heroism is colored by his assassination, a point brought up by historian Catherine Clinton in her provocative question, "What if Booth had been a bad shot and Mary Lincoln had died instead of her husband?"<sup>289</sup> Clinton's counterfactual exercise leads her to conclude that "She would have been shrouded with the fame she so craved rather than the infamy that hounded her during her years as a widow."<sup>290</sup> Clinton's work points to the certain reality that Lincoln's death has profoundly influenced his historical legacy including the contentions over his marriage to Mary Todd in ways that do not, perhaps, accurately reflect the marriage itself so much as they reflect an adherence to the sacrificial narrative.

What, then, is gained in terms of how Lincoln's legacy might be meaningful to us now by focusing on the Lincoln marriage as participating in a romantic love prototype rather than first

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance." This memory is foregrounded in the narration of *Fondly* as the narrator speaks, "he loved this man on the copper penny or the five-dollar bill as if he was a member of the family."

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> "Wife Versus Widow: Clashing Perspectives on Mary Lincoln's Legacy." *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* (28.1: 2007): 17.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.



and foremost as a corollary plot point in the Lincoln as sacrificial hero story? The old chestnut that history is written by the victors is reflected in Hogan's assessment of the ideological ends to which heroic and sacrificial narratives often serve. For Hogan, "There is no particular elite constituency addressed by the romantic narrative. In keeping with this, the romantic narrative appears to be the least ideologically problematic of the three."<sup>291</sup> Certainly romantic plots can be written to serve social elites, however this is not a constituent element of the prototype in the way that it is for heroic and sacrificial plots.<sup>292</sup> BTJ/AZ's focus on the Lincolns and their role as romantic leads might allow for some circumvention of the problematic ideologies undergirding Lincoln as sacrificial hero that trouble Jones, particularly in their foregrounding of Lincoln's death to such a degree that he blocks the view of the many, many tragic deaths of the slave population that lie behind his own in the horizon of history.

An additional potential boon in revising Lincoln's narrative toward romantic prototypes is the possibility of empathic responses that work against the usual in-group out-group categorizations that frame our emotional responses to other people (such as the Ambady study in Chapter One). Hogan describes the disidentification potential of romantic prototypes as the likelihood for less ideological bias than heroic and sacrificial prototypes:

In contrast with heroic plots, romantic narratives commonly work directly against identity categories...class, caste, race, nation, ethnicity, family – are among the primary obstacles to the union of the lovers, and romantic plots almost invariably incline us to empathize with the lovers. Moreover, while there is sometimes divine intervention in romantic narratives, the lovers commonly face human problems and they respond to them in human ways. This sets them apart from sacrificial narratives by making the causality generally comprehensible and controllable[.]<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 136.

<sup>292</sup> See Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, ch. 3 for more on ideology and the three prototypes.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

Returning to BTJ/AZ's metaphor of "history is distance," restructuring Lincoln's narrative into a romantic narrative might help us to, in the present, traverse the distance to the past via emotional responses that are less likely to be implicated in exclusionary ideologies. Lincoln's mythological status in American history can be alienating – consider Israeli dancer and BTJ/AZ performer Asli Bulbul's response to a question about Lincoln's identity: "He must be one of the darlings of American history because they have a car named after him, right?"<sup>294</sup> Jones himself admits to frequent moments of doubt during the creative process, where "Sometimes I wake up and I think, you're not big enough to deal with Lincoln."<sup>295</sup> Returning to Lakoff and Johnson's primary metaphor of Important is Big, it's clear that Jones's perception of Lincoln's importance, of Lincoln the myth, alienates him from Lincoln as a human with desires and emotions that originate through the same mechanisms as all other humans. As Hogan states, a focus on romantic narrative also likely results in a focus on human causality, on understanding events through humans as agents that act because of comprehensible desires. Emerson's perception that focusing on Mary Lincoln alongside her husband will "diminish" Lincoln's achievements is a negative spin on what BTJ/AZ approach as a positive process: a "shrinking" of Lincoln not so that the reverse of Important is Big might be realized but so that Intimacy is Closeness is more achievable.

BTJ/AZ do not simply perform the Lincolns as a romantic narrative instead of a sacrificial or heroic (or combination thereof) narrative; they also crucially revise what might be a standard romantic plot in which the Lincolns star. Therefore, before looking at exactly what kind of love story the company creates, it is useful to describe the prototype for romantic narratives

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<sup>294</sup> "Bill T. Jones: A Good Man."

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

and how the Lincoln marriage has historically fit (or not) into this prototype. Following Hogan's formula, romantic narratives begin with "two people who are unmarried and living ordinary, relatively untroubled lives."<sup>296</sup> This appears to have been the case for Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln when they began their courtship in Springfield, Illinois in the late 1830s. In romantic narratives, the couple meet and fall in love, with varying speeds based partially on "whether or not the encompassing society allows free intermingling of the sexes so that the romance has the possibility of developing over time."<sup>297</sup> This is a particularly interesting plot point in terms of the Lincolns' romance and specifically how it has been historically remembered. Jean Baker faults many historians' "flawed understanding of the history of that institution [marriage]" as the reason that history has failed to accurately represent the Lincoln marriage.<sup>298</sup> Baker's work charts the historical understandings of courtship and marriage that at least partially structured the Lincoln's romance, particularly the notion of companionate marriage rather than marriages based on property arrangement. Spending little time on the courtship of the Lincolns not only functions to disinvest the reader or spectator in the future events of their life together, but also does not reflect what would likely have been an extended courtship "of gaiety and fun."<sup>299</sup>

In Hogan's prototype, somewhere along their courtship path, the couple encounters a roadblock, or series of roadblocks, from social authority. Mary Todd and Lincoln experienced just this from Todd's Springfield chaperone and brother-in-law, Ninian Edwards. Edwards had married Todd's sister Elizabeth and moved her from the Todd family home in Kentucky to Springfield. Often, according to Hogan, this opposition to the match results from the social

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<sup>296</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 129.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> 110.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

authority's perception that the lovers belong to different social groups (caste, race, etc.). Certainly this may have been the case for Mary Todd and Lincoln, as Lincoln was a poor lawyer at the time of their courtship, and Todd belonged to a wealthy and prominent Kentucky family, the daughter of a famous judge. Hogan continues, "Often one of the lovers is exiled...there is often some imagery of death or a mistaken belief[.]"<sup>300</sup> This event holds true in the Lincoln's romantic history, in what Lincoln called "The Fatal First," January 1, 1841, whereupon the couple broke off their engagement. There are many, many reasons historians have supplied for why the first engagement failed<sup>301</sup>; it is enough for my purposes here to note that, true to romantic prototype, the lovers met a roadblock in a misunderstanding. The pair did eventually marry in November 1842.

Interestingly, the courtship and eventual marriage (or death prior to, in the case of tragic romance) generally occupy a significant portion of romantic narrative. In the Lincoln's case, the sense of the pair as young, intimate lovers has completely evaporated from most accounts of their lives that include courtship at all, in favor of a focus on the tragic deaths of three of their four sons and the negative effects of those events on the relationship.<sup>302</sup> By contrast, BTJ/AZ's version of the Lincolns focuses almost exclusively on the intimacy of the pair's relationship, on the possibility that, as Baker, puts it, the attitude of dismissal and frustration towards Mary Todd held by some historians may not be and in fact might be the polar opposite of Abraham Lincoln's feelings towards her. Narrative prototypes result from observations about the relative universality of certain sequences of events rather than from a single archetypal narrative source, thus all

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<sup>300</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 129.

<sup>301</sup> See Baker's account for a thorough list.

<sup>302</sup> One exception is Daniel Mark Epstein's *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), which is an excellent study of the couple from their Springfield courtship through Lincoln's assassination.

romantic love plots are thoroughly situated in the communities from which they originate. Hogan posits two kinds of principles that structure how the general narrative prototype gets shifted within a specific context: “First, there are principles that serve to alter a basic prototype or its representation. We may refer to these as alteration principles. Second, there are principles that serve to make abstract prototypes concrete. We may refer to these as specification principles.”<sup>303</sup> Both alteration and specification principles are choreographic tools for the company’s revision of the Lincoln love story.

BTJ/AZ alter the basic prototype of narratives of the Lincolns by focusing on the counterfactual possibility that the Lincolns enjoyed an intimate relationship both emotionally and physically, revising their representation through the specification principle of character function.<sup>304</sup> The Lincolns, danced by Asli Bulbul and Paul Matteson, are introduced early in the opening series of *Fondly* using the set’s platform. The work’s set consists of two playing spaces: a large oval that spans the stage with a moveable, semi-transparent white sheet that demarcates the oval and functions as a screen for projections, and a rectangular platform that connects to the oval via a runway. The platform functions as a microscope, usually featuring solos and duets while the oval space contains the group choreography, and occasionally providing a choreographic counterpoint to the stage action. The platform is used to introduce characters as well, albeit obliquely. We first see the Lincolns (yet to be identified as such) in the opening series of platform dances wherein most of the company take their turn briefly in the spotlight. Their choreography is spare and consists primarily of a weightsharing motif that is executed at the opposite ends of sustained and quick movement shifts. The characters are introduced,

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<sup>303</sup> *How Authors*, 33.

<sup>304</sup> Hogan posits three main categories of specification principles: event types, character functions, and divisions of scene. *Ibid.*, 35.

importantly, as a couple, rather than as individuals, which departs from a Lincoln as hero, and especially as self-reliant hero, narrative and veers us into romantic territory. However, BTJ/AZ are not interested in a simplistic representation and before their next duet, the dancers do appear in solos as the narrator, Jamyl Dobson, gives us a brief origin story for each, including their birthdates, birthplaces, etc.

Jones calls the romantic storyline “the most moving” element of *Fondly*, which also includes a recreation and revision of the Lincoln-Douglas debates that thrusts the work into a meta-political dimension.<sup>305</sup> I think Jones is correct here; the major Lincoln duet is quite effective at eliciting emotional response in its embodiment of Intimacy is Closeness and use of romantic prototypes – it also happens to be choreography of uncommon beauty. Matteson and Bulbul dance a duet in the oval stage in front of the rest of the company, who watch in a group. The duet begins with a small acknowledgement of the “performance” of the duet for the onstage spectators as the pair’s choreography sweetly references the social dance conventions of the historical Lincolns’ time, complete with a closed hold from waltzing and small, schottische-like bouncing flicks with the knees. An original waltz score supports the social dance effect, performed in a minor key that casts a melancholy mood over the scene. The closed hold establishes what becomes a near-constant connection between the pair’s arms, which, as the choreography departs from the historical social dance references and into a more strictly modern vocabulary, continues as an ever-present cradling action focused in the upper body but not contained to it. As the couple moves across the stage, Matteson and Bulbul reach their limbs to seek out contact with the other person, with arms and legs cradling heads and pelvises. Their eyes do not leave the other’s body, creating a sense of an interior world between them. Their

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<sup>305</sup> “Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance.”

choreography embodies Lakoff and Johnson's Intimacy is Closeness metaphor. The softness of the cradling action is crucial for the sense of intimacy; in a later duet between Shayla-vie Jenkins' slave character and Peter Chamberlin's slave owner character, closeness does not imply intimacy because of a harsh, forced quality to the movement that works against this intimacy.

The gentle softness of much of the duet's choreography is complicated by strong, sensual (bordering on sexual) moments that make clear that this is a romantic union. The entire duet is remarkably tactile; in one moment Matteson as Lincoln kneels before Bulbul's Mary Todd and presses his forehead into her belly as she runs her hands down his head and neck. Matteson then slides his hands down Bulbul's back, pressing his palms against her buttocks. She does a quick, playful flick with her leg, reminding Matteson that they are being watched. This is an interesting sequence for what it might imply about how the Lincoln's relationship has been historically represented: the sensuality and indeed sexuality of the relationship gets curtailed by a sense of the "publicness" of Lincoln as a figure. Soon after, Bulbul performs a solo on the platform as the company dances in the oval with Matteson that continues to suggest this tension between the close intimacy of the couple's emotional and physical relationship and the thrusting of this relationship into the public sphere, both in their own time and in retrospective histories. Dobson narrates a heavily abridged version of events spanning Lincoln's election, second inauguration, and eventual assassination. In many histories, Mary Lincoln is often positioned, for good or ill, as very invested in her husband's political career. If positively represented, this interest places her in the role of helpmate, complementing her husband's political acumen in her own domestic activities. Consider, as Clinton notes, that the term "first lady" only became common during her

occupancy of the White House.<sup>306</sup> If negatively portrayed, Mary's actions in her husband's political life are categorized as frivolous and ignorant; see Emerson's description of her "rapacious shopping mania" and a list of Lincoln's achievements accomplished, importantly for Emerson, "all without the help of his future wife."<sup>307</sup> BTJ/AZ propose an alternative vision foregrounding the pair as lovers whose intimate relationship reverberated through their decision-making, including political decisions. While Dobson narrates Lincoln's second presidential victory with great fanfare from the oval, Bulbul, dancing on the platform in a spotlight, ecstatically flings herself down on the ground, spine rippling from neck to pelvis as she lies supine, running her hands up her torso. She looks to her right and draws her hand along the ground in front of her, as if stroking an imaginary person. Bulbul's sensual choreography implies that the identity of Mary and Abraham Lincoln as lovers at least partially impacted their responses to political defeats and victories. Her reaction to his win is first and foremost a physical reaction, a move towards intimacy. Since we are in the home stretch of Lincoln's story, this is only a gesture of intimacy toward an absent figure, as Lincoln is shortly to be assassinated. Our archive of the Lincoln's relationship is a famously paltry and dubious one; almost all of it is second-hand, as the pair burned most of their correspondence, and reminiscent, being collected after Lincoln's death (which almost certainly colored what people had to say).<sup>308</sup> Thus BTJ/AZ's proposal that starting from the stance that the pair were intimate lovers (not unreasonable given how romances usually develop in both lived experience and romantic narrative) is equally valid to assuming the opposite, and may even help us get closer, through understanding the pair's potential intimacies, to these figures and work against history as distance.

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<sup>306</sup> "She was rightly perceived as a new breed of presidential wife, which is perhaps why the term first lady came into usage during her tenure as mistress of the White House." 5.

<sup>307</sup> 66.

<sup>308</sup> See Pinsker for a review of the Lincolns' "reminiscent" archive.



BTJ/AZ stage Lincoln's assassination in a total flip of its usual (historically accurate) representation. Even historians who position Lincoln as a sacrificial hero, independent and self-reliant, a man apart from his wife in both character and habits, adhere to the historical fact that no matter how much time Mary and Abraham Lincoln may have spent apart, Lincoln died by her side at Ford's Theater on April 15, 1865. In fact, this occasion is often related as one of the rosier in the couple's history, with Mary whispering, "What will Miss Harris think of my hanging on to you so?"<sup>309</sup> In BTJ/AZ's version, Mary and Abraham are not, in fact, in the same theater box. Bulbul remains on the platform while Matteson is further distanced from her as he is lifted by the company. Matteson stands upright on the company's hands as they whirl him around the stage, taking over his actions and suggesting that the public plays a role in Lincoln's legacy. When Dobson recites, "he is shot: he dies...he dies...he dies," Matteson falls backwards and is caught and placed on the floor by the company. This is a dramatic movement that takes up plenty of space and includes the added risk of falling from a significant height, yet the focus remains on Bulbul as Mary, on her reaction to Lincoln's death rather than Lincoln's death itself. As Matteson falls and is lowered to the ground, Bulbul grounds her feet widely, looks to her right (echoing her choreography in response to his second victory) and reaches out her right arm, stretching through her fingers. Her left hand grips her left breast. Her gesture of reaching out is fairly straightforward, representing a yearning, grasping action towards that which is already gone. Her other, simultaneous gesture of gripping her breast employs the ancient association of beating one's breast with grief while also, in the context of the previous floor sequence, implying a sensual intimacy that contextualizes her grief as the stuff of tragic romance. In BTJ/AZ's

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<sup>309</sup> Qtd. in Clinton, 16.

version, Mary's acknowledgement of her husband's untimely death comes firstly through an explicit, provocative gesture towards the physical and emotional intimacy that they shared.

In Hogan's formulation, figures of social authority often stand in the way of the lovers' happiness.<sup>310</sup> In the case of the Lincolns, BTJ/AZ's choreography of the Lincoln marriage suggests that it is historians as arbiters of the American past that have stood in the way of understanding the Lincolns as lovers. It is certainly not historically accurate to only represent the Lincolns as intimate romantic partners, motivated solely by their emotional and physical intimacies; however, especially in light of the couple's problematic archive, it is equally suspect to assume that the couple's identity as lovers had *no* effect on their behavior and decision-making. BTJ/AZ's counterfactual thinking is needed here, especially if we are to get closer to the past and its effects on us now, particularly our emotional responses to it. Distilling "The Lincolns" into a romantic partnership, accessible via the metaphor Intimacy is Closeness, is a related methodology to Jones's techniques building his 1994 masterpiece, the documentary dance *Still/Here*: "It was called self-indulgent. But I felt that the more personal it was, the more it invited a larger discourse."<sup>311</sup> In a similar vein, it's possible to see BTJ/AZ's revision of the Lincoln's story as sloppy history, and indeed I am not advocating that their version of events become THE version of events. However I do think that their proposal that we look at the Lincolns in terms of transhistorical human experience is a worthwhile exercise that in some ways counters the ills of the standard Lincoln narrative, a narrative that tends to diminish the social and personal world in which Lincoln's rise took place, and particularly the women who existed in it. In trying to discover why Lincoln remains so omnipresent in American lives, constricted as

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<sup>310</sup> See *How Authors*, p. 31 for description of love plots and roadblocks.

<sup>311</sup> "Bill T. Jones in Conversation with Ann Daly," 119.

he may be within certain narratives for certain demographics, the company chooses moments of emotional spikes, and these choices might be seen as argumentative in Hogan's sense that "we are more persuaded to act in certain ways by emotionally strong instances...rather than general guidelines."<sup>312</sup> Hogan's example here is of buying a Volvo – a bad experience with a Volvo will be more powerful in influencing future actions than a list of facts about how Volvos perform. Similarly, introducing spectators to an emotionally saturated version of Lincoln accessible through his positioning in a romantic narrative may have greater influence on future notions of his legacy than another rehearsal of his political accomplishments.

Bill Moyers, in the introduction to his interview with Jones, claims, "Every generation must negotiate with his [Lincoln's] ghost."<sup>313</sup> The notion of Lincoln's ghost and Lincoln as a haunting figure features prominently in *100 Migrations*, however here I wish to foreground the important divergence from this formula that *Fondly* performs. In *Fondly*, it is not necessarily we who must negotiate with Lincoln's ghost, but rather Lincoln who must deal with us, and with ghosts of his own. Throughout *Fondly* Shayla-vie Jenkins and LaMichael Leonard, Jr. represent a variation on the romantic lovers that Matteson and Bulbul perform, this time inspired by Stowe's figures of Eliza and George Harris. Jenkins and Leonard dance their own duets but also ghost the movements of Matteson and Bulbul's focal duet, dancing just outside the light within the oval. Hogan notes that in most narratives, there is variation on a theme or motif. However, "variation...is inseparable from differences in the characters involved."<sup>314</sup> In *King Lear*, as Hogan describes, the theme of test/reward and its outcomes vary greatly between the sisters Goneril and Regan, and their other sister Cordelia, a very different character. Returning to the

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<sup>312</sup> *How Authors*, 43.

<sup>313</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance."

<sup>314</sup> *How Authors*, 34.

discussion of difference, particularly racial difference, and emotion in Chapter One, in *Fondly* a crucial area of difference remains in-group/out-group identification based on racial saliency of performers. Where both Bulbul and Matteson read as white, Jenkins and Leonard read as black, and this perceived racial distinction affects their positioning to Lincoln as a figure.

Jenkins and Leonard not only provide variation on the theme of the romantic, heterosexual couple, but also on the movement motifs of this theme that compose Bulbul and Matteson's choreography. In fact, the opening duet between Jenkins and Leonard establishes some of the motifs that get taken up in the later focal duet of the Lincolns. In this opening duet, Jenkins and Leonard adopt several "pedestrian" actions that ground their interaction in lived experiences of romantic union rather than in abstraction. The pair walk down the aisle from the oval to the platform, and once on the platform, engage in a highly tactile series of gestures, remaining in constant contact. Leonard slowly lifts Jenkins' hands, pressing his palms against hers. Then he bends at the waist and presses his forehead to her stomach, a gesture that is repeated by the Lincolns but from Matteson on his knees rather than standing. The implication of romantic intimacy by these small gestures is made explicit in a sequence where Jenkins and Leonard roll on the ground together, with Jenkins placing her entire length against Leonard's so that they become a human log, united through touch. In addition to their duets on the platform, the duo also echoes phrases and moments in the background while Bulbul and Matteson perform the Lincoln duet. Narrator Jamyl Dobson positions the company throughout the work as "the crowd," and the spatial organization of Jenkins and Leonard relative to Bulbul and Matteson has implications for how these characters are allowed to move through public and private histories. The Lincolns are allowed to perform their romantic duet within the space of the crowd, the oval, while Jenkins and Leonard's duets are confined to the platform, a more private place in terms of

the spectatorship of the crowd (though a heightened public space in the context of the audience). Their movement within the oval consistently shadows the Lincolns, operating on the dark boundary of the lighting. While the company's representation of the Lincolns as romantic lovers is far from wholly rosy – see their separation at Lincoln's death – Bulbul and Matteson move through the oval and the platform relatively unimpeded, while Jenkins and Leonard stay in the shadows during the Lincoln duet. However, the couples' shared movement vocabulary implies shared emotional qualities to their romances, elevating what might seem like a less historically significant romance, that of Jenkins and Leonard, to the same level of notice to us today as the Lincolns, if not to bystanders of the historical period.

Positioning Jenkins and Leonard as Eliza and George, the romantic focus of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is perhaps the most direct influence of *Last Supper* on this new work in terms of content. Jenkins and Leonard ghost the Lincolns choreographically throughout the work, however they, too, are haunted - by Eliza and George, earlier representations of the burden of history on racialized bodies. In a scene from the *American Masters* documentary of Fondly's creation, Jones works with Jenkins and Peter Chamberlin, who represents another historical figure, telling the dancers, "Let's go from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – she's the beautiful octaroon, you're the evil slave master, she's trying to run away. Let's suggest that!"<sup>315</sup> Eliza and George work to haunt the Lincolns by ghosting their movement, but also through choreographies that make explicit the ambivalent and conflicted relationship some black Americans might have to Lincoln. Hogan notes that "The problem with romantic plots is that their concerns are perhaps too purely personal, and they tend to focus on characters whose material circumstances are rather good...romantic plots tend to ignore the crucial social issues raised by the heroic and sacrificial

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<sup>315</sup> "Bill T. Jones: A Good Man."

plots – war and hunger.”<sup>316</sup> By performing character variations that, within an American social environment, are inflected with the weight of a history of racialized violence and deprivation, BTJ/AZ are able to circumvent this tendency of romantic plot while still activating the emotional routes into making Lincoln meaningful that a focus on romance makes possible.

Clinton, in her manifesto for a more balanced view of Mary Lincoln, writes, “The first lady may indeed have committed errors in judgment at best, and crimes at worst...But unlike mistakes made by Lincoln’s generals, those faults did not cost lives.”<sup>317</sup> Indeed, the use of Eliza and George in *Fondly* foregrounds the human cost of Lincoln’s actions and legacy. As Jenkins and Leonard move from the somewhat ahistorical space of the platform to the historicized oval, they act as representatives of the present capable of embodying the past, connecting us through time in their embodied choreographies of intimacy. Eliza and George’s perfect mirroring of the Lincolns’ choreography implies a universal capacity for emotion that is shared by all people simply by virtue of being human, yet the contextualizing of Eliza and George as characters with relationships to the Lincolns that happens outside of the duets implies that, as Ambady et. al’s study found, biological facts are never socially neutral. Two moments in particular highlight the differing outcomes of these romantic unions and the racial bias upon which they rest. The first is in a tableau made by the company in the upstage right corner of the oval. Matteson as Lincoln stands in the center of the company while Jenkins and Leonard kneel, one on each side. Matteson rests a palm on each of their foreheads. This gesture reads on three conflicting yet inseparable registers that are influenced by the tension with which Matteson performs the gesture. When Matteson begins, he unfolds his palms slowly and gracefully towards Jenkins and Leonard, with

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<sup>316</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 249.

<sup>317</sup> 14.

a light tension that feels almost reverential, as though he is anointing them. The gesture quickly turns paternalistic as he places his palms on their foreheads and they lower their eyes, like a father soothing unhappy children. Then the tension in Matteson's palms increases slightly as he appears to press down on Jenkins and Leonard's skulls, and their bodies sink towards the floor. The elevated status that Lincoln enjoys, this sequence suggests, is equal parts a reflection of the genuine good he may have done for black Americans, good inspired perhaps partially by an attitude of paternalism rather than a commitment to equality, and the human cost, in oppression and untimely deaths, of black American lives that undergirded the causes of the Civil War conflict, continued throughout its duration, and remain in altered forms today.

Lincoln's assassination shifted the eventual narrative of his life into the tragic realm. Albert Furtwangler, summarizing accounts of Lincoln's life, asserts, "Here, certainly, is the pattern of high tragedy: the isolation of a unique good man, his immolation in a catastrophe he helped initiate, and his survival in deeds and utterances that remain incomparably noble."<sup>318</sup> Alongside their revision of Lincoln's biography into a tale of romance, and their revision of romantic narrative to include the larger social world within which the personal union occurs, BTJ/AZ re-focus the tragic lens often applied to Lincoln by applying it also to the situation of Eliza and George. While Lincoln's untimely death prompts grief and sadness (encapsulated in Bulbul's performance) the greater societal tragedy of his life is the immense cost to liberty and life itself that the slave trade engendered, a trade that shaped the America Lincoln lived in and whose existence reverberates today in social structures of racism. In a temporally disjunctive sequence, BTJ/AZ find a second moment to perform character variation, this time on the fallen

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<sup>318</sup> *Assassin On Stage: Brutus, Hamlet, and the Death of Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991): 7.

hero that Lincoln represents. This revision generates an embodied argument for literally moving beyond Lincoln in our cultural understandings of the meaning of his presidency.

This sequence begins with Jenkins as Eliza walking from the oval to the platform with Chamberlin as the slave master crawling behind her, nipping at her heels. This image is suggestive of earlier motifs from *Last Supper*: Eliza, the slave master, and the dogs are all part of that work's choreographic universe. Chamberlin stands behind Jenkins, grabbing at her throat, shoulders, and breasts. Chamberlin's grab of Jenkins' breast is a strong variation on a motif established by Bulbul's performance as Mary Lincoln; in this second iteration, the agent of the grab is external to the person being grabbed, and the context is one of forced, rather than longed-for, intimacy. Jenkins' availability for this kind of embodied interaction is made possible, the choreography suggests, by her racial saliency and the disempowerment it causes within this particular social environment. Jenkins stands uncomfortably during these gestures before eventually kicking Chamberlin off; he crawls off the platform. Leonard then arrives and the pair begin a reprise of their earlier duet. However this reprise includes an addition: Lincoln (Matteson) as spectator. Lincoln watches the two dance from the shadow of the walkway. The duet reaches its end, with Leonard's arms lingering on Jenkins' as he is pulled away from her, down the walkway, by an invisible force. Their separation has a finality to it that is confirmed by Jenkins' accusatory look and stance towards Lincoln, who remains on the walkway. The sense that Lincoln is somehow implicated in Leonard's untimely exit is strengthened by an earlier interaction between the two men where they share a heavy, tense handshake. Jenkins then performs directly at Lincoln, with forceful, angry energy. In contrast to her lack of agency with Chamberlin, here Jenkins is in full command of her body, slicing exquisitely through the space. Her body seeks out a large kinesphere, appearing to carve every possible layer of space around



her. For example, one large gesture is a low lunge with legs standing far in front and behind the pelvis. Jenkins backbends over her back leg, her torso seeking out the space behind and to the sides of her, while her front leg and arms envelop the space in front of her. Her movements are deliberate, slow, and shot through with purpose. At the end of this sequence, Jenkins' eyes pierce Matteson's, and she walks by him off the platform slowly, each foot feeling the earth, with her spine and head erect and her hands clasped behind her back.

At this point the spectator sees that Lincoln's hands are red, a crucial detail. Here is where the work's understanding of time plays a key role in uniting past and present: in the sequencing of *Fondly*, Lincoln has already died. Yet the duets between Jenkins and Leonard and Jenkins and Chamberlin place us temporally before his death, in the context of images and tropes of slavery used in abolitionist materials (and in pro-abolition sentimentalism, as Stowe's text suggests). Thus the Lincoln with blood on his hands (whose blood? His own? Leonard/George's?) is both ghost and live spectator, and Jenkins' attitude of rebuff towards him a representation of past and present black American lived experiences. The romantic duets have already invested us in Jenkins and Leonard's story, and their movement between the past of Eliza and George and the present (seen in their solos and discussed in detail in the following section) implies a similarity between past and present American social environments of hostility towards black Americans. The social world in which Lincoln's achievements are inevitably situated gets pushed to the fore, not through our negotiation with Lincoln's ghost, but through the representation of Lincoln's ghost confronting past and present figures. The relationship between Lincoln, who is radically revised from tragic hero to romantic lead, and our present conditions of citizenship and participation in civic life is positioned as one that is constantly moving, both

moving us as embodied beings and moving us as beings that are motivated by emotional response.

### 3.3 A CRUCIBLE OF ASSOCIATION

Jenkins' walk past Lincoln is a reprise of the first moment of the piece, a moment that connects the past of Lincoln and the present of Jenkins through embodiment. The piece begins with a projection of a Lincoln figure in his signature stovepipe hat walking across the curtain. Jenkins echoes his walk across the stage towards the platform. This corporeal echo invites viewers instantly to make a variety of inferences: that Lincoln is somehow embodied in Jenkins, that Jenkins is in the shadow of Lincoln, or simply that Jenkins and Lincoln, by virtue of sharing the same space of the stage and movement vocabularies, are somehow connected. They also are headed in the same direction, an action that implies they seek out similar goals. Source-Path-Goal schemas and our lived experiences of time and space allow for this inference of "heading in the same direction" to have both literal and figurative resonances in this opening sequence. The reprise of this walk in the later duet also implies that our relationship to history is not fixed, but rather changeable, and that we can understand the causality of that change through embodied emotion. In the work's beginning, when Jenkins reaches the platform she begins a solo that at first glance has little to do with Lincoln, who has disappeared from the curtain.

Jenkins' solo moves through the space with deliberate specificity – each body part activated sequentially, carving the air. A movement impulse that begins in the ribcage extends with sumptuous fullness of time and space down the arm and out the fingertips. She performs with a quality of weight; this is not the effortless, ethereal aesthetic of the ballerina, but rather an

attempt at an ideal of a real body moving through space. And yet because her movements are executed with such precision and fullness, they seem unreal, or at least removed from any pedestrian reality. When interviewed about this section by Bill Moyers, Jones began to muse on the use of Jenkins' solo in the work's landscape of abstraction: "She doesn't move like a normal person. Is she a body in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Or is she a body now? The work is saying put all that aside. Connect the idea of the body to a real body."<sup>319</sup> What assists in putting aside one's questions is the accompaniment to the solo, a recording of Walt Whitman's "Poem of the Body," later known as "I Sing the Body Electric," recited by a child, Jordan Taylor. The section played is the catalogue of the body's parts, beginning with "Head, neck, hair, ears, eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eye-brows..."<sup>320</sup> Long pauses between each word create a meditative rhythm consonant with Jenkins' calm yet coiled energy as a mover. The matrix of associations created by as few images as those of Lincoln in his stovepipe hat strolling across the curtain and Jenkins' African-American female body echoing his steps created, for me as a spectator, a tension within the performance of the solo that went (I contend deliberately) unresolved. The solo builds to Jenkins' slapping the floor and the lights dropping on her and going up suddenly on the rest of the cast in the center of the oval. Part of this tension results from a different use of focus in Jenkins' solo. In the duets, her focus is on Leonard as George or Matteson as Lincoln, fully contained within the onstage world. The solo counters this focus, by moving from quick flashes of the eyes towards the body part initiating movement, to extended, powerful gazes at the audience. We are acknowledged as being a part of the world within which Jenkins' solo moves – she knows she is being watched.

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<sup>319</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance."

<sup>320</sup> See Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, either 1855 or 1856 editions for "I Sing the Body Electric."

This solo is repeated later in the work with the very deliberate intention of referencing not only the weight of a legacy of slavery in the present but specific images of slavery from the past. In many ways, this repetition confirmed explicitly what I found to be an implicit uneasiness in the cataloguing of the body from its first iteration. Leonard performs this reprise within the world of the oval stage, in a small square demarcated by white pillars that are moved into various configurations by the company throughout the performance. The moment directly preceding Leonard's solo is a telling duet between Leonard and Jennifer Nugent as a "Lady Liberty" figure, draped in a white sheet. Their choreographic relationship of moving together in duet, forming a tableau, and then Lady Liberty exiting and leaving Leonard alone forms a clear narrative of the relationship of black Americans to the notion of "freedom" and its rhetoric in the mid-nineteenth century. The pillars are used throughout the work to create various kinds of "public" spaces: they ring the oval during large group sequences and play a role in the Lincoln monument tableau that recurs, with the company lifting Matteson's Lincoln onto their shoulders. The pillars lend a sense of historicity and importance to some of the work's scenes and shape the space of public vs. private performances. Their use as atmospheric support for the company's Lincoln monument as well as the box they create for Leonard's duet with Lady Liberty and later solo reacts to what Dana Luciano terms the monumental impulse, "the cultural work done by national-public memorial...[to] sacralize foundational virtues – the freedoms of the nation, the affections of the family – to legitimate the forward movement of national history."<sup>321</sup> The use of the pillars to frame both the Lincoln monument and what becomes the auction block in Leonard's solo

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<sup>321</sup> *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007): 170.

undercuts, through choreography, the notion that freedom is available to all, either in Lincoln's time or our own, and that the history of the United States is progressive for all Americans.<sup>322</sup>

This reading is possible due to several contextual shifts surrounding Leonard's choreography. The movement vocabulary is an exact reprise of Jenkins' solo, though as Leonard performs his qualities of effort shift dramatically. These shifts are influenced by a crucial difference in the recitation of Whitman's poem. In the reprise, the poem is recited live by the work's narrator, Jamyl Dobson, and with a vocal inflection that moves from the measured exploration of Jordan Taylor to the aggressive clip of the auctioneer. The stark shifts in Dobson's tone and tempo are reflected in Leonard's body as his deliberate, full movements become quicker and slightly off-balance, conferring a feeling of unease and urgency. The sounds of a whip crack through the air and accentuate moments of emphasis within the choreography, creating stops and starts that shudder through Leonard's body, a clear departure from the fluidity of Jenkins' performance. The changes made in the solo's second iteration to the choreography, staging, and delivery of the text firmly create the image of a slave on the auction block, and of more sinister uses of a catalogue of the body that the first performance of the solo only gently implied.

A third element also dramatically recontextualizes the choreography: the acknowledged presence of a public, composed of both the work's spectators and the audience of the stage world. While Jenkins does acknowledge the audience, her indirect gaze is relatively neutral. Here, two choices, in combination with the use of the pillars as a scenic device, foreground the participation (active or complicit) of a public in the onstage events. Once Dobson makes the shift to auctioneer, he begins pointing at members of the audience, singling them out for interest in

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<sup>322</sup> See Luciano, ch. 4, for her argument about the "countermonumental" impulse in mid-nineteenth century black American rhetoric, for example Frederick Douglass's "Fourth of July" speech.

purchasing particular body parts. Additionally, once the auction setting kicks in through sound and movement, a projection of buyers dressed in 19<sup>th</sup>-century garb appears on the upstage scrim. Their chatter begins to creep into the soundscape. The internal drive of the choreography established in Jenkins' solo is, by the end of Leonard's performance, completely eliminated as Dobson's auctioneer and the on- and offstage publics circumscribe his movements. Jones claims that Leonard's solo "is nothing more than an abstract gesture, heated up in the crucible of our association."<sup>323</sup> This phenomenon perfectly reflects the biocultural underpinnings of meaning-making. In some ways, yes – Jones is correct that the movement itself, in terms of what arm is moving, etc., is abstract in that it is not functional. The movement qualities, however, are not abstract – Leonard performs an unsteady, worried, whirling speed that is founded in the embodied emotions underneath our lived experiences.

Jones's "abstract gesture" might well stand in for biology in the biocultural relationship. Able bodies have certain capacities for movement (which dance often pushes to their limits) that cannot be altered (i.e., knees cannot bend backwards). Yet the movements bodies produce exist within, as Jones says, a "crucible of association." In Leonard's solo, stimuli of Leonard's black American body, the public setting, Dobson's auctioneer, and the sound of the whip all interact and reinforce the sense of an auction block. Our connections between these stimuli and certain historical realities are socially specific to American histories of slavery that, *Fondly* suggests, affect the present as well as the past. The cognitive scientific concept of conceptual blending is a good example of how culture influences meaning-making, and is particularly apt for parsing the stimuli Jones introduces in Leonard's solo. Mark Turner's notion of conceptual blending is complex, however here it will suffice to simplify it as fairly literally what the term describes: our

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<sup>323</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance."

brains contain a blending space (which Hogan locates in our working memory) wherein multiple concepts are blended together to produce a different concept.<sup>324</sup> In Leonard's solo, one concept might be "black man," and another "auctioneer." Because of a particular American history involving these two concepts, a third blended concept of "the slave auction" is generated in order to make sense of the staged event. Further, our emotions motivate our recognition and formation of concepts in conceptual blending. The emotions associated with harsh movements and sounds support the negative emotional saliency of the auction event represented onstage. Thus both our biological proclivities to associate embodiment with emotion and the cultural contexts that foreground certain associations between bodies, emotion, and history shape the dramaturgy of Leonard's solo and its ability to make sense to us as spectators.

In the repetition of the solo, Jones challenges the audience to see past the idea of a body to the real body: our associations and plethora of images and sounds surrounding the auction block are so strong and plentiful that it is easy to plug this particular representation into that idea. The relative abstraction of the first solo proposes Jones's challenge and gives a sense of success (if success is to see the body as a real body without the baggage of "ideas," itself a tricky desire) that is then undermined by the second solo. For me, the complication happens in Jones's simultaneous presentation of bodies as archives. In this work, ideas are fundamentally embodied and commentary on ideology is expressed through the body, primarily in its movement. This commentary is owned by the dancers, and is often biographical. Thus the body, the real body, is an archive of experience but also of ideas, ideas that get expressed corporeally. In other words,

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<sup>324</sup> See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) for detailed description of conceptual blending. See Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 107-114 for his assessment of conceptual blending including the notion of blending space as working memory.

the ideal/real dichotomy set up by Jones is not borne out in the conceptual matrix of the work. What I find most fascinating about this repeated solo is what it suggests about the body as archive: that its strength, its uniqueness as an archive is in its ability to change, to *move*. Jenkins' "present-day" iteration of the solo has changed within her body, through movement, the meaning of the ideas present in the archive. This change is made explicit only when set against Leonard's performance of the "past" embodied archive. Jones reminds us, in Leonard's solo, that biology is always contextualized by culture. One last element of Leonard's solo firmly advocates for a biocultural understanding of meaning: every time we hear the crack of a whip, a projection of a silhouette, Jones's "dancing darky," flashes briefly alongside the 19<sup>th</sup>-century silhouettes of the public. Leonard is the silhouette, and his dual casting in the same moment as the slave on the auction block and the darky dancing is a comment on "a favorite old saw of mine – it is [that] we love certain black folks because of their natural athleticism, their natural sense of sensuality, and they're natural performers...it's still the question of 'how do you want your minorities?'"<sup>325</sup> Understanding meaning as a biocultural endeavor frames the company's work and the company itself – consider a *Vanity Fair* blurb about the work that features a photograph of the shirtless Jones, captioned "Malcolm and Martin in one musculature."<sup>326</sup> For Jones, recognizing the dual forces of biology and culture does not fix us in a painful present, contextualized always by a determinant past, but rather looks forward toward change. For the Lincoln trilogy, his hope is that "maybe they'll [the audience] leave the theatre with a little bit more freedom in their bodies, not so afraid of their bodies and afraid of other bodies, but also, ah, the possibilities of how I

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<sup>325</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance."

<sup>326</sup> Laura Jacobs, "Abe and Mr. Jones: Dance star Bill T. Jones choreographs a tribute to Lincoln." *Vanity Fair* August 2009. Online. Accessed 30 June 2013.



might live.”<sup>327</sup> The notion that the theatre is a space of change, of reckoning with the past in order to change the present and thereby set a different future course, is made explicit in the community piece *100 Migrations*, examined in Chapter Three.

This chapter has touched on metaphor as a sense-making tool in human cognition, history-making, and artistic practice; Chapter Three moves from this discussion of metaphor’s functions to the explicit metaphor of history as “the usable past” and how this plays out in *100 Migrations* as a choreographic approach. Representing Lincoln as an individual, motivated by recognizable desires for love and belonging, directly relates to the company’s approach to community members’ histories in the following chapter, drawing a through-line from the ways we think about historical characters to the ways we engage our fellow citizens. Lastly, the biocultural realities of embodied cognition necessarily undergird all the works in the Lincoln trilogy, moving from a discussion of conceptual blending in *Fondly* to mirror neurons in *100 Migrations* as an explanatory framework for how these works address transhistorical human conditions of meaning-making that are nonetheless situated in particular spatio-temporalities.

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<sup>327</sup> “Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance.”

#### 4.0 CHAPTER THREE: DEMOCRACY MOVING: COMMUNITY, CREATIVITY, AND COGNITION

*Science is finding things out: and in that sense, history is a science.*<sup>328</sup>

*When it comes to understanding the past, historians are the acknowledged experts. But when it comes to understanding how we understand the past, there are no experts.*<sup>329</sup>

*Dance [is] a refined sense of that most common thing we share which is human movement. It's got to be able to move in different ways.*<sup>330</sup>

*100 Migrations* is the middle work of the Lincoln trilogy, bringing the choreographic impulses of *Serenade* and *Fondly* to a community-based creative methodology. This piece was developed by Jones and BTJ/AZ Associate Artistic Director Janet Wong at the University of Virginia in November 2008 and included ninety community members from Charlottesville, VA as performers alongside the ten company dancers. Creating this piece was a return of sorts to the company's choreographic methods from the early and mid-90s, specifically their landmark 1994 work *Still/Here*, for which Jones led workshops across the United States for chronically and

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<sup>328</sup> R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 9.

<sup>329</sup> Raymond Martin, qtd. in Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 10.

<sup>330</sup> University of Virginia, *UVa Today Podcast*. "Bill T. Jones Interviewed by Deborah McDowell." 11 November 2008. Accessed 3 December 2013. All subsequent quotations from this interview are from this source unless otherwise indicated.

terminally ill people, grieving the loss of Zane and his own HIV-positive status alongside the participants.<sup>331</sup> While *Still/Here* choreographed a broad swath of emotions related to experiences of bodily devastation, *100 Migrations* involved community members in order to work through the legacy of a cultural figure whose very name invokes notions of community and its particular formation in democracy: “I thought that the question of Lincoln was very much a question of being a part of a society and that everybody who considers themselves an American must have the DNA of that man who we call the greatest president who ever lived. So I wanted to know what that looks like, democracy moving.”<sup>332</sup> For practical reasons, *100 Migrations* did not go on to tour the globe as did *Still/Here*: where *100 Migrations* was performed by one hundred people, the vast majority not paid to be members of a touring dance company, *Still/Here* incorporated the audiovisual presence of workshop participants who did not actually perform the piece. Additionally, I think that *100 Migrations* would be less effective as a touring piece precisely because of its temporal and spatial circumstances. Firstly, its rootedness in Charlottesville, just a stone’s throw from Richmond, a Civil War Confederate capital, and secondly its embeddedness in time: the company’s residency began just days after Barack Obama’s election to the presidency, and many participants and spectators articulated a felt connection between Lincoln, Obama, and the company’s work with the community. In fact, I think it highly probable that Obama’s election influenced how participants shaped their contributions to the work, and to the sense of historical progress the work encouraged.

This chapter will address three interrelated elements surrounding *100 Migrations*’ generation, performance, and reception. The first is the notion that feeling history, or feeling the

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<sup>331</sup> Much has been written about *Still/Here* and its (at the time) radical process. See my “Embodying the Undiscussable: Documentary Methodology in Bill T. Jones’s *Still/Here* and the Culture Wars,” *Studies in Musical Theatre* 5.3 (2011): 297-304, for an overview of its generation, reception, and controversy.

<sup>332</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*.

past, necessarily entails reckoning with the present and forecasting into the future. This section examines the triangulated relationship between time, space, and identity that governs how individuals make the past meaningful in the present, and extend that meaning towards the future in both abstract and practical ways. I pay particular attention to the history of Charlottesville as a space of contention over the legacy of slavery and memory of the Old South, positioning the *100 Migrations* participants as public historians who, according to Donald A. Ritchie, “utilise [*sic*] their skills more subtly in efforts to shape public consciousness through the presentation of the past in public places.”<sup>333</sup> I argue, alongside Freddie Rokem and others, that performance offers unique expressions of past-present-future coexistence, and harbors tactics that can effectively “counteract the destructive forces of history.”<sup>334</sup>

Johnson writes, “our bodies are the very condition of our meaning-making and creativity.”<sup>335</sup> In a similar vein, Damasio claims that emotions result in physicalized response “in the form of actions and behavior [.]”<sup>336</sup> The second section of this chapter takes up these claims about cognition and creativity in discussion of two primary choreographic methodologies utilized in *100 Migrations*. Specifically, I examine the company’s use of gesture and touch as embodied representations of emotion-driven responses to Lincoln’s legacy, as situated in the place of Charlottesville and the time of a post-election-high following Obama’s victory. This section also looks at the phenomenon of empathy and how gesture and touch, as expressive qualities of emotion, manifest empathic response and other prosocial emotions – “emotions that

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<sup>333</sup> “When History Goes Public: Recent Experiences in the United States,” *Oral History* 29.1 (2001): 93.

<sup>334</sup> Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>335</sup> *Meaning of the Body*, 15.

<sup>336</sup> *The Feeling*, 47.

are aroused by real, imagined, anticipated, or remembered encounters with other people”<sup>337</sup> – that are unique to group-based activity.

The concluding section of this chapter focuses on the effects of *100 Migrations* and the potential effects of its methodologies if incorporated by other performances. Here I take up Jill Dolan’s notion of utopian performatives, wherein “live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world.”<sup>338</sup> I examine the cognitive science behind embodied emotion to demonstrate that the possibilities for performance to “change our minds” are literal: depending on the specific relationship of body-brain-environment in a given performance, dance and theatre have the potential to actually change our neurological maps, and can foster progressivism. I take seriously cognitive scientists’ Grit Hein and Tania Singer’s assertion that “our brains do not exist in isolation, and their functioning should be modulated by the social factors and culture on the mesolevel of groups and the macrolevel of society,” thus I address the socio-cultural consequences of *100 Migrations*, which functions on both the meso- and macrolevels of social experience.<sup>339</sup> This section also balances cognitive scientific studies of the inhibitive qualities of collaboration and collaborative memory specifically with Miranda Joseph’s critique of the “romance of community,” concluding that not all communities foster and support change, nor is community always a positive force in terms of the accuracy of memory and the shaping of narratives. For example, take a recent study on

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<sup>337</sup> Mark R. Leary, “Affect, Cognition, and the Social Emotions,” in *Feeling and Thinking: The Role of Affect in Social Cognition*, ed. Joseph P. Forgas (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), 331.

<sup>338</sup> *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>339</sup> “Neuroscience Meets Social Psychology: An Integrative Approach to Human Empathy and Pro-Social Behavior.” In *Prosocial Motives, Emotions, and Behavior: The Better Angels of Our Nature*, eds. Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2010): 119.

collaborative memory that suggests “Effects of collaboration are counterintuitive because individuals remember less when recalling in groups. Collaboration can also lead to forgetting and increase memory errors.”<sup>340</sup> Thus the commonplace idea that collaboration (through the popular notion of “brainstorming” and other various methods) can inspire greater creativity than individual activity is not supported by scientific studies. These studies suggest to me that we should pay even closer attention to those creative strategies that do appear to work positively regarding the power of creativity, cognition, and community to effect change.

### 3.4 THE PERFECT PLACE FOR THIS TO BE HAPPENING

In this section I examine the where and when of *100 Migrations* as well as the “who” of the community members who participated in the work’s generation and performance. BTJ/AZ’s residency at the University of Virginia included several public events in addition to the actual performance of *100 Migrations*. One of these events was an interview with UVa professor Deborah McDowell about Jones’s approach to the Lincoln trilogy. Jones summarized the conflicted nature of his feelings about the “redeemer” president as an internal civil war between “the five year old Bill and the fifty-six year old Bill...which one is going to win in this work?”<sup>341</sup> There are several salient points for my discussion within Jones’s summary. The first is that, of course, the five year-old and fifty-six year-old Bill are the same person: embodiment in this sense encompasses both past and present emotional responses that Jones has to Lincoln. The

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<sup>340</sup> Suparna Rajaram and Luciane P. Pereira-Pasarin, “Collaborative Memory: Cognitive Research and Theory” (*Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5.6 (2010): 649.

<sup>341</sup> *UVa Today* podcast.

second is Jones's implication that his response has changed over time, from one of unconditional love to skepticism. Further, we can infer that Jones's future response may shift – that a new piece might be made between the fifty-six year-old Bill and the ninety year-old Bill.<sup>342</sup> These may seem like obvious observations, but my intention here is to show how feeling history is a process that is equally invested in projecting forwards as well as looking backwards, and that the pasts we have as individuals profoundly shape how we understand history as a collective and personal phenomena.

While I doubt that many historians would characterize their activities as actively forecasting the future,<sup>343</sup> our cognitive uses of narrative are inescapably oriented towards both understanding the past and practicing (behavior, interactions, responses) for potential future occurrences, regardless of whether or not we consider ourselves historians. In 1989 historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen embarked on a nine-month survey of 1,500 Americans, pulling from across gender, class, and racial demographics, in order to ascertain how people understood the role of the past in their lives. They found that almost universally, respondents characterized their understanding of the past as something that was useful for structuring future experiences: “they assemble their experiences into patterns, narratives that allow them to make sense of the past, set priorities, project what might happen next, and try to shape the future.”<sup>344</sup> Rosenzweig and Thelen also found that for most people, national historical narratives failed to guide their decision-making and sense of self as strongly as familial or smaller group identities’

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<sup>342</sup> Many have noted Jones's unique abilities to tap into a sense of continuity through fragmentation and unification in his own body: “No other dancer-choreographer today allows past, present, and future to mingle so freely in his body.” Jacobs, *Vanity Fair*.

<sup>343</sup> See, for example, Richard J. Evans's claim that “if your main aim is to shape the future, then it is not a good idea to devote your life to studying history [.]” 115.

<sup>344</sup> *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 12.

versions of the past did. Racial identity, particularly for non-white Americans, was significantly more important as a “usable past” than was nationality or “Americanness.” Louis Filler’s 1947 observation that “Our relation to history is determined, at least in part, by the goals toward which we reach” is born out in terms of the inseparability of past, present, and future in terms of making meaning.<sup>345</sup> For Filler, the past and future were not necessarily on a continuum reaching towards progress, but rather necessary partners in terms of how people conceptualized history as an active, useful endeavor: “the problem of the ‘usable’ past...is one of determining where we have been and where we intend to go.”<sup>346</sup> Richard Ned Lebow agrees with Filler, claiming “We routinely build scenarios with good or bad outcomes based on the lessons we think we have learned from the past and use them to work our way through life...Future ‘memories’ of this kind are just as important for building and sustaining identities as memories of the past [.]”<sup>347</sup> Precisely because the past is usable, more personal experiences of regional, local, and familial pasts shape our sense of what is possible in the future to a greater degree than do larger national and global narratives of history.

While our cognitive use of sense-making tools like narrative is neurologically hardwired, these processes take place within specific material and social environments that profoundly influence meaning-making. For Johnson, meaning “emerges as structures of organism-environment interactions or transactions,” a phenomenon he terms organism-environment coupling.<sup>348</sup> In the following pages I will describe the temporal and spatial dimensions of the environment of Charlottesville in November 2008, however I want to briefly consider here the

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<sup>345</sup> “America and the ‘Usable Past’” (*The Antioch Review* 7.3, 1947): 343.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>347</sup> “The Future of Memory” (*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617.1: 2008), 39.

<sup>348</sup> xii.



stage as its own energetic environment that brushes up against the material-social environment surrounding it. Many scholars have written on the theater's potential to elevate experience out of the everyday; Dolan goes further and suggests that performance carries a utopian potential, understanding utopia not as an amorphous place located somewhere in the future but rather as a process that can be implemented in the present: "Utopian performatives describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense."<sup>349</sup> I agree wholeheartedly with Dolan about the potential for performance to inspire, and I think performances that grapple with history make unique offerings in this way. If we are lifted slightly above the present, what are we lifted into? Dolan suggests visions of future experience. I argue that performances that happen in the present but utilize the past vault us into contemplation of the future in distinct ways. The very ability of performance to offer paths into future action is concentrated when its subject is historical because of our narrative capacity for associating past, present, and future. Rokem writes, "The theatre 'performing history' seeks to overcome both the separation and exclusion from the past, striving to create a community where the events from this past will matter again."<sup>350</sup> Making the past matter is, as Rosenzweig and Thelen found and as Brooks and Filler postulated, a matter of making the past usable in shaping the future, a task that can be done only when we understand how the (often local) past has been used to make our present.<sup>351</sup> In *100 Migrations*, the past (including national histories, such as Lincoln's assassination, but also familial and regional pasts)

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<sup>349</sup> 5.

<sup>350</sup> xii.

<sup>351</sup> Blake summarizes Brooks' argument: "The past would become 'usable' when it allowed Americans to pry open spaces in the present for future innovation." 423.

matters a great deal, in part because of its ability to influence future behavior and actions. Thus while I agree with Dolan about performance's heightened ability to crystallize our desires and motivate our actions, I also see value in a position like Philip Kitcher's, wherein ethics, and particularly progressive action, are related to an ever-shifting end-point: "Ethics emerges as a human phenomenon, permanently unfinished. We, collectively, made it up, and have developed, refined, and distorted it, generation by generation. Ethics should be understood as a *project* – the ethical project – in which we have been engaged for most of our history as a species."<sup>352</sup> Thus the end-point of progressivism (defined within *100 Migrations* in the language of democratic ideals) towards which the work reaches is a future constantly in negotiation in the present, with people actively working on justifications for its desirability, rather than an obvious condition of "civilized" society self-evident to all.

Keith Oatley proposes that one of the cognitive and evolutionary functions of storytelling, and by extension reading fiction, is that by encountering events within the structure of narrative, people enter "a state of preparedness to reason about the social world."<sup>353</sup> Importantly, for Oatley and other cognitive narratologists like Hogan, reasoning about the social world is motivated significantly by emotional response – to repeat an earlier point, the very events we remember in retelling a story are selected through emotional response as critical narrative features. Reading fiction functions as a kind of rehearsal for future interactions (and as a way of contextualizing and understanding past interactions) in our social environment. I would argue that when spectating, not only are we rehearsing future actions through following a narrative and understanding causality and relationships within that narrative, but we are also

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<sup>352</sup> Kitcher, *The Ethical Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2. Kitcher develops a notion of ethics which he terms "pragmatic naturalism," which can be put in productive conversation with Vázquez's cultural materialism.

<sup>353</sup> *Passionate Muse*, 160.

rehearsing being in the social world through being in an audience. In *100 Migrations* participants perform but also watch each other perform, enacting but also rehearsing social relationships through observation. Add to this the literal rehearsing that accompanies performance and further cognitive value to performing the past emerges. Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin's study on collaboration and the pitfalls of collaborative memory (discussed at length in a later section) found that while collaborative memory was not the boon to creativity as often characterized in popular discourse, working collaboratively did have some benefits, particularly in its function as a rehearsal: "Collaboration can also produce powerful effects on eventual individual learning by enabling rehearsal of...information."<sup>354</sup> In other words, our ability to respond to and contextualize stimuli and, particularly in this experiment, to learn new information in the future is enhanced by working collaboratively in the present. In *100 Migrations*, this present collaboration is focused on the past yet, as Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin demonstrate, rehearses crucial skills for building the future.

We do not, however, rehearse or perform in a vacuum where our intended messages are easily achieved. If, as Dolan asserts, the utopian potential of performance is connected vitally to its "present-tenseness," another way to understand this phenomenon in performing history is that the past and the future are equal pulls whose energies keep us swirling in the present.<sup>355</sup> Thus I now turn to the present of *100 Migrations*, and its conception in a very specific time in American history – the election of Barack Obama, with its own pulls towards a past defined by Abraham Lincoln and a future hopefully not defined by racial prejudice. The *100 Migrations* residency took place from November 9-16 in 2008, beginning five days after Obama's historic election on

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<sup>354</sup> 656.

<sup>355</sup> 13.

November 4 as the first African-American president of the United States. The residency included a performance of *Serenade/The Proposition* at Charlottesville’s Paramount Theater on November 13, shaping the residency as participating in the company’s journey from *Serenade* to *Fondly*. Many spectators attended this performance as well as *100 Migrations*. One such spectator, Jody Esselstyn, asked the company where a certain snippet of text – “I bid you an affectionate farewell,” during Matteson’s solo – originated, Esselstyn’s attention drawn to these words because of their emotional impact: “They were so powerful in the dance and had me sobbing for the last few minutes of the piece.”<sup>356</sup> Esselstyn connects emotional response to the contemporary moment, concluding that emotions were heightened given Obama’s election: “I found it [the performance] very rich and very powerful esp [*sic*] in light of the recent election of Obama.”<sup>357</sup> For Esselstyn, Obama’s election critically framed the experience of spectatorship, specifically heightening the works’ abilities to elicit strong emotional responses.

For Jones, however, the work is emphatically not related to Obama’s election: “This is not about Mr. Obama. It is not. It’s about a climate of hope wherein we conjure up the means to save ourselves.”<sup>358</sup> I interpret Jones’s remarks to place the possibility for change and even a utopian vision of the future squarely within the actions of the performers and spectators surrounding *100 Migrations*, rather than a top-down kind of effect wherein Obama’s election solves social injustices merely by trickling down. Jones goes on, claiming he is ambivalent about the ability of Obama’s election to sustain a climate of hope,<sup>359</sup> much as the Obama campaign rhetoric championed this very thing. Indeed, a study by David P. Redlawsk, Caroline J. Tolbert,

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<sup>356</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> *UVa Today* podcast.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

and William Franko about voters' emotional responses to Obama and their relationship to latent attitudes of racism found that "modern racism continues to be a factor in electoral politics."<sup>360</sup> Nonetheless, the election clearly impacted how participants (both performers and spectators) engaged the work, and in fact addresses questions Jones has brought up previously in his career. In a 1997 interview with Thelma Golden, Jones asserted, "I want to know the 'I' that was defined by a slave culture. Is it antiquated, is it obsolete? And if so, what has it changed to?"<sup>361</sup> Ten years later, the Lincoln trilogy suggests that this identity is not, in fact, antiquated much as we might wish – "slave culture" has shifted its precise systemic forms of racial oppression but its inequalities have not disappeared. In his acceptance speech, Obama remarked, "at last, change has come to America."<sup>362</sup> Jones is clearly dubious of this claim, yet remains committed to change as a necessary concept that keeps the narrative arc of history pointed towards progressivism, however much it may meander on the way there.

While Jones and Obama may not have, in 2008, shared the same interpretation of the election, they do share an abiding interest in Lincoln. Lyn-Dell Wood, a performer in *100 Migrations*, wrote the following to BTJ/AZ: "I wanted to pass this on to Bill T. from the 60mins [sic] interview with Pres. Elect Obama. Obama said he's reading about Lincoln right now. And he said the following [:] There is a wisdom and intelligence there...I find him [Lincoln] a very wise man...Wow Mr. Jones is really timely!"<sup>363</sup> Obama often quoted Lincoln in campaign speeches, associating the promise of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and unification of a divided nation with the successful election of a black president. His election coincided with the

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<sup>360</sup> "Voters, Emotions, and Race in 2008: Obama as the First Black President" (*Political Research Quarterly* 63.4, 2010): 885.

<sup>361</sup> 133.

<sup>362</sup> "Yes, We Can! The Victory Speech." In *Barack Obama: Speeches on the Road to the White House*, eds. Maureen Harrison and Steve Gilbert (Carlsbad, CA: Excellent Books, 2009): 224.

<sup>363</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ.

nationwide Lincoln Bicentennial celebration, vaulting the past into the present, as Lincoln scholar Ronald C. White notes, “The remarkable tether between Lincoln and Obama, suddenly in such plain view in recent months, is not an end but a beginning. For many Americans, Lincoln, however appreciated before, has at the outset of a new presidency moved from there and then to here and now. He has become strangely contemporary.”<sup>364</sup> Obama’s campaign rhetoric and successful election vaulted Lincoln into the present by fulfilling popular notions of the past in Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and forecasting a future that Lincoln would endorse.

Temporality and spatiality are coterminous in our experience of the world – while we can attempt to separate these dimensions of experience analytically after the fact, phenomenologically they are always occurring simultaneously and shaping meaning through a gestalt effect rather than as separable elements. Returning to Hogan’s observations on place attachment, one of the reasons why “The center toward which we tend, and against which we experience all other places, is home” is because our earliest experiences of home generally happen during a formative experience of time: childhood.<sup>365</sup> Further, place attachment relates to our emotional attachments to people (thus “home” is an even stronger attachment due to its usual associations with parents and siblings whom we are deeply connected to emotionally). Our emotional attachments to people and places produce spatiality, “the ‘existential’ experience of location,” which “is fundamentally an emotional experience.”<sup>366</sup> The actual place of UVa and its architecture – as well as its historical, political, and social relationships to Charlottesville that its spatial relationship has generated – produce profound feelings amongst various communities

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<sup>364</sup> “Lincoln’s Memo to Obama” (*The Wilson Quarterly* 33.1, 2009): 21.

<sup>365</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 30.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

associated with the campus that vary dramatically between pride, happiness, disgust, and anger. These feelings frame the environment within which the *100 Migrations* residency took place.

The original grounds of UVa were famously designed and supervised by Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson's troubling relationship to slavery extends to his work as an architect and educator, though historically the role of slavery in the construction and daily administration of UVa has been little discussed. Many historians, both past and contemporary, write of Jefferson's educational aims without the slightest tinge of irony: consider J.L. Sellers' 1936 comments "Common school education for all and unlimited opportunities for the gifted were unqualified convictions and attainable objectives in his [Jefferson's] mind"<sup>367</sup> and "Probably no other great university in this country has been so nearly the work of one man as the University of Virginia was the conception and execution of Thomas Jefferson."<sup>368</sup> Inevitably, Jefferson's beliefs in common education accessible to all did not include blacks, much as his construction of the "Academic Village" critically depended upon their enslaved labor. In 1985, Mary N. Woods similarly quotes Jefferson's beliefs uncritically, despite their deeply problematic implications: Jefferson believed "a university education was essential in a society where 'the people are the only safe depositories of their own liberty.'"<sup>369</sup> Critical studies of the relationship between slavery and UVa are few: an unpublished 2003 paper by Charlottesville historian Gayle Schulman and a senior thesis from 2006 by UVa student Catherine S. Neal.<sup>370</sup> I do not attempt such a study here; rather, I am interested in how UVa's shifting relationship to its own history

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<sup>367</sup> "Thomas Jefferson's University" (*Prairie Schooner* 10.2, 1936): 113.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>369</sup> "Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia: Planning the Academic Village" (*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 44.3, 1985): 268.

<sup>370</sup> See Meghan Saunders Faulkner, "Slavery at the University of Virginia: A Catalogue of Current and Past Initiatives" for these references.

coincides with the *100 Migrations* residency as both processes deliberately take up questions of race, history, memory, and community.

While much scholarly attention has focused on Jefferson's personal life and relationship with Sally Hemings as well as on the role of slavery in the building of Monticello, UVa itself is now leading the charge in revising its own history and the role of slavery therein. Two campus groups directly engage with this history: the alumni group IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access) Fund and the grant-funded UCARE (University and Community Action for Racial Equity) both pledged funds earmarked towards making public UVa's role in the slave trade. UCARE was organized in early 2007 following a Virginia General Assembly resolution expressing "regret for the state's role in the slave trade. Shortly afterward, the University of Virginia Board of Visitors passed a commendation of this resolution, expressing a particular regret for the university's role in the employment of enslaved persons."<sup>371</sup> From these actions UCARE was formed with the express goal "to further understand the legacy of slavery and segregation in the university's history as well as in the Charlottesville community. UCARE members hope to help the university and adjacent communities come together to identify actions that could improve their relationship and lead to reconciliation."<sup>372</sup> Revising UVa's history and repairing its relationship with the Charlottesville community were articulated as parallel goals wherein acknowledging past wrongs, specifically racial offenses, was a key strategy – and a necessary one, as several town-gown hall meetings revealed that many in the Charlottesville community referred to UVa not as the lofty "Academic Village," but rather as "The

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<sup>371</sup> Faulkner, "Slavery at the University of Virginia: A Catalogue of Current and Past Initiatives," 5. Accessed online 10 December 2013. This catalogue was produced at the request of the IDEA Fund, and is quite comprehensive in its review of scholarly, community, and archaeological activities related to the role of slavery in the University's history.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



Plantation.”<sup>373</sup> *100 Migrations* became part of this initiative, designed to help bridge “the gap between Charlottesville and UVa.”<sup>374</sup>

The IDEA Fund and UCARE both identify a shameful past as a key factor in the poor town-gown relations that UVa and Charlottesville have historically shared. In the 2000s the University began a sustained effort to study or verify the presence of slaves at UVa. *100 Migrations* coincided with this new initiative within a year or so. Jones certainly knew of the institution’s past when he received their residency proposal in March 2008. He began to plot out the work’s infrastructure, choosing the University’s iconic Lawn, part of Jefferson’s original design and surrounding by the Academic Village, in order to “evoke the land of America and the work of slaves used to build the image of democracy in the architecture of UVa.”<sup>375</sup> Six months prior to the commission of *100 Migrations*, archaeologists completed a yearlong dig from November 2006 to November 2007 during which they excavated Pavilion 4 (one of the University’s original structures) and found evidence of slave quarters, surmising that faculty who lived on the grounds likely owned these slaves.<sup>376</sup> Many of the slaves who lived at UVa were originally enslaved at Monticello and sold to UVa faculty following Jefferson’s death in 1826.<sup>377</sup> *100 Migrations* is part of the larger project of public reckoning with UVa’s past and the segregation of Charlottesville that it helped engender through its participation with the slave trade. One African-American community performer claimed that “All of this [the residency] has

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>374</sup> Lindsey Turner, “UVa and the Arts: ‘100 Migrations’ Summary and Proposal for Future Guest Projects.” Nonpaginated. Courtesy BTJ/AZ.

<sup>375</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*. See Michael Brawne, *University of Virginia: The Lawn* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994) for Jefferson’s designs of UVa.

<sup>376</sup> See Faulkner, 6-7 for details on this project. Also see Faulkner for description of projects that took place after the *100 Migrations* residency, such as the 2010 South Lawn addition to the campus which is on the land once known as “Canada” because it was a historic neighborhood of freed blacks, as well as the excavation in 2012 of sixty-seven grave markers near the University Cemetery, likely those of slaves.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 4.

a much deeper meaning for people in this region...this is the perfect place for this to be happening.”<sup>378</sup> *100 Migrations* offered a unique opportunity to engage the past, via Lincoln and the legacy of the Emancipation Proclamation, in the present of a community where racial tensions ran high even in the election of Obama, to look towards an uncertain future. Personal histories became a conduit through these temporalities. Doris, an African-American Charlottesville native, performed her familial history as part of the work, standing on one of two podiums flanking Lincoln’s deathbed and telling the story of Paul, a freed black man who signed up to fight in the Civil War after Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. Doris speaks of her own journey to Washington, D.C. to view the African American Civil War Memorial dedicated to the 209,450 black troops who fought in that conflict. She describes searching for Paul’s name in earnest, because he was her great-grandfather. After the performance, Doris is ebullient, overcome with emotion as Jones hands her a bouquet, and looks firmly into the camera as she states, with wonder and pride, “This experience has heightened my sensitivity.”<sup>379</sup> Doris appears hopeful that working through her family’s past in the present will positively change the route of her future by impacting her emotional capacities. This, I think, is *100 Migrations*’ true promise: that through embodied emotion, empathic capacities might be motivated in the direction of progressive change.

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<sup>378</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid. All descriptions of the work itself come from BTJ/AZ’s house recording of the performance, accessed via their New York Live Arts archives.

### 3.5 COMMUNITIES OF GESTURE

In 1896 the Confederate Memorial Literary Society (CMLS) of Richmond, VA, an organization composed of elite white Southern women, founded the Confederate Museum. The Confederate Museum and CMLS as the founders and operators of the Museum aimed to enact “a new source of cultural authority through recording and narrating public memory.”<sup>380</sup> The women of CMLS donated their own families’ Confederate artifacts and mounted a steady stream of lawsuits in attempts to win back for the South items that had been brought north by triumphant Union soldiers. Historian Reiko Hillyer posits that the intense focus the CMLS had on objects was directly related to its ultimate goal of rewriting history: “recognizing that those who controlled historic objects could control historical interpretation, the CMLS sought to redeem Confederate nationalism by repatriating Confederate relics.”<sup>381</sup> In *100 Migrations*, Civil War-era objects make their way to the South via their use as set pieces, placing a marker of the conflict’s most well-known death, that of Lincoln, directly in the center of the piece and near the historic center of the Confederacy. Lincoln’s deathbed anchors the action of *100 Migrations* and inspires choreographies that speak to how we might touch and be touched by the past in material ways. The choreographic focus on touch foregrounds embodied emotion as meaning-maker, connecting past, present, and future through practices of moving and feeling together. In this section I address the specific choreographies of *100 Migrations* and how they inspire empathic response by incorporating both individual and group emotional responses to stimuli and using touch as both an affective and kinesthetic strategy. Dolan writes, “utopian performatives are the received

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<sup>380</sup> Reiko Hillyer, “Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South” (*The Public Historian* 33.4, 2011): 44.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

moment of *gestus*, when those well-delineated, moving pictures of social relations become not only intellectually clear but felt and lived by spectators as well as actors.”<sup>382</sup> Gesture, feeling, and social relationships are the choreographic bedrocks of this piece, fueling its engagement with embodiment and emotion as pathways to reckoning with the past and proposing future action.

Lincoln’s deathbed, flanked by two podiums, is the only set piece for *100 Migrations*. This choice seems practical: one hundred moving bodies is already quite a task for wrangling in space. The bed is center stage, with performers dancing various patterns in groups around it. The performers are dressed in blues and grays, meant to hearken to the Union and Confederate uniforms. Conceptually, the participants were divided into North and South regardless of their personal origins: “it starts as two armies performing maneuvers, then they walk across that bed, circle around the bed, then they disappear [.]”<sup>383</sup> Jones’s description is literal – the circle around the bed is the work’s conclusion, and then the performers leave the stage – but also figurative: the divisions between the two armies melt away as they become a mass milling through the stage toward the exits. The choreography throughout suggests that commemorating Lincoln might be a way through past and current divisions toward a future with less specifically racialized conflict. Through *100 Migrations*, the warring sides not only of society (particularly in a center of the Old South) but also of ourselves, such as Jones’s child and adult selves, might find the space to listen in touch and gesture, to reimagine what Lincoln means for us in a time yearning to be post-racial.

While the primary organizing conceit for the one hundred bodies onstage is that of two armies representing North and South, many other groupings formed the foundation of the work. *100 Migrations* is a work made by and for the Charlottesville community, and its choreography

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<sup>382</sup> 7.

<sup>383</sup> Jones, qtd. in Bromley.

says as much about social relationships within and between individuals and groups as it does about Lincoln's status within this particular community. Hogan writes that, cognitively speaking, when we comprehend characterization in narrative, "the first crucial division...is between us and them, in-group and out-group."<sup>384</sup> This division is based in our own experiences of the social world and need not be a hostile division (though historically it often is), but simply a recognition of the myriad differences that liken people to others (or not). The consequences of in-group and out-group identification can be costly to the social fabric, as "our empathy is inhibited with respect to members of out-groups. This is presumably due in part to a diminished inclination to simulate their experiences and feelings."<sup>385</sup> Empathy is an often other-oriented human ability with the potential to both reinforce and transgress group boundaries. *100 Migrations* uses embodied emotional response to cultivate empathy amongst new group formations that circumvent the boundaries of traditional group identities.

One of the first steps in choreographing this work was the division of the one hundred performers into groups of ten, each led by a member of the company who was one of the ten. Prior to breaking off into these small groups, each performer was given a slip of paper containing a word or phrase from the Gettysburg Address. Groups were organized based solely on where their word fell within the speech. Thus the group composition crossed lines of age, race, gender, and ability since it was not founded upon these distinctions. Jones's mission in creating this work was to adopt as democratic a method as possible for generating choreography: "trying to be as inclusive as possible, it says loads about what the promise of Lincoln was."<sup>386</sup> And indeed perhaps the work's greatest inclusivity is across the boundaries of age and ability; it features

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<sup>384</sup> *Affective Narratology*, 37.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.* Ambady et. al's conclusions also support this claim.

<sup>386</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*.

several performers who make modifications to choreography based on what their particular bodies can achieve. Performers were instructed to “make a shape with the sense of that word,” a gesture that could be easily repeated not only by its particular performer but also by the entire cast.<sup>387</sup> These gestures became “The Hundreds,” with each group responsible for mastering its set of gestures. The gestures themselves are simple abstractions of the participants’ assigned words or phrases – “battlefield,” “unfinished,” “devotion,” and so on.<sup>388</sup> Many involve a change in level, such as lunging towards the floor, accompanied by an arm gesture, such as the action of wrapping one’s arms around a large basket. In teaching their fellow performers’ their gesture, participants were encouraged not only to specify the precise body parts, direction, etc. of the movement, but also its qualitative aspects, whether or not a given gesture should reach, flick, or embrace, for example. The Hundreds demonstrate the clear connection between embodiment and emotion in making meaning out of general experience and also specific histories, such as that of the Civil War represented by the Gettysburg Address. By generating, teaching, and performing their gestures as a group, performers experience embodiment as a route into empathy that can short-circuit the problems of in-group and out-group categorization for empathic response.

The term “empathy” is much contested across humanities, arts, and social sciences disciplines, and my aim here is not to give an exhaustive review.<sup>389</sup> Rather, I look to recent social cognitive and affective neuroscience for a working definition, understanding that our

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<sup>387</sup> Kartemquin footage of *100 Migrations* rehearsal process. Online. Accessed via Youtube 10 December 2013.

<sup>388</sup> The company used Lincoln’s Gettysburg address verbatim, however I quote here from their own internal copy of the *100 Migrations* script from a section called “the swath text.” (The swath refers to the swath of red fabric stretched across the deathbed across which the company traveled during the work’s conclusion.)

<sup>389</sup> See Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (London: Routledge, 2011) for a recent genealogical review of “empathy” as a concept and its relationship to the performing arts.

comprehension of what exactly empathy is and how it works as a human capacity are far from settled both within and without cognitive studies. Hein and Singer distinguish between Theory of Mind – “our ability to understand other people’s beliefs and thoughts” – and empathy – “our ability to share other people’s feelings.”<sup>390</sup> While it appears that ToM and empathy are different processes, it is not clear that they can operate independently of one another: in other words, comprehending another’s beliefs or thoughts is not unrelated, and in fact in all likelihood is inexorably connected to comprehending their feelings. Importantly, empathy is not an emotion but rather a capacity of responding to other people’s emotional states. Empathy does not automatically involve other-oriented action: we can share another’s affective state and know that our affective state was prompted by theirs, however this response need not motivate us to do anything about their affective state, particularly if it is negative. Group membership can influence the likelihood that empathic response becomes actionable, or transforms into what Hein and Singer term *empathic concern*: “defined as an other-oriented response congruent with the perceived distress experienced by another person.”<sup>391</sup> Hein and Singer’s experiments suggest that there are neurological, functional differences “between judging the mental states of similar and dissimilar others,” a finding that supports the work of Ambady et. al regarding identity-based prejudice.<sup>392</sup> Empathic concern is more likely when we perceive someone as belonging to our group. By forming groups based on the random-generation process of the Gettysburg Address division, BTJ/AZ create groups whose social relationships do not rest on racial, gender, or ability identification but rather on a shared task. For participant Lyn-Dell Wood, the group identification became a way to find belonging in the piece, signing her correspondence “Lyn-

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<sup>390</sup> 110.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

Dell 10 in group 1 w Tonio.”<sup>393</sup> Wood identifies herself by her group number but also her gesture number – 10 – and with the group’s leader – Antonio Brown – suggesting that embodiment, emotion, and social relationships are intertwined within Wood’s sense of participation in the work in order to make meaning out of a seemingly arbitrary numerical designation.

Generating their individual choreographies for their words necessarily involved participants’ memories of their encounters with the speech, with Lincoln broadly, and with the legacy of slavery in the United States on familial, regional, and national levels. Doris’s story of her great-grandfather Paul’s history as a freed black soldier in the Civil War is paired with community member Jim Respass’s own familial history. Like Doris, Jim takes the podium and tells a brief story: “In 1861 Lincoln planned to travel from New York to Washington to deliver his first inaugural address...” Lincoln historians will recognize this as the beginning of the story of the Baltimore Plot, an assassination conspiracy headed by white supremacist Cipriano Ferrandini.<sup>394</sup> Jim reveals that Ferrandini was his great-great-grandfather. Doris and Jim’s histories represent opposing sides of the conflict, and it is fitting that their stories take place within the context of Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech, part of which is recited by Janyl Dobson (the narrator for both *Serenade* and *Fondly*) directly preceding Jim and Doris’s stories. During the “House Divided” recitation, company dancers Paul Matteson and Antonio Brown perform a duet, their racial differences (Matteson is white, Brown is black) mirroring the historical context for Lincoln’s speech. They are watched by the ten groups, staged as clumps in

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<sup>393</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ.

<sup>394</sup> See Norma J. Cuthbert’s *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1949) for a history of the Baltimore Plot.



a ring, each group equidistant from Lincoln's deathbed, re-christened "The Resting Place" in the company's choreographic shorthand.

As Matteson and Brown finish their duet and return to their groups, the word "House" begins to repeat. This repetition cues the groups into action: they run through the stage, circling the bed, and begin a section of choreography composed primarily of touch, contact, and weight-sharing. The section includes fast repetition of the group gestures. Hein and Singer propose, in their definition of empathic concern, that the primary method by which empathic concern becomes actionable is by "adopting the other's perspective and...valuing the other's welfare."<sup>395</sup> The motivation of these activities by embodied emotion is made explicit in BTJ/AZ's choreography for the "House Divided" section of *100 Migrations* through the Hundreds and through touch. By learning ninety-nine other performers' gestures, and embodying each gesture, including its emotional motivation, in their own body, performers physically adopt the other's perspective, the other's interpretation of the text. A 2002 study by Batson, Chang, Orr, and Rowland demonstrated that "focusing on a particular group member's feelings...elicited higher levels of empathic concern than did focusing on the facts of the person's situation."<sup>396</sup> The "facts" in the Hundreds start as the words themselves, but the development of these facts into a series of shared gestures likely increases the probability that participants experienced empathic concern towards their fellow performers, as they were asked to take on each other's gestures and understand them qualitatively rather than simply anatomically. Our skills of proprioception, of sensing where our bodies are in space and how to move them, are neurologically intertwined with our capacity for empathic response. Learning others' gestures is a tangible way to

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<sup>395</sup> 116.

<sup>396</sup> Qtd. in John F. Dovidio et. al, "Empathy and Intergroup Relations," in *Prosocial Motives, Emotions, and Behavior*, 395.

empathize with their emotional states. A study by Antonio Damasio of persons with severe brain trauma found that “patients with damage to body-sensing regions of the cerebral cortex would not be capable of [empathy],” and further, that “In the absence of this region [right somatosensory cortices], it is not possible for the brain to simulate other body states effectively.”<sup>397</sup> Because of the embodied nature of emotion, body simulation (both purely neurological but also physicalized simulation, as in the repetition of gesture) is a primary conduit through which we sense others’ emotions. Recognizing emotional qualities shapes how we construct and connect to narratives, or to chained sequences of “facts.” Jim and Doris’s familial relationships to their stories of Cipriano and Paul demonstrate this phenomenon, as we access these histories through the emotions of Jim and Doris as narrators.

The other half of Hein and Singer’s formulation for empathic concern, valuing the other’s welfare, is achieved in *100 Migrations* through choreographies of risk. In this same section, groups perform phrases that include a member of the group being supported and lifted into the air by the rest of their group. This action is accomplished in a variety of ways: in some groups, the individual takes a flying leap into the clump, is caught, and lifted. In other groups, the individual simply falls backward into the group, who catches and supports them. In a third variation the individual, walking through space with the group, is touched by other group members and yields his or her weight, allowing the individual to be lifted continuously as the group moves. These are all situations of risk for the individual in which the possibility for injury is increased over other choreographies. Group members become responsible for the physical welfare of one of their members, performing actions that secure that person’s welfare and are motivated by empathic concern. Significantly, these actions are accomplished through contact,

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<sup>397</sup> *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2003), 116.

through an embodied connection between group members that requires them to literally support each other through touch. The Hundreds repetition and lift sequences are accompanied in this section by weight-sharing within groups as performers use each others' limbs as levers to push and pull through space, and by the sounds of contact: as they run around the bed, performers slap each other's hands, creating a soundscape of touch that reinforces this section's other choreographic choices.

Hein and Singer propose that “the relationship between empathy and actual prosocial behavior is influenced by social factors, such as whether the person in need is seen as a member of one's own or different group.”<sup>398</sup> The “House Divided” choreography centers on sequences of prosocial behavior (through embodied action) within the company groups. However, the formation of these groups is, as described earlier, radically different from typical group distinctions. The *100 Migrations* groups embody Lebow's claim that “Given the proliferation of multiple identities, individuals are likely to belong to multiple memory communities, making contact and cooperation across these communities more feasible.”<sup>399</sup> Contact across communities is literal in the “House Divided” section, as performers touch and share their weight with one another regardless of their group distinctions across age, ability, race, and gender. Their choreographies run counter to the narration of Lincoln's House Divided speech: the divisions embodied by the groups are not based on any salient social rubric, and are porous. As performers run through the space, they cross paths with other groups, momentarily joining their ranks, and then return to their home group. This choreography suggests that maintaining division is a choice – the opposite choice, to fight division, is equally possible. This, in particular, is the great

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<sup>398</sup> 117.

<sup>399</sup> 38.

promise of artistic work: that divisions (which are founded on in group-out group cognitive processing) need not be prescriptive, and that art can embody alternative constructions of community that are not built upon division.

I think this potential for momentary shifts to begin the work of social change relates to the utopian dimension of performance that Dolan articulates, and is indeed reflected in the reactions of performers to their participation in the work: “To be picked up by my group was like going to heaven...it was glorious.”<sup>400</sup> This performer’s response connects embodiment, emotion, and utopian potential within a single moment of choreography. The response also foregrounds the community aspect of the choreography, the fact that the group is responsible for this performer’s positive emotional response because of their embodied support via contact. BTJ/AZ choreograph intersubjectivity, a shared group sense that both cognitive scientists and performance scholars have recognized as a significant phenomenon. The physical mixing-up of groups can indeed have a profound impact on how we understand who we are because of the connection between embodiment and emotion: “*body-based intersubjectivity* – our being with others via bodily expression, gesture, imitation, and interaction – is constitutive of our very identity from our earliest days, and is the birthplace of meaning.”<sup>401</sup> In other words, our abilities to mirror the physicalities of other people (both neurologically through mirror neurons, and in the literalization of learning others’ gestural vocabulary) teach us about who we are in the world. For Dolan, utopian performance uniquely taps into intersubjectivity: “Intersubjectivity extends beyond the binary of performer-spectator...into an affective possibility among members of the

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<sup>400</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*.

<sup>401</sup> Johnson, 51. Emphasis in the original.

audience.”<sup>402</sup> Cognitively speaking, embodiment, emotion (Dolan’s affect), and intersubjectivity are all connected from the beginning; in other words, we do not need to work at intersubjectivity, it is our natural human tendency. However, it is also our tendency to build intersubjectivity with subjects within our group, and to avoid empathic connection with those outside of our group. Thus, *100 Migrations* does offer a unique opportunity to strengthen intersubjectivity (at which we are already quite skilled) between people who have little innate incentive to exhibit prosocial behavior, motivated by empathic response, towards one another.

These opportunities are particularly vital because, as Hein and Singer recognize, in-group and out-group identifications are persistent and strong in their abilities to promote division; thus, they cannot be erased but rather worked against in creative ways, such as we see in *100 Migrations*. Any utopian dimension of progressive action at work in a reading of this piece is necessarily balanced by the reality that exclusionary forms of identification and community formation will persist as a formative element of how humans understand the social world. It is worthwhile to think of progress, here, in Kitcher’s terms, which are not bound up in a progressive/conservative binary but rather position “the concept of ethical progress in the discharging of functions, originating with the problem of remedying failures of altruism [.]”<sup>403</sup> In Kitcher’s view, the ethical project arose from our human failures at altruism, our inability to consistently act in another’s interest, that were hindering the advancement of social morality. Ethical progress can be made when given actions, policies, and behaviors are seen as “promoting altruistic responses to marginalized people whose most basic desires have previously not been

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<sup>402</sup> 31.

<sup>403</sup> 7.

met.”<sup>404</sup> However, “stratified societies create conditions under which it is harder to recognize when the original function of ethics [the remedying of altruism failures] is not being fulfilled.”<sup>405</sup> In Charlottesville, town-gown and black-white have been binaries of group membership that have negatively stratified society and its ability to progress beyond these divisions, making the work of *100 Migrations* vital to the shared goals of UVa and Charlottesville to repair these relationships via complete revision. Responses from audience members suggest a forward momentum connected to emotional responses to the piece: “When it was over I felt this emotional surge that I wasn’t expecting.”<sup>406</sup> This spectator, speaking to the Kartemquin Films crew during their documentary process, embodies the emotional surge that she verbally articulates through tears and upturned corners of the mouth – her body expresses the intensity and positive quality of the emotions she experienced as a spectator. Her language of “surge” connects to movement and the possibility of emotions to literally move us. This comment, taken together with performers and fellow spectators’ reflections on the significance of the work specifically for the Charlottesville region, forms a matrix of responses that reflects the possibility of the arts to contribute to social and cultural change.<sup>407</sup> The space of performance, however, can be a rarefied one, and it is the challenge of moving progressive experiences from this space into the larger social world that Jones addresses in his incorporation of the community into the generation and performance of *100 Migrations*.

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>406</sup> Kartemquin Films footage from BTJ/AZ DVD copy of *100 Migrations*.

<sup>407</sup> Johnson writes, “When the arts are misconceived as a minor, nonpractical, wholly subjective dimension of human life, aesthetics becomes merely a tertiary enterprise having little perceived relevance to the nature of mind and cognition” (xi). This perceived irrelevance is countered by *100 Migrations* in its connection between choreography, community, and cognition.

### 3.6 A GENIUS PUBLIC

*100 Migrations* offers its participants the opportunity to become interpreters of the past through explicit recognition of embodiment and emotion as meaning-making processes. However, performers' interpretations, like those of all historians, are necessarily situated in a present that is partially defined by what it is moving towards – the future. The connection between past, present, and future is essential for conceiving of the past as potentially usable. Returning to the Confederate Museum of the mid-1800s, its display of Old South artifacts “might suggest that the Civil War was not a past usable to the task of sectional reconciliation.”<sup>408</sup> *100 Migrations* also participates in a task of reconciliation through revision, through reimagining how we might use the past in service of healing present divisions as we look to a more utopian future. This work utilizes a creative choreographic methodology of creating archives out of archives – of developing a series of gestures inspired by the archive of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address that in turn became an archive of Charlottesville community responses to history that were developed via embodiment, emotion, and memory. These gestures were then drawn upon, selected for the narrative of *100 Migrations* just as any historian must make selections from a given archive to suit her or his narrative of the past. Lebow writes, “Memory is the new paradigm of history, overpowering and restructuring other frames of reference like class and gender.”<sup>409</sup> This may be true in terms of trends in academic historical practice, but as Rosenzweig and Thelen found out in their study of American citizens, memory, particularly remembering familial and regional histories, is inexorably connected to an individual's sense of class, race, and gender membership. Modes of commemoration and remembrance are not equally available across all group

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<sup>408</sup> Hillyer, 57.

<sup>409</sup> 26.

distinctions within the social structure – the ladies of the CMLS clearly felt this way when building their Confederate Museum. Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin found that in situations of collaborative memory, i.e. group attempts at constructing a narrative of the past, individuals who did not contribute (or felt they could not) in the present task of storytelling were less likely to speak up in the future as well, thus effectively silencing particular histories: “Silence – or not contributing recall output – during collaboration can have lasting consequences. That is, memories not recalled during collaboration might not necessarily rebound in later recall.”<sup>410</sup> I am interested in how the *100 Migrations* performers use their individuated embodiment, in all its possibilities for division (along lines of race, gender, ability, etc.), to remember Lincoln and to project future configurations of community.

A key moment in the piece for understanding how the individual and community fit together via embodiment is its conclusion structured around the artifact of “The Resting Place,” Lincoln’s deathbed. In this section performers walk across a red path that stretches diagonally across the bed, pausing in the center to perform their gesture and syncing up with Janyl Dobson’s recitation of the Gettysburg Address, called “The Swath Text” by the company. Performers vary widely in their delivery of the gesture. Some find the center spot, prepare, and then go into the gesture, others arrive center while simultaneously beginning the gesture. Some performers add dynamics to their gesture, crafting tempo and direction in specific ways that they feel manifest the text. Others also deliberately add facial expressions as an element of interpreting the text – these are usually positive, such as calm smiles, but also include furrowed brows and eyes squeezed tightly shut during words like “death,” “war,” and “battle-field.” Many performers are unused to public performance, and look at the ground for the duration of their

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<sup>410</sup> 659.



walk across the deathbed. For the community participants of this work, their walk across the bed is the only “solo” moment of the piece, which undoubtedly heightened nerves. For Jones, the bed is a device that supports the notion of a usable past: “I’m going to give that bed to the community, so the highest aspirations about culture will become a footpath on the man’s deathbed.”<sup>411</sup> Jones’s words imply that the Gettysburg Address, frequently used in public sphere rhetoric, has become a speech on a pedestal far removed from actual lived experience. The Hundreds are an attempt to make the speech usable, to make the image of Lincoln as tragic hero useful to people’s processes of understanding the past. The Hundreds, performed on the functional footpath of Lincoln’s deathbed, are generated through an embodied, emotional connection to the past that utilizes collaborative memorial processes for which “the goal is not so much to enhance memory accuracy, but...to arrive at a shared representation of the past.”<sup>412</sup>

BTJ/AZ’s visit to UVa was a cornerstone event in the university’s new push to enhance the institution’s profile and commitment to arts education and programming. As part of the company’s residency, Jones was invited to deliver the inaugural lecture for UVa’s newly initiated Assembly for the Arts. In his lecture, Jones argued that rather than the notion of a genius artist, “What is needed today is a genius public [.]”<sup>413</sup> Jones elaborated on this concept in a following public interview with Deborah McDowell, connecting the work of the performers to the work of the spectators: “I am hoping that there is somebody out there who can see it [potential for change], and more importantly, as an artist speaking, who can *feel* it – that’s what I believe in, a kind of emotional intelligence.”<sup>414</sup> Rather than a genius public composed of

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<sup>411</sup> Jones qtd. in Anne Bromley, “Art Isn’t Just the Pursuit of Beauty,” nonpaginated.

<sup>412</sup> Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin, 658.

<sup>413</sup> Jones in Bromley, nonpaginated.

<sup>414</sup> *UVa Today* podcast, emphasis mine.

communities who know their history, who can recite facts in the proper order, Jones advocates instead for a public with the capacity to move and be moved, to feel history so that the past might be immediate and urgent in our own bodies. This is Jones's ultimate aim with *100 Migrations*: "I want people to leave having some sense of being moved. Something touch them, at least one image touch them."<sup>415</sup>

Our very concept of "being moved" necessarily depends upon the embodiment-emotion relationship universal to human experience. The sense of being moved is literal for the spectator: as we watch fellow community members being lifted, locomoted, caught, supported – literally being moved – we also feel a sense of movement due to our mirror neuron system. Put simply, mirror neurons allow our bodies to simulate actions that we see others doing without actually performing those actions in the moment – a neurological imitation. Mirror neurons are a relatively recent area of neuroscientific study and have so far been located in the left frontal and parietal lobes of the brain. Experiments by Vittorio Gallese and others have demonstrated that when we watch another person grasp for a glass, the same neurons fire in our own bodies that would allow us to perform that action without our needing to actually execute a grasping action.<sup>416</sup> Because of the link between embodiment and emotion, mirror neurons also play a role in empathic concern.

Much of our ability to empathize with others develops through our ability to read facial expressions of emotion and other corporeal signs of emotional response. A study by social psychologist Paula Niedenthal found that the connection between emotion and embodiment occurs at the neurological level with respect to the functioning of mirror neurons. Often we read

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> See Marco Iacoboni's *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect With Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008) for a recent and thorough review of mirror neuron research and its implications.

others' emotions through facial expressions of basic emotional responses that undergird almost all expression, subconsciously mimicking what we perceive in others (think of the social contagion of laughter and tears, and of the universal tendency in infant development for infants to mimic the facial expressions of parents, causing adults to easily smile and coo at babies so that they might also smile). In Niedenthal's study, participants were asked to detect changes in others' facial expressions. One half of the group was tasked with holding a pencil in their teeth during the exercise. This group, hampered physically by the pencil and unable to mimic, was significantly less able to detect subtle emotional shifts in others, leading Niedenthal to conclude that "Mimicking others is not just a form of communicating nonverbally; it helps us to perceive others' expressions (and therefore their emotions) in the first place."<sup>417</sup> Additional studies by Jonathan Cole similarly support the notion that embodiment and emotion are inextricably linked: "those born with Moebius syndrome, a congenital inability to move the muscles of the face, report not only the altered ability to communicate felt emotions, but also the inability to read emotions in others."<sup>418</sup> Other actions deliberately associated with heightened emotional experiences – like hugging, cradling, and other modes of touch – inspire similar mirror neuron responses of either simulation or mimicry. Being moved and being touched are similar concepts, both implying that our emotional response system has been activated by an outside stimulus. The connection between movement, emotion, and touch is strongly articulated in the choreography of *100 Migrations*, as being touched and being moved are literal actions with consequences for heightening emotional intelligence. By proposing new choreographies of feeling and moving within non-normative group formations, the participants in *100 Migrations* might actually

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 115.

change spectators' minds by causing unusual mirror neuronal responses.<sup>419</sup> In fact, this work suggests that a genius public might be fostered by the radical notion of corporeal/emotional intelligence. I return to a notion Jones articulates in different terms in his interview with Bill Moyers: "maybe they'll [the spectators] leave the theatre with a little bit more freedom in their bodies, not so afraid of their bodies and afraid of other bodies, but also, ah, the possibilities of how I [they] might live."<sup>420</sup> Since the performers in *100 Migrations* interact and support one another's bodies without legible corporeal expressions of fear but rather those of affection, warmth, and care (especially in choreographies of risk), it's likely that due partially to our mirror neuron system, spectators would experience simulations of these emotional qualities, rather than fear, an emotion strongly inspired by group identification and prejudice.

Many participants and spectators used the language of being moved to talk about their experience with *100 Migrations*. Jim Respass, who performed the story of his great-great-grandfather's assassination attempt on Lincoln, wrote to the company after the residency concluded, "Those who were there were truly moved and awestruck by the power of the piece."<sup>421</sup> Julia Rhondeau, a Charlottesville community member and spectator, wrote:

Dear Mr. Jones, I brought my 16 year old daughter to see the performance at U-Hall in Charlottesville VA on Sunday. I cannot express how *moved* we were by every element of 100 Migrations. Words music movement spirit...all inspirational. Might I suggest that you take your artwork...right to the heart of the matter. On the Mall in D.C. perhaps at the Lincoln Memorial with all the members of Congress the Supreme Court and the President in attendance. 100 Migrations needs to be *felt* especially now.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Importantly, minds change all of the time; mirror neuron changes may not necessarily lead to altered memory, however they are part of a variety of cognitive processes related to empathy and thus support the company's work engaging history through embodied emotion.

<sup>420</sup> "Bill T. Jones Re-imagines Lincoln Through Dance."

<sup>421</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ.

<sup>422</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ. Emphasis mine.

Rhondeau's comments suggest that, for her, the value of *100 Migrations* lies in its ability to move people through movement, to inspire emotional response through its choreographic strategy of embodied emotion. Rhondeau also proposes that the mode of spectatorship the work encourages is one of feeling, of engaging with history through emotional response. Her sense of the work's engagement with history is clear in her connection between its choreography and the past, represented by the Lincoln Memorial, and the present, found in current elected officials. Her correspondence with the company suggests that *100 Migrations* should be felt by those in our highest offices not because it reflects historical facts, or celebrates Lincoln, our national hero, but rather because of its potential to catalyze social change, an idea with increasing visibility and traction "especially now," in the days after Obama's election.

BTJ/AZ has historically been associated with cultural debates, perceived as engaging as much with social issues as with modern dance aesthetics. Jones commented in 1997 that "we [the company] attract a number of people who see my persona as being about social change."<sup>423</sup> While Jones seems ambivalent in this interview (and a review of the company's repertory immediately preceding and following the interview indicates a choreographic focus on form and aesthetics rather than on historical revision), by 2008 the relationship between the company's aesthetic and its thematic concern with social issues is proudly articulated: "Our mantra: What is at stake here?...What's at stake now has to do with what I call the discourse – the ongoing way in which the society attempts to know itself."<sup>424</sup> In the Lincoln trilogy, BTJ/AZ focus on historical discourse – the ways in which American communities attempt to know themselves through

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<sup>423</sup> "Bill T. Jones in Conversation With Thelma Golden," 132-3.

<sup>424</sup> "What's at stake?" In *Further Steps 2: Fourteen Choreographers on What's the RAGE in Dance?* Ed. Constance Kreemer (London: Routledge, 2008), 104.

endowing the past with meaning.<sup>425</sup> What's at stake in *100 Migrations* is the role of the past in the present and future, and how embodiment and emotional response address intergroup relationships. Thus the work is not simply a choreographic reflection of universal human capacities of embodied cognition: rather, it suggests that what is valuable about emotional response and embodiment (manifested in touch and movement) is its potential for actionability, for *moving* people towards social change through moving them around the stage (and simulating that movement in spectators).

Katherine Birdsall, a Charlottesville resident who attended *100 Migrations*, said as much in her reflection on the performance: "After witnessing multiple community moments, I realized how this was a catalyst for relations, and the enormous potential evoked by the events of the week."<sup>426</sup> I would argue that the work's reception as potentially transformative rests not only on its ability to choreograph through embodied emotion but also on its clear representation of embodied agents, of community members who make a physical choice to support one another regardless of group identification and who use their bodies in the development of The Hundreds to forge a new group identity. Hogan claims that humans have "agent-based imagination," wherein instead of "imagining some situation, then working backward to agency," we start with agents themselves and imagine their capacities for action.<sup>427</sup> This makes sense given our cognitive abilities with regard to making sense of human interaction. Think back to the *100 Migrations* performer's assertion that being picked up by his group was like going to heaven. In this scenario it is the actions of agents, his fellow group members, which lead to his experience

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<sup>425</sup> I think it is more a fault of our language that Jones's use of "know" might appear to replicate a Cartesian dualism between knowledge and feeling – it is clear from his interviews and the company's practices that feeling and emotional response are generative of knowledge in the company's view.

<sup>426</sup> UVa's institutional assessment on the *100 Migrations* residency, non-paginated, courtesy BTJ/AZ.

<sup>427</sup> *How Authors' Minds*, 36.

of a heaven-like situation.<sup>428</sup> Another observer, UVa Professor of Art Larry Goedde, commented that “Seeing the participants flocking around Pat [an eighty year-old woman who, due to her use of a cane, modified the choreography with the assistance of BTJ/AZ dancer Erick Montés as her partner]...during performance, I realized how many people were involved and the extraordinary achievement of bringing the performance together in such a short time, and the degree to which the community pulled together to make it all happen.”<sup>429</sup> Goedde’s observation articulates the embodied emotional cognitive processes present in the work and in Goedde’s own body that make meaningful his experience as a spectator. Goedde claims that it is watching the performers “flocking” that leads to his realization of the vast number of participants and the scale of the work’s achievement. Flocking is a cardinal choreographic technique both in terms of ensemble-building and generating actual choreography that derives from the imitation of bird-like patterns of movement. Flocking implies being part of a group and of moving together toward a shared point in time and space, which we cognitively interpret as a shared goal. Watching the flocking section of the choreography (which closely precedes the Resting Place sequence), Goedde’s mirror neurons likely kicked in, simulating the sensation of moving as part of a group. The goal of flocking as a dance exercise is to build a group sensibility, where leadership in terms of direction, tempo, and movement shifts seamlessly as the group changes its facing, and is ideally undetectable due to the synchronicity of the group. This notion of shared leadership between a relatively large number of agents is connected cognitively to the movement of flocking, and is likely what Goedde picks up on as a spectator through his own internal simulation of the action.

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<sup>428</sup> We also have a particularly illustrative example of the cognitive foundations of metaphor in embodiment and emotion here: the literal sensation of support and elevation coupled with the emotional feeling of happiness lead this performer to use the concept of “heaven” metaphorically to describe his experience.

<sup>429</sup> UVa institutional assessment, courtesy BTJ/AZ.

Goedde uses the language of “pulled together” to describe what he saw; this is a clear example of the role of embodied emotion in the cognitive development of metaphor. The *100 Migrations* performers do, quite literally, pull together as part of the work’s movement vocabulary, and this leads to a sense of shared group ambition that, due to the compositional technique used in creating the groups, extends beyond traditional demographic boundaries. “Pulling together” and “flocking” are also activities that can only describe the movement of agents. Recall the discussion of Eliza 4 in Chapter Two: our perception of human beings as agents, as “actants,” relies heavily on embodiment and our ability to ascribe authorship of an action to a given agent. Because the performers are the agents of their movement, it is easier for spectators, such as Birdsall and Goedde, to infer that the motivation that inspires the performers’ group choreographies resides within the performers, rather than the situation of performance, and thus might continue into future community interactions.

One of the historian’s chief tasks, as reiterated often in these pages, is the comprehension of causality, which often takes the form of shaping narrative. Understanding how past events have caused present conditions of experience is the traditional representation of causality in the work of historians; however, *100 Migrations* suggests that our representations of the past and understanding of their causal role in our present allows for projecting causality, for forecasting how the present might cause and contribute to various future outcomes. My concern is with the unique social emotional processes that happen when we organize ourselves into groups and communities, and with how these profoundly embodied processes point the way toward future change. In review of recent social neuroscience Leary claims that, “positive and negative emotions are mediated by different systems of the brain and have markedly different effects on



attention, judgment, motivation, and action readiness [.]”<sup>430</sup> Because of their distinct physical locations in the body, positive and negative emotions (including social emotions) can be effectively targeted, elicited, and strengthened by specific stimuli. I find this research incredibly promising, as it indicates that social ills such as prejudice (which results from a systemic adoption of the human tendency toward bias) can be affected by experiences that re-route emotional response. Studies by Dovidio et. al found that “intergroup behavior [essentially what we mean when talking about ‘community’] is motivated substantially by affective reactions,”<sup>431</sup> and further noted “the potential of interventions that generate empathy for improving intergroup attitudes and reducing intergroup bias.”<sup>432</sup> Eventually the authors commit to the terminology of causality, positioning their work as investigating “the causal role of empathy in prejudice reduction.”<sup>433</sup> This research suggests that experiences like *100 Migrations* which, through embodiment in both participants as movers and spectators as active observers, instigate empathic concern across intergroup lines can actually support prejudice reduction, a clear aim of the BTJ/AZ residency in the eyes of UVa and the company itself.

My intention is not to paint an overly rosy picture of community: certainly formations of community foster bias as much as they might reduce it (see the Civil War as a clear example). Addressing communal notions of history and the past, Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin’s study on collaborative memory illustrated that group interactions inhibited accuracy in remembering events, positing the “retrieval disruption hypothesis” wherein individual processes of memory recall are disrupted at the point of retrieval by group presence and interaction. Further, “the

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<sup>430</sup> 339.

<sup>431</sup> 394.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 395.

retrieval disruption hypothesis predicts more disruption during collaboration as group size increases,”<sup>434</sup> certainly not reassuring in the case of *100 Migrations* even considering the company’s wise choice to reorganize into smaller groups. Dovidio et. al’s research also showed that empathic concern was not a band aid for all social ills: “well-intentioned actions of an outgroup member toward a stigmatized target may have little impact on intergroup behavior if perceivers hold chronic negative expectations concerning the outgroup [.]”<sup>435</sup> For example, consider the “white savior” complex wherein white group members offer well-intentioned actions toward black group members, a stigmatized group within a U.S. context. These actions often bolster the larger social attitude toward whites by ascribing empathy to them rather than positively affecting the negative expectations of the behavior of black group members. Further, Dovidio et. al found that enduring experiences of racism could cause an inability to engage in prosocial emotion, or “the consequential effects of Blacks’ discriminatory expectations of bias and interracial exposure on their prosocial responses [.]”<sup>436</sup> Cultural critic Miranda Joseph argues that “Fetishizing community only makes us blind to the ways we might intervene in the enactment of domination and exploitation” and Dovidio et. al’s research supports this assertion in its demonstration of the possibility for intergroup relationships to foster rather than reduce prejudice.<sup>437</sup>

However, I am not convinced that we should throw the notion of community out the window simply because some of its formations do not work towards a progressive future. In fact, what research into embodied cognition shows is that we are not bound to a specific vision of the

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<sup>434</sup> 653.

<sup>435</sup> 403.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>437</sup> ix.

future, but rather the body-mind's very changeability gives us great agency in the present to causally affect future experiences of community. What is needed is experiences of actual empathic concern; Leary concludes that while it's certainly easier to empathize with in-group members, similarity "is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition"<sup>438</sup> for empathy, rather "taking the perspective of an outgroup member...or focusing on the person's feelings reduces intergroup prejudice and bias."<sup>439</sup> The Hundreds specifically do this very thing, requiring participants to embody another person's interpretation of a shared task and in doing so collapse group distinctions by forming groups based on empathic concern.

I contend that *100 Migrations* proposes valuable formations of community in terms of their potential for future change because it is a generative, rather than imitative, choreographic process. In Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin's study they note that scientific understanding of collaborative memorial processes are not perfect: "nearly all the studies have tested collaborative processes at the retrieval stage. This is surprising because in real life, people routinely experience new events together."<sup>440</sup> In Rajaram and Pereira-Pasarin's study, participants were asked to recall facts of the past (both historical and personal) while in a group setting and then to arrive at a shared narrative of these past events. Here the authors make the distinction between, on the one hand, retrieving memories of past facts in a group setting and, on the other, experiencing collaborative memory *as a group*, or generating new interpretations of the past not through individual recall but through group creation. The work's conclusion gives a good sense of how group experiences of new events relate to interpreting the past. After walking across the Resting Place (the "footpath" for the community in Jones's terms), participants formed circles around the

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<sup>438</sup> 116.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>440</sup> 657.

bed. The inner circle stood right next to the bed, bending forward and reaching out to touch the bed. A second circle formed directly outside of the first, connected by placing hands on neighbors' backs. This tight boundary of bodies ends up a few layers deep, and the close proximity leads performers to lean completely against one another and support this action through touch. The effect is of a single mass pressing towards the bed with a united energy. The bed becomes absorbed into this effort of maintaining connection. This conclusion offers two interrelated practices of making the past meaningful in the present, both structured through the phenomenon of embodied cognition. The first is of the usable past – the notion of the bed as a footpath that allows for individual action and interpretation, where the past (in the shape of the bed) touches us as we move through the present. The second is of the past as an energy that can be re-routed through embodied emotion, manifested in the community's literal and figurative touching of one another and touching of the past as they press their hands onto the bed's surface; this action generates forward momentum, we get the sense that this expression of community is not, in fact an end-point (though it may structurally be the work's conclusion) but rather a beginning. This effect "lets audiences imagine utopia not as some idea of future perfection that might never arrive, but as brief enactments of the possibilities of a process that starts now."<sup>441</sup>

Many performers and spectators articulated the role of *100 Migrations* as inspiring to future activities in the public sphere of Charlottesville, UVa, and beyond. Charlottesville citizen and environmental activist Betty Mooney attended *100 Migrations* and referenced the piece in her call-to-action for cleaning up the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir: "The effort to bring this issue [clean water] to a level of importance that would capture the *hearts* and minds of our elected officials began as Bill T. Jones the wonderful choreographer in town this week creating a

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<sup>441</sup> Dolan, 17.

work about [what] Lincoln said as a voice in the wilderness.”<sup>442</sup> Mooney’s description of the future action that *100 Migrations* might inspire specifically uses the language of embodied emotion, the heart, and echoes Julia Rhondeau’s assertion that *100 Migrations* “needs to be felt.” For performer Jim Respass, his participation in the residency re-shaped his relationship to the historical past through foregrounding his familial connection to the events of American history. Respass was moved to dive into his great-great-grandfather’s forgotten archive: “I have his induction papers into the Knights of the Golden Circle as well as his naturalization papers from January of 1860 and the story just seems to keep growing. I have contacts in Baltimore who are going to try and find the addresses of the houses that he stayed in and I’ll probably make a trip up there to take a look.”<sup>443</sup> Mooney and Respass both express the idea that history is something we understand and that shapes present and future experience through heart and through body, through being moved and moving. UVa’s internal interpretation of the residency demonstrates that using embodied emotion as a choreographic strategy for engaging with the past does work in terms of demonstrating the arts’ relevance to social life: “The company’s presence at UVa...instilled a sense of value for the arts...and created an avenue for communication between UVa and the greater Charlottesville community.”<sup>444</sup> The activities of revising history are clearly understood as impacting not only the past and present, but the future as well. In Lindsey Turner’s summary of the project after the fact for UVa, she justifies the residency’s “University-wide” designation (which allowed access to greater funds and promotional resources) claiming, “These events are not the standard artist-in-residency, but something that aims to be ground-breaking and different – something that hopes to answer a new question, propose a new model, or do

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<sup>442</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ. Emphasis mine.

<sup>443</sup> Personal communication. Courtesy BTJ/AZ.

<sup>444</sup> UVa institutional assessment, courtesy BTJ/AZ.

something completely different.”<sup>445</sup> Indeed the residency did propose a new model for making the past meaningful in the present by choreographing embodied emotion, a cognitive reality for all humans trans-historically, within an intergroup context that worked against historical modes of prejudice specific to Charlottesville and the American public sphere.

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<sup>445</sup> Turner, 10.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION: MOVING BEYOND THE REIGN OF REASON

*To live is to live in history. And history as we know it consists of a series of threats.*<sup>446</sup>

*Few can be induced to labor exclusively for posterity; and none will do it enthusiastically...What an ignorance of human nature does it exhibit, to ask or expect a whole community to rise up and labor for the temporal happiness of others, after themselves shall be consigned to the dust...Great distance, in either time or space, has wonderful power to lull and render quiescent the human mind.*<sup>447</sup>

Abraham Lincoln delivered the above speech to a Temperance Society in 1842 on the occasion of the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Washington's birthday, criticizing what he felt were sweeping, strict attempts at curtailing heavy drinking and the mayhem that occasionally ensued. Lincoln instead advocated persuasion through reasoning with drunkards, through feats of rhetoric that would make clear the logical self-interest in sobriety as a social policy. Lincoln recognized what many of the social neuroscientists cited in these pages have empirically concluded: humans are intrinsically self-interested and it is challenging to develop consistently altruistic behaviors. Even when working with others on a shared goal, such as a shared representation of the past in

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<sup>446</sup> Rokem, x.

<sup>447</sup> Lincoln, "The Temperance Address" (David Lowenthal, *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 34-35. Emphasis in original.

Rajaram and Periera-Pasarin's study, "people recall details during a conversation to meet specific goals. People select certain details (as opposed to other details) to resolve conflicts, to selectively endorse or silence information, to entertain the listeners, to obtain feedback, or to achieve certain communication goals."<sup>448</sup> Our behavior in the social world is self-interested; this is not a criticism of our species, rather a reality which causes certain tendencies (such as in-group out-group divisions) to be stronger than others (such as identification across group boundaries). Thus what Kitcher calls the "ethical project" is a continuous process, never reaching a true utopian expression of the ethical good, yet still made worthwhile in its workings as a process rather than a product. Similarly, Amy Cook notes that "The power of a great play is not located in what it means, but in how its meaning is made and remade over time and generations."<sup>449</sup> Process, rather than product, becomes the site of actual results: continuing to commit to, as Kitcher would say, remedying altruism failures, or revising previous meanings of a play (or a novel, as in the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) is where the work happens. For Jones, process and product are inseparable, and his belief that "You don't make a distinction truly between what you practice and what you produce" could be seen as an ethical stance towards art-making.<sup>450</sup>

I found this emphasis on process over product to function as the company's ethic of art-making during my experiences with BTJ/AZ in their summer 2012 workshop at Skidmore College. This workshop focused on the collaborative process of BTJ/AZ and SITI Company as they built a new work inspired by the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. For me, the residency foregrounded Cook's observation that a work's significance lies in its continually remade meaning through my own embodied re-making of specific phrasework from the BTJ/AZ

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<sup>448</sup> 658.

<sup>449</sup> "Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre" (*Theatre Journal* 59, 2007): 581.

<sup>450</sup> "Bill T. Jones in Conversation with Thelma Golden," 127.



repertory. My revisions of these phrases were placed in conversation with the company's revisions, creating a network of reimagined choreographies that reinforced a notion of the value of process over product: the revisions themselves taught me less about art-making than the revising. During the residency my days were split between mornings spent working on technical aspects of the company's approach to movement and afternoons spent learning their choreographic methodology and specific repertory. Split into two groups, we dancers primarily learned Jones's solos from early in the company's repertory: *Duet II*, *Donn*, and *Nebraska* embody several of the "core" Jones traits, including sequential initiation, emphasis on the pelvis locomoting through space, and intricate footwork. We also learned BTJ/AZ dancer Jenna Riegel's solo from *Story/Time*, a 2010 work that includes dancer-generated solos but also revised phrasework from *Nebraska*, *Duet II*, and *Donn*. We were given the same task that Jones had given the company in the building of *Story/Time*: to remake the earlier solos with specific limitations (staying in a grid, for example, or working only with high and mid-levels). These exercises were preparations for our group revision of *Continuous Replay*, a 1991 work that lifts its gestural vocabulary directly from a 1977 solo by Arnie Zane.

*Continuous Replay* is a marathon of focus, one that was exhilarating but which I fell short of many times during our rehearsals. The piece consists of precise sequential repetition of thirty gestures that progress, beginning painstakingly slowly but with increasing speed, on a grid pattern across the stage. The piece begins with a single dancer and exponentially adds the rest of the company, usually expanded in performance as an "alumni" piece, where previous company dancers come back to join in. The gestures are performed sequentially, building upon one another: 1, 1-2, 1-2-3, etc. Once the company has reached particular numbers (for example 16, or 25), the rules of the piece change to incorporate improvised moments of stillness, tempo shifts,

and other in-the-moment choreographic revisions. Thus each performance of *Continuous Replay* is both highly structured (this is the reason that company members from all periods of the company's repertory can perform it together with minimal, if any, rehearsal) and never the same as another performance. Importantly for us in the residency, rehearsals of the piece included both mind-numbing speed-throughs of the gesture sequence and moment after moment of surprise, where improvisations would take the piece in a new direction before snapping it back onto the grid. Our bodies became archives of the company's history in learning and revising *Continuous Replay*: we embodied Zane's original gestures from 1977 (themselves a markedly different, much more angular aesthetic from Jones's) as well as Jones's 1991 revision of the gestures into a structure for a group, rather than a solo (this done to commemorate Zane's passing), and finally our own revisions that we arrived at as a newly-formed, ephemeral company. We improvised within the piece but also built structured revisions that were performed as their own works. We connected to the absent Zane, to the present company of BTJ/AZ, and to ourselves as a briefly united band of artists by taking on each other's gestural vocabularies, similar to the work of the Hundreds in *100 Migrations*.

This, then, is the value (artistically, cognitively, socially) of the work of BTJ/AZ: a rehearsal of our capacities for empathy through embodied emotion. The company's methods of using embodied emotion as a route into making work are what set their endeavors apart from other artistic attempts. Moreover, their archival repertory is a distinct set of works within this rehearsal of empathy because the stakes are so very high: none less than our social world's attempt to know itself through understanding the past and forecasting into the future. Martha Nussbaum claims, "the role of the arts in human life...[is] that of nourishing and extending the

capacity for empathy.”<sup>451</sup> Play is a chief method of exercising the actions Nussbaum describes, reimagined in the work of BTJ/AZ as playing through the use of revising stories (as in *Last Supper* and *Fondly*), playing with counterfactuals (as in *Serenade* and *Last Supper*) and playing as reorganization of social hierarchies (as in *100 Migrations*). In Cook’s summary of mirror neurons and their relationship to language, she notes that “The fact that the brain exploits sensory-motor neurons to understand abstract concepts or poetic language suggests that language makes us feel, not by communicating a final feeling-state, but by activating our own experience of that state. *Imagining* and *understanding* are the same thing [.]”<sup>452</sup> The neuronal activation and the original experiences by which those neural maps are shaped are, of course, impossible without our lived reality of embodied emotion. Imaginatively revising the past is a way of understanding the past, of reckoning with its presence in the present, and of fashioning a vision of the future. Lincoln closed his Temperance Address with a rousing call: “Happy day, when, all appetites controlled, all poisons subdued, all matter subjected, *mind*, all-conquering *mind*, shall live and move the monarch of the world...Reign of reason, all hail!”<sup>453</sup> This utopian vision has, obviously, not come to pass (and certainly did not exist during later attempts at Prohibition!). Appealing to reason cannot be done without appealing to emotion, as the two are codependent functionally; Lincoln’s own passionate address is evidence enough of this reality, in addition to all of the cognitive scientific hypotheses within this study that support this point.

Often we see appeals to reason in situations of high stakes and as ways of legitimating and authorizing particular arguments. Rokem writes of “our sense of the historical past as a series of tragic failures of basic human values,” a concept that jives with Kitcher’s argument of

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<sup>451</sup> *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 101.

<sup>452</sup> 589.

<sup>453</sup> 38.

ethics and values as functional social technologies that respond to altruism failures.<sup>454</sup> History is embedded in the negotiation of right and wrong, good and bad, as are all human endeavors due to how we make sense of the world around us. These assessments cannot be grounded in some notion of “pure reason,” much as Lincoln might like, as processes of reasoning are necessarily motivated by emotional responses grounded in our embodied experience of the natural and social world. The cognitive scientific framework I have adopted here is, I think, essential in framing why artistic attempts at historical revision are significant in gleaning meaning from human endeavor, and particularly *how* BTJ/AZ’s work in this area achieves its efficacy. However, I recognize that the language and epistemologies of empirical science can too often sway into prescriptive truths, and have been used to do so in the historical situations under discussion throughout this study: consider the initiatives of the Confederate Museum Ladies’ Society, wherein “the publications of the CMLS employed the scientific language of the day and expressed the faith the organization had in uncovering objective historical truth through the collection and display of physical evidence.”<sup>455</sup> Placing dance, historiography, and cognitive science into the same conversation reveals, I think, as much about what the artists have to say to scientists as scientists do to artists. Namely, that analyzing how cognitive scientific theories of embodiment and emotion play out in the specific situations represented in the processes and performances of BTJ/AZ’s works foregrounds the necessary shifts in “culture” that are part and parcel of the biocultural reality cognitive science uncovers. I share with Cook the belief that “Interdisciplinary work requires that scholars be bilingual – it does not require them to be converts...A ‘theoretical’ position (whether within the sciences or the humanities) is not less

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<sup>454</sup> 1.

<sup>455</sup> Hillyer, 49.

valid for lacking empirical data, but it should be responsible to and refutable by a network of studies and theories with which it remains in dialogue.”<sup>456</sup>

Rokem’s epigraph here conceives of history as a series of threats to the social fabric, a series of profound altruism failures. His observation that “to live is to live in history” rings true in Jones’s perception in *Last Supper* of racial inequality as a present reality that can be traced back partially to the worldview present in the historical circumstances surrounding the generation of Stowe’s novel. BTJ/AZ’s reimagining of the past is simultaneously a revision of present orientations towards threats to the social fabric (and certainly the perception that something is a “threat” is bioculturally-influenced). Using embodied emotion as a route into the relationship between the past, present, and future heightens possibilities for the rehearsal of empathy and, particularly in *100 Migrations*, argues for “the effectiveness of establishing a common group identity for promoting intergroup helping,”<sup>457</sup> surely an altruistic success rather than yet another failure. It is my hope that the arguments herein demonstrate how the arts can contribute to social defenses against the reoccurring threats of history but also might defend the arts against the series of institutional threats lobbed with increasing frequency and force. For me, the next step in this research is the formation of a cognition-based model of arts advocacy that springs from BTJ/AZ’s example. Reimagining theories of history happens, as the company charges, through heart and through body. I have argued here that BTJ/AZ propose a corporeal relationship to history,<sup>458</sup> one of interanimation through embodied cognition. We are moved,

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<sup>456</sup> 580.

<sup>457</sup> Dovidio et. al, 398.

<sup>458</sup> This notion is not entirely dissimilar from Rokem’s concept of the hyper-historian: “the actors serve as a connecting link between the historical past and the ‘fictional’ performed *here* and *now* of the theatrical event; they become a kind of historian, what I call a ‘hyper-historian’ [.]” 13. Emphasis in original. For Rokem, the doubleness of theater, which charges the actors with representing the past in the present, creates a surplus of time and space, a “hyper”- real performance. Contrastingly, My emphasis is on the

literally and figuratively, by the past and, in the archival repertory of BTJ/AZ, we *move* the past, choreographing historical events and figures into our present so that we might re-route our current paths.

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ways in which BTJ/AZ practice and perform a new orientation towards the work of history that is grounded in embodied emotional response and that forces new understandings of historical modes of inquiry.

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