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Ariel Nereson

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Ariel Nereson

**COUNTERFACTUAL MOVING IN BILL T. JONES'S *LAST SUPPER*
AT *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*/*THE PROMISED LAND***

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.

—Bill T. Jones¹

When Bill T. Jones's longtime creative and life partner Arnie Zane was in the last months of his life, the pair began conceiving a new work for their dance company, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company (BTJ/AZ), that was inspired by Zane's love of Leonardo da Vinci's painting *The Last Supper* and a gift from company member Seán Curran of a pornographic deck of playing cards titled *52 Handsome Nudes*.² Zane generated the image of African American opera star Jessye Norman "on an ice floe, suspended above the stage at the Brooklyn Academy of Music"³ as a postmodern interpretation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's character Eliza Harris, the romantic heroine of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Zane passed away in March of 1988, and Jones continued on with their idea, eventually staging and touring *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land* in 1990.⁴ The first half of the work, comprising "The Cabin" and "Eliza on the Ice," is a reimagining of Stowe's classic text that is part of one of the company's abiding projects, the choreographing of contemporary relationships to history. For Jones and many in his company, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was not simply a story from the past but was rather a persistent narrative that has shaped historical trajectories of racial prejudice within the United States and in current lived experiences of racialized embodiment. This essay examines how the company's multiracial cast performed "Eliza on the Ice" as an experiment in historical inquiry through imagining "counterfactuals" to Stowe's representation of the racially hybrid Eliza. I propose that

Ariel Nereson is the Interdisciplinary Arts Coordinator at Vassar College. She holds a Ph.D. in theatre arts from the University of Pittsburgh. Her current book project is An Engine of Change: Revisionist History and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company Lincoln Trilogy. Her essays and reviews have appeared in The Journal of American Drama and Theatre, Theatre Journal, Studies in Musical Theatre, Theatre Survey, and Slavic and Eastern European Performance.

the company's choreographic and conceptual strategy of counterfactual moving, through its emphasis on embodiment, critically addresses the impact of the historical past on present bodies.

Jones has described *Last Supper* as grounded in his embodied experience of race: "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."⁵ His vision of the work as founded in an exploration of black history was developed and enacted by a multiracial company that included 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. The company included Arthur Aviles, Leonard Cruz, Seán Curran, Lawrence Goldhuber, Gregg Hubbard, Heidi Latsky, Betsy McCracken, Maya Saffrin, Andrea Woods, and Jones himself. The guest artists were the rap artist and ex-con R. Justice Allen, the publishing magnate John Cowles, choreographer Sage Cowles, actor Andréa Smith, local clergy who lived in cities the company toured, and Jones's mother, Estella. In BTJ/AZ's methodology, the lived experiences of company members serve as archival sources for the work's content and structure. Within the work the company treats Stowe's novel as its own historical event that represents generalized figures grounded in Stowe's contemporary history (and, as we will see with the case of Eliza, actual historical subjects). The ensemble examines how the phenomenon of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* participates, through its emphasis on colorism in the representation of Eliza, in a long historical process leading to the structuring element of their own contemporary social environment: racial inequality.

"Eliza on the Ice" is a series of solos for the company's four women that also includes the performance of Sage Cowles as Harriet Beecher Stowe, the male company as the dogs chasing Eliza, and a coda from dancer Gregg Hubbard as a fifth Eliza in drag. This section builds on the character revision from the preceding one, "The Cabin," by taking a sustained look at Stowe's characterization of Eliza Harris within the archetype of the tragic mulatta and the novel's overarching paradigm of sentimental Christianity.⁶ The five Elizas' performances challenge factual aspects of Stowe's Eliza, namely, her identity as a mother and her phenotypic proximity to whiteness (and, in Hubbard's performance, as female). "Eliza on the Ice" differs from 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 composed of a female collective making their way through oppressive circumstances rather than as the exceptional individual, Stowe's sentimentalized maternal mulatta. This collective enacts performances composed of distinct movement vocabularies that not only explore alternative representations of the character but also suggest the value of counterfactual moving as a complementary practice, grounded in embodiment, to the counterfactual thinking of academic historians.⁷ Jones's choreographic method in this section aligns with historian John Lewis Gaddis's notion of history's "laboratory," wherein testing counterfactuals involves "varying conditions . . . to try to see which would produce different results."⁸ 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 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.

FACTS AND COUNTERFACTS

Gaddis writes, "[I]f 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."⁹ Gaddis calls these alternatives "counterfactuals." One of the widely accepted rules of the discipline of history is that claims about historical events, actors, and causality should be backed up by evidence.¹⁰ The increasing frequency of works of counterfactual history and public history¹¹ highlights a tension in practices of historical inquiry that *Last Supper* also articulates about "whether [history's] quests should be shaped by authenticity ([the] needs of its users in the present) or accuracy (what actually happened in the past)."¹² Counterfactual history is commonly described as counterfactual thinking, or counterfactual thought experiments. Within counterfactual thinking, historians consider an antecedent action to an event (one of the most popular is the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand as the antecedent to World War I) and pose an if-then statement wherein the antecedent event is altered in some critical way to change the outcome in the events that followed (i.e., if Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated, then World War I would have been avoided). Counterfactual thinking is often described as a useful exercise for historians to sharpen their abilities to interpret evidence and thoroughly understand context. The Franz Ferdinand example is a relatively plausible counterfactual because of the sheer luck of his assassin. However, implausible, "miracle" counterfactuals also have value that is located in "the analytical utility of considering alternative worlds," as Richard Ned Lebow notes.¹³ Counterfactual history is not, as Catherine Gallagher points out, the same as revisionist history—such as when BTJ/AZ revises the sequence of events in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through retrograde movement in Tom's death scene in the section "The Cabin." Gallagher continues, "Nor is it secret history, in which some previously hidden component is revealed and added to the chain of cause and effect [.]"¹⁴ Instead, counterfactual thinking "[w]ants you to consider the probable, plausible, or possible consequences of an admittedly false conditional," while both revisionist and secret histories rely upon (presumably not false) historical evidence.¹⁵

Perhaps it is the evidence-based distinction between revisionist or secret histories and counterfactual histories that has led much debate over counterfactual thinking to settle on its value as a thought experiment or even as a skill-learning exercise. *Last Supper* suggests much higher stakes for what I call experiments in counterfactual moving: namely, that thought experiments do not adequately address the embodied consequences of historical events in the present. Fun though counterfactual thinking may be, there is a seriousness of endeavor in Jones's

work that, although it is inspired by the notion of counterfactuals, goes further in suggesting that counterfactual moving can have causal force through its vehicle of embodiment in rerouting lived experience. Jones's claim that history's rules must be broken focuses on the troubling causality between the catastrophic past of racial prejudice and racist policies in the United States and present structures of inequality. Historian Martin Bunzl writes, "There is an incestuous connection between causal claims and counterfactual claims. If . . . historians make causal claims, then counterfactual claims come along for the ride, like it or not."¹⁶ In other words, claiming that x , y , and z were direct causes of an event necessarily excludes other possible causes as the direct causes, an exclusion that is usually based in archival evidence that the historian then marshals to support her or his claim. In order to break the rule of causality that Jones finds so problematic, counterfactuals must be voiced. Jones turns to his discipline, dance, to voice these counterfactuals through movement.

When one traces how BTJ/AZ countered the "factual" Eliza Harris of Stowe's novel, the historical figure Eliza Jane Johnson enters the scene. In her account of the Underground Railroad, historian Ann Hagedorn provides a brief story about a slave woman crossing the Ohio River in the dead of winter at night, carrying her baby.¹⁷ This story comes from the Rankin family, whose home in Ripley, Ohio, functioned as a stopover for slaves using the Underground Railroad. The woman, whom John Rankin remembered as Eliza, was being chased by a slave catcher named Chancey Shaw.¹⁸ In a change from Stowe's story, Shaw was waiting for Eliza (later determined to be Eliza Jane Johnson from a Dover, Kentucky, plantation) on the Ohio side, instead of chasing her across from the Kentucky side, as Stowe writes. Eliza Jane Johnson fled from her stop on the Kentucky border, jumping from ice floe to ice floe, clutching her young son, and miraculously reached the Ohio shore. As she was on the verge of collapse, Shaw, who was waiting for her, caught her by the arm (this is another notable difference from Stowe's tale, where Eliza's escape was in fact successful). According to John Rankin Jr., the youngest son of the Rankin family, Shaw, stunned by Eliza's survival, guided her through the night to the Rankin home, telling her, "Any woman who crossed that river carrying her baby has won her freedom."¹⁹ From this first moment of the Eliza story, preceding Stowe's version and the many stage iterations that followed her novel, Eliza's identity as a mother became the key to her value (in some ways replicating the slave economy); it impressed Shaw enough to force a radical change in his character. Stowe eventually heard of this tale when John Rankin Sr. met Calvin Ellis Stowe, Harriet Beecher's husband, and told the tale to both of them. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliza's maternity and her light skin are Stowe's primary characterization tactics. As Fergus M. Bordewich writes in his history of the Underground Railroad: "Unlike the stocky, very dark woman who found her way to Rankin's house, Stowe's Eliza was a fine-mannered, light-skinned mulatto."²⁰ It's worth noting that Jones is not the only artist engaged in counterfactual thinking here; Stowe's "original" is in many ways counterfactual to the historical event and explicitly revisionist.

Jones introduces the actors of Stowe's novel in the first section, "The Cabin," to set up the relationship between movement and character that is

necessary for the Elizas' counterfactual moving later in the piece. "The Cabin" functions to introduce the "types" of the novel, its primary characters in all of their stereotypical glory. These stereotypes include movement vocabularies; 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."²¹ Jones establishes this physical distinction in movement vocabulary between racialized characters as a kinesthetic representation of color-based locations in the social hierarchy that is countered in the later Eliza performances. 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 these are replicated in "The Cabin."²² 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 "I'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."²³ These dancing figures provide a critical counterpoint to the Elizas' collective assertion of movement as counterfactual.

Sentimental Christianity functions as an explanatory framework for Stowe's fictional narrative, but it is also a strategy for impacting her historical moment.²⁴ This framework shapes her representation of the "factual" Eliza Jane Johnson so strongly that Eliza Harris emerges as a kind of factual figure in her own right, emblematic of the actual historical currents of Stowe's time and place. Stowe revises Eliza as a mixed-race figure that leans both in racial appearance and in temperament toward what Stowe would have understood as the "white" side of the spectrum—and here there is a bit of slippage in Stowe's work between the categories of mulatto and quadroon, categories whose fixity shifted depending on a state's legal definitions.²⁵ Stowe paints Eliza's mulatto origins, her hybrid racial genetics, as partially responsible 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 [Eliza's husband] 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.²⁶

Yarborough's claim is borne 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 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."²⁷ Stowe's text supports a whitening logic wherein the closer one is to whiteness biologically, the closer one is to white gentility and its supposedly stronger moral fiber.²⁸ This promise of benevolent white femininity (in

contrast to the harsh white male ethic in the novel) rests upon a system of colorism, wherein "the workings of color gradations [function] as a measure of the subject's value."²⁹

In James Baldwin's critique of Stowe's novel, he describes Eliza as "a beautiful, pious hybrid,"³⁰ and indeed Eliza's hybrid racial status serves as the origin for the whitening process this heroine undergoes throughout the text. Jennifer DeVere Brody claims that the whitening of Eliza is directly related to maternity, femininity, and sentimentality: "The production of purity . . . depends on the erasure of hybridity."³¹ Stowe's goal of eliciting sympathy among both abolitionist and proslavery readers is in part accomplished through this erasure of Eliza's blackness, to the point that she is described as "white" by the three slave hunters who want to capture her. Stowe also uses the popular stereotype of the tragic mulatta to work within a familiar narrative for (according to her perception) radical ends. While Cassy, enslaved sexually to Simon Legree, fits the mold of the tragic mulatta more closely than Eliza, Eliza's very hybridity implies a constant threat of sexual violation that, within the novel, is paradoxically discordant with her white genteel nature and yet is practically guaranteed by her skin color. In order for readers to support Eliza as a pure, maternal figure, Stowe must assure them that "Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave."³² Eliza's phenotypic proximity to whiteness infers an emotional and moral proximity to proper femininity, which functions as the locus of sympathy within a sentimental framework. This connection is made instantly as the slave catchers Loker, Haley, and Marks sit around the table drinking as they hunt for Eliza, and Haley describes her succinctly to the others as "white and handsome—well brought up."³³ Stowe places this assessment in the mouths of those most likely to oppose such a connection: firm antiabolitionists. The three men converse after having lost Eliza across the river, an episode that occupies only 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 escape functions quite literally as a spectacular element³⁴ and also an instance of what Harvey Young calls the "spectacular event," or "charged racialized and racializing scenarios, in which complexed experiences assume a more active and, indeed, determining role in a person's lived experience."³⁵ It is in her act of fleeing the plantation that Eliza's identity as a slave is solidified: this action is caused by her enslavement, itself a condition of institutionalized racism and colorism.

A last category of facts has bearing on my discussion here: the facts of movement, or rather its descriptive categories. In this essay I use a phenomenological language of movement analysis. Philosopher Mark Johnson describes the most basic movement categories as "four recurring qualitative dimensions of all bodily movements: tension, linearity, amplitude, and projection."³⁶ The Eliza choreographies foreground these qualities in distinct ways for each representation of the character, and each dancer's deviations allow the spectator to make differing appraisals of their goals and emotional states. Briefly, *tension* refers to the literal tension in the 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;

it isn't difficult to see how these experiences of muscular tension give rise to colloquialisms such as "you look tense."³⁷ *Linearity* refers to paths of motion through space. 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.³⁸ *Amplitude* refers to what degree "our bodies fill and use the space available to us in a tight, contractive fashion or in an expansive way."³⁹ 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."⁴⁰ 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 connects effort to a joined experience of physical and mental exhaustion.

Importantly, these qualitative dimensions are directly related to ideologies that impact 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."⁴¹ When we say someone is an "upright" person, most likely we are correlating a nice straight spine with a high degree of socially sanctioned behavior. When we say someone is withdrawn, we make an inference about their emotional state that results from appraisals of their embodiment—likely a reduced amplitude and decreased tension that would make it challenging for this person to spring into action. BTJ/AZ made explicit these unconscious associations among embodiment, emotion, and the assessments of character that follow in the multiple Elizas of "Eliza on the Ice."

ELIZA(S) ON THE ICE

Each Eliza solo in Jones's work presents one fragment or side of Eliza. Andrea Woods's historical Eliza uses traditional costume, vernacular gesture, and Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" speech to ground herself in the 1850s. Heidi Latsky, dressed in a loose shirt and pants and speaking a modern text, seems firmly rooted in the present. Betsy McCracken performs a mythic, almost futuristic vision of Eliza, whereas Maya Saffrin's performance is of a captive Eliza, whose imperiled status as a female body resonates across time. (I discuss these below as Eliza 1–Eliza 4, respectively.) *Last Supper* creates a surplus of historical moments and figures, responding to a scarcity of archival presence for Eliza Jane Johnson and a lack of factual or truthful representation in Stowe's Eliza. "Eliza on the Ice" produces a new vision of Eliza whose embodied hybridity can neither be erased nor fully circumscribed. In terms of its engagement with colorism, the hybridity shaped in this section is influenced by the perceived racial identities of its performers. The social locations of the Elizas are informed by American audiences' ingrained abilities as "practitioners . . . of colorist systems of differentiation."⁴² In her study of Zora Neale Hurston's play *Color Struck*,

Nicole Fleetwood argues that performance intersects with colorism in its “visualization of racial-gender hierarchies through the phenotypic features of the performers and the audience’s ability to assign value and meaning to those characteristics.”⁴³ In *Last Supper*, audience perceptions about performers’ racial identities and the assumptions about character that might follow are countered by the facts of movement, by associations between movement quality and character desires that each Eliza embodies.⁴⁴

For Jones, Woods’s Eliza represented a “‘historical Eliza’—one whom Alvin Ailey would have recognized.”⁴⁵ 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 to be the Eliza who connects the action of the preceding section, “The Cabin,” thematically and stylistically with “Eliza on the Ice.” Jones has described Woods’s choreography thus: “In 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[.]”⁴⁶ Woods also articulated this notion of a movement vocabulary taken from personal history. When I asked her where a particular gesture, a vernacular “no-no-no” wagging of the index finger, came from, she laughed and responded, “Besides from my mother?”⁴⁷ 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, her weight on the back leg with that knee bent and the hip cocked to the side, and her arms circling back and around to end with her hands crossed at the wrists and resting on a fictional hoe in front of her. 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 and Sage Cowles’s recitation, as Stowe, of Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” speech (originally delivered in 1851, one year before the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) 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. One particularly challenging moment occurs early on when 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, the arabesque sets up this character as one who is strong and literally balanced, as evidenced in Woods’s active and tense musculature. Moreover, she is unafraid to take up space, as is made clear through Woods’s remarkable amplitude here and throughout the solo. Her ability to extend fully through her limbs and to explore the space in all dimensions with her torso implies a sense of comfort and ease within the strength established by the tension of the arabesque. Eliza 1 feels good to the spectator—Woods’s flexible spine, instantly shifting from ramrod-straight to rippling, indicates the 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 reveal 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/Stowe 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.⁴⁸ Her feet slap the floor, but her straight spine and clear linearity make it seem as though the sound has more to do with the force she exerts during her task than the force the task exerts on her. Eliza's success in her crossing result from an exquisite knowledge of the body's capabilities rather than from the combination of luck and complexions advanced in Stowe's version. Yet Stowe remains a haunting presence onstage through Cowles's figure, and this juxtaposition of Cowles and Woods illustrates John Lewis Gaddis's claim that "history is constantly being measured in terms of previously neglected metrics. . . . But the history these representations represent has not changed."⁴⁹ The company's revision of Eliza through new "metrics" or counterfactual moving also 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.

Positioning Woods's Eliza as the first Eliza, the historical Eliza, counters Stowe's representation of her as nearly white, as Woods is clearly African American and does not, as Stowe hoped Eliza would, read as white.⁵⁰ Darkening Eliza extends the assumptions about her moral uprightness and emotional strength toward an alternative range of racialized and feminized bodies. Cowles recites Truth's assertion that according to the reigning patriarchal values of Truth's day, "cause Christ wasn't a woman," women were less worthy of respect, consideration, and equality.⁵¹ 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 facial discomfort suggests being penned in, experiencing the lived consequences of the one-two punch of patriarchy and racism Truth's speech critiqued. 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 Eliza's frustrated emotions. This is a singular moment, however, made more striking by its distinctions in amplitude, tension, and projection from the majority of Woods's choreography, which suggests a physical and emotional overcoming of these obstacles. Woods told me

that when she performed this solo, "I was very proud. . . . If a lion gets to roar, that [solo] was my lion's roar."⁵²

Whereas Woods performed the "historical" Eliza, Heidi Latsky represented the modern-day woman. Latsky's Eliza 2 solo is a complete revolt against the lyricism of Woods's choreography. 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 reflexively to 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. 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 in Eliza 2 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 is in terms of control: though both dancers exercise great control over their bodies, the appearance of each character's control over her movement is sharply differentiated. Latsky appears to be struggling to get out of a straitjacket. The choreography focuses on the upper body and includes several extended series of sharp slicing, slashing, and hitting motions with the arms, actions that carve the space but also carve Latsky's own body as she repeatedly hits her sternum.

Each Eliza seems to have a "home base" movement, and Eliza 2's is a thumping of the chest that spins her chaotically off her axis. 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, giving the impression that the hand is not her own. Latsky's solo involves either extreme tension or a complete lack of tension, never achieving the kind of balance we see from Woods's choreography. While she recovers from each thump on the chest, her arm fairly pulses and shakes with tension as 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. Latsky's movement through this gesture reverberates up the arms and through the chest into her head, which falls off its axis at the neck both backward and forward with a fierce, violent quality. This choreography is Latsky's own, and in developing it Latsky articulated a reciprocal causal relationship between emotion and movement. The hitting action came from her need to feel anger: "I had to find movement so that I could get angry."⁵³ This Eliza, or this side of Eliza, is one of anger and hurt. In contrast to the loping walk that takes Woods offstage, here Latsky crawls off, literally brought low and unable to rise. By placing this extreme of anger and fear into a representation of Eliza that is both white and contemporary, Jones cleverly revises both Stowe's equation of Eliza's whiteness with emotional equanimity and the notion that the negative social world Eliza faced is fixed in time.

Although I have described these performances thus far as solos, I want to briefly acknowledge the role other dancers play in supporting these choreographies. I have already mentioned Sage Cowles's portrayal of Stowe, but she is not the only character from the novel who is present. Stowe describes the slave

hunter Loker as a bulldog, and when the three hunters are conferring over the dinner table after Eliza's escape across the river, she compares Tom's mannerisms to the actions of a dog.⁵⁴ In Jones's work, the men of the company play the dogs. Their choreography as they run through the aisles and chase the Elizas to and from the stage is a burlesque of a football/military drill. 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 triumphant air. Their hands stay flat-palmed or in fists, but never natural. The men are dressed 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 with prominent teeth above them on a long stick. These dogs have real physical power, demonstrated in the forceful tension and projection of their choreography and audible snarls, but they are also dogs of satire and play; they line up in front of the stage like Chippendales dancers.⁵⁵ The "dogs" chase off both Woods and Latsky but come to attention when Betsy McCracken, as Eliza 3, enters the space.

McCracken's Eliza seems suspended from 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. Dressed in a white full-body unitard, 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."⁵⁶ A struggle to maintain power ensues in this solo, and though the choreographic focus is on McCracken, "there is tension implicit in the fact that she can never turn her back on [the dogs]."⁵⁷ As there are multiple dogs and one Eliza, this narrative requires great flexibility on McCracken's part, and she twists her body left and right, creating an unceasing spiral in order to keep the dogs in her sights. McCracken's Eliza functions as mythic and futuristic in the sense that she seems displaced from any particular moment, and her abstract costume and saliency as a white performer allow her body to appear as an almost blank slate, unmarked racially within a colorist system but profoundly marked as a woman facing a pack of rowdy dogs.

The choreography for Eliza 3 makes use of McCracken's impressive extension, as if the flexibility of her body makes her top dog in this power structure. But whereas Latsky's solo vacillated wildly between the poles of tension and Woods's choreography found a balance, McCracken lives firmly on 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 with 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. McCracken's physical gifts of extension make it seem like she is taking up more space, but in fact her movements are restricted by the staff she wields in order to maintain distance between herself and the dogs. The relentless twisting action required to keep each dog in her

sight functions as this Eliza's home base. The effect of these extremes of linearity and tension is that emotionally this character is in control of her situation, but this control comes at a high cost—the total erasure of pleasure and comfort and a high degree of physical and emotional exhaustion.

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 generally."⁵⁸ McCracken's Eliza seems to represent a moment-to-moment, tenuous triumph over male domination—which is suggested by the bondage gear the dogs wear—that nonetheless exacts a tremendous price. Her performance suggests an atemporal, abstract vision of femininity in relationship to masculinity, and there seems to be no coherent cultural script from which she and the dogs operate. From this unmoored vision of a powerful woman fighting against male domination comes a representation of another facet of Stowe's Eliza: the captive woman. Eliza 4 is the flip side of McCracken's archetype—a transhistorical stereotype rooted and repeated in representations of the tragic mulatta trope, reflected in dancer Maya Saffrin's biracial identity. Through their embodiment of opposite poles of the tension spectrum, McCracken and Saffrin represent oppositional pulls within the Eliza figure. Hortense Spillers, who agrees 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."⁵⁹ In other words, the kind of femininity that is granted subjecthood in the novel is Christian, educated, and whitened, relegating the black female characters to positions of objectification and preventing them from progressing beyond the bounds of their enslavement.⁶⁰ Saffrin's Eliza represents the captive woman, though it is unclear what her spatiotemporal 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."⁶¹ This is the object Eliza, not the subject. Saffrin's Eliza harks back to Stowe's initial description of the character and the implicit sexual desire her personage inspires, a description that displaces agency for sexual purity onto the mistress rather than locating it within Eliza herself.

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 movement vocabularies that reverberates in this section's concluding quartet. Woods's presence connects the later events of Saffrin's solo to the "historical Eliza," suggesting that this history of female subjugation repeats itself while always wearing a fresh mask. Woods exits, and the dogs are back. Their football/military drill-inspired choreography here takes on a threatening quality as Saffrin becomes a prop that is transferred from dog to dog. Eliza 4's choreography is a sequence of throws, with Saffrin's weight never really controlled by her own body. One dog/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 tenuously controls the dogs, Saffrin's Eliza cannot control her own bodily 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.⁶² 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.

This lack of tension in Eliza 4 contributes to the perception that she lacks agency over her self, a perception compounded by the dogs’ authorship of her movements. During her choreography with them, it is challenging to see Eliza 4 as a subject rather than an object: she is rarely the author of her own movements, has no control over her linearity (thus disrupting spectatorial projection of her goals and desires), and exerts no force of tension within her own body or upon others. It’s difficult to perceive anything about her emotional state and thus to empathize with the character because the choreography works so effectively to dehumanize her (thereby making a strong argument for the totalizing effects of the tragic mulatta stereotype on racially salient female sexuality). This difficulty is compounded by Saffrin’s blank emotional expression throughout the sequence.

We infer different emotional states and differing desires, goals, and future actions among these four 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 noting that we might think of them as characters, defines character as “a set of patterns within an individual’s behavior.”⁶³ Understood as patterns of movement from which we also infer patterns of social behavior, Jones’s starkly different choreographies for the Elizas dramatize counterfactual moving. Jones is uninterested in a single interpretation of Eliza, particularly the yoked stereotypes of sacrificing mother and tragic mulatta that have come to immortalize her. Instead, his company represents a collective of alternatives that experience the world very differently through their movement vocabularies. In her critique of the novel’s sentimental logic, Lauren Berlant identifies a central claim of Stowe’s text: “female authorship leads to female sexual dignity and women’s identification across distinctions in racial, class, linguistic, national, and sexual privilege.”⁶⁴ The four Elizas resist this identification of experience based on a shared anatomy, presenting four clear departures from Stowe’s Eliza, each contextually distinct.

Jones shapes “Eliza on the Ice” using 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. During what seems like the finale of this section, Jones throws in a surprise coda from dancer Gregg Hubbard, who rolls up from behind Cowles/Stowe as the Elizas exit. The conclusion begins with Woods’s entrance as the dogs leave Saffrin on the ground.⁶⁵ Eliza 1 and Eliza 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/Stowe, a shadowy upstage presence, reaches into the wings and brings Saffrin back onstage. Cowles attempts to maintain contact with Saffrin, but Eliza 4 rejects the proximity or contact offered by Stowe, shrugging 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 shoulders. Identifying the cause of this shift is not difficult: the presence of the other Elizas has literally given Eliza 4 strength. 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 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 walk is a different gesture with the upper body for each of the four dancers. This choreography illustrates Jones's overarching concept of each woman as a facet of the same figure, giving all of them the same choreography in the lower body but allowing for individual expression of the upper body.

COUNTERFACTUAL MOVING

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"⁶⁶ 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."⁶⁷ My argument here is not to minimize Eliza's grief but rather to point out that Stowe's characterization of Eliza capitalizes on her motherhood, specifically on the emotional attachments between mother and child that come to define her. Her emotional state, which seems to depend 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 sound and healthful, and Eliza was a happy woman."⁶⁸ It makes sense that Stowe, who was writing for many housewives whose husbands subscribed to the *National Era*, an antislavery magazine that ran *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a serial before it was published as a novel, would foreground Eliza's motherhood as a method of getting her readers emotionally invested in her plight. In fact, Elizabeth Ammons has persuasively claimed that Stowe's feminist act of requesting a room of her own for her writing work resulted from her conviction that, as a mother, she inherently sympathized with the injustices of the slave system.⁶⁹ Stowe's radical point of view, Ammons claims, lies in her conviction that these injustices would be solved through a shift away from "a profit-hungry masculine ethic" and toward "home and mother [which] must not figure as sanctuaries from the world but as imperative models for its reconstitution."⁷⁰ If Jones is theorizing counterfactual moving through his choreography, then a necessary if-then formulation of his counterfactual project may be this: If maternity is erased as a sympathetic incitement for social change, then what takes its place?

Stowe's reliance on white middle- to upper-class women's views of the sanctity of marriage and motherhood profoundly shapes her Eliza. In Jones's vision, spectators' sympathetic responses to the Elizas are shaped by a shared

human experience of the correlative relationships among embodiment, emotion, and the projection of desires. 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. The triangulated characterization of Stowe's Eliza as whitened, maternal, and ultrafeminine is countered through Jones's counterfactual Elizas, presented as alternative visions whose paths diverge from Stowe's scene of Eliza's escape. In fact, here the Elizas escape not into a foregone conclusion of the heterosexual family unit but into an unknown future where relationships are based on choice and affinity rather than circumscribed by racial identity. It is their chosen relationships to one another as members of a strong female collective that give them the strength to saunter offstage.⁷¹

But Jones is not content to conclude with this relatively triumphant quartet. He characteristically pushes his counterfactual movement theory further, changing the biological fact of Eliza's femaleness. As the Elizas roll offstage, an unexpected fifth Eliza enters from upstage center. Gregg Hubbard, a tall, athletic black man, enters the stage tottering on high heels, wearing a white miniskirt. He performs what Jones describes as "an incantation of grasping arms, jabbing fingers, wobbling knees, and extended tongue."⁷² Hubbard's choreography also includes a moment where his sex is acknowledged: instead of presenting a performance of "passing," Hubbard foregrounds his male identity in a sequence in which he runs his hands down his body, pausing at his pelvis, presenting his crotch to the audience. Hubbard drew on other performance traditions in preparation for this role, remembering, "I lived with a stripper at the time, and I asked what should I do [to prepare]? She said come home and find some music you like and dance in heels."⁷³ The agency and sensuality of this solo stand in marked opposition to Saffrin's Eliza, who is an object, a passive and unwilling target of male desire. Hubbard's Eliza, in contrast to the previous four and especially to Saffrin, presents himself to the audience as a desiring subject, challenging our gaze on his body with his own tactile access to it. Hubbard appears to take pleasure in his performance, and he dances *at* the audience rather than *for* them. This Eliza explicitly breaks the fourth wall, daring spectators to make the assumptions about racialized and gendered identity that the previous four Elizas sabotaged.

Hubbard's new formulation of Eliza is a collision between context (all of the Elizas that precede him) and character (Hubbard's male identity and ownership of Eliza 5's sensuality). Murphy writes that this solo is a self-reflexive moment for the audience, in which the construction of gendered identity by a "viewing, laughing public" is recognized.⁷⁴ The performances of the previous Elizas suggested a self-reflexive acknowledgment of the racial hierarchies that scaffold social status and provided many sustained choreographies of Eliza as an empowered subject with mastery over her body. However, none of the previous Elizas have portrayed her as a person with potential sexual desires. Hubbard's performance does not suggest a man trying to pass as Eliza but rather embodies a desiring subjectivity that

allows the Eliza figure agency over her sexual body. "Dragging" Eliza suggests not a mockery of the character but an expansion of her desires and goals. Hubbard states, "It was shocking in a lot of ways. I felt it was done in such a way that it doesn't belittle or demean or take away from the Elizas that happen before that. It's just a new interpretation of the Eliza story."⁷⁵ I was initially troubled by the fact that the figure responsible for reclaiming a lost female sexual agency was male; however, I think there is room for a possible advocacy in the confrontational tone with which Hubbard performs. His presentational style challenges the spectator to differentiate him from the previous Elizas, a difference Hubbard sweeps away when he exits performing their rolling walk. As he does so, Cowles crawls along the upstage wall, reciting Truth's speech in reverse order; her location on the ground supports the receding role of Stowe in defining Eliza's identity. As Truth's speech moves backward, Hubbard moves the Elizas conceptually forward, proposing that to embody Eliza is to issue a challenge to dominant conceptions of racialized femininity.

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Last Supper has not been restaged in its entirety since its original tour in the early 1990s. This is not surprising since it is a giant production, more than three hours long, that requires the auditioning of community members ahead of time for "The Promised Land," the finale. However, its choreographic proposal of counterfactual moving remains in the company's repertory, influencing later works and endowing much of BTJ/AZ's work with immediacy and urgency. When Zane passed away, the vision of an Eliza suspended over the stage disappeared as well, but what persisted was a sense that the work needed to get made, and now. Partly this sense was attributable to the fact that Zane had died of AIDS-related illness, and Jones reasoned that since he himself was also HIV-positive, his time too would be cut short.⁷⁶ Jones's experiences of prejudice as a black, gay, HIV-positive man shaped his reading of Stowe. Initially he felt the novel was "hokum, misinformation. I find it moving, infuriating, beautiful, embarrassing, and important."⁷⁷ And yet, "The book also says something about the liberal impulse in America. . . . [T]here are the fundamental notions of freedom and acceptance. They are the linchpins of 20th-Century liberal philosophy. However, some of those liberal, educated people harbor deep prejudice at critical points."⁷⁸ In *Last Supper*, these critical points of racialized and gendered social hierarchies become points that must be moved through rather than thought about. Embodying counterfactual figures resulted in new movement vocabularies of race and gender, new ways of physically relating to the world. For Jones, counterfactual moving rested on the facts of his dancers' physicalities and lived experiences rather than on the type of archival facts that historians might prefer. Yet the dancers felt they were participating in an endeavor of historical inquiry, as company member Seán Curran articulates: "It was theatricalized, but the point I want to make is that it felt visceral, real, historical. I loved that about it, that it felt real."⁷⁹ There is a facticity of feeling in counterfactual moving, reflecting Catherine Gallagher's claim that "[T]he desire for a revisable past will always be troubled

by the knowledge that possible histories are not mere reshufflings of a constant set of human actors, but inevitably raise the spectres of biological loss and potential generation.”⁸⁰ *Last Supper* was created in an immense void of loss, both immediate in relation to Zane’s passing and persistent in the loss of ancestors due to legacies of racial violence. Jones’s method of counterfactual moving does not ignore the historical facts of loss that shape its context. Instead, it embodies generation, abundance, and multiplicity as instincts for survival and flourishing that are found in our bones.

ENDNOTES

1. Bill T. Jones with Peggy Gillespie, *Last Night on Earth* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 197.
2. *Ibid.*, 204. Jones’s autobiography contains a long chapter on the creation of *Last Supper*, including the story of its origins in what Jones calls the “fragmented chronology” that is his history as a black man (205).
3. *Ibid.*, 204.
4. The inspiration from the deck of playing cards remained conceptually evident in the work’s finale, which included fifty-two nude performers from each city in which the work was performed. In the title, *The Promised Land* replaces the original title, *Featuring 52 Handsome Nudes*, which was changed to appease skittish sponsors. The work premiered as part of the New Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) on 8 November 1990 and went on to tour for almost two years to thirty cities internationally. See Jones, 223, for discussion of the work’s touring.
5. Jones, 197.
6. For more sustained discussion on the tragic mulatta type, see Ralina L. Joseph, *Transcending Blackness: From the New Millennial Mulatta to the Exceptional Multiracial* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Kimberly Snyder Manganelli, *Transatlantic Spectacles of Race: The Tragic Mulatta and the Tragic Muse* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012); and Eve Allegra Raimon, *The “Tragic Mulatta” Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
7. Although in this essay I am concerned primarily with counterfactual thinking as it relates to the discipline of history, we all engage in counterfactual thinking as part of our reasoning processes. See Kai Epstude and Neal J. Roese, “The Functional Theory of Counterfactual Thinking,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12.2 (2008): 168–92.
8. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 100.
9. *Ibid.*, 101.
10. Herein lies counterfactual thinking’s challenge to historical inquiry. As Martin Bunzl puts it, “The rhetoric of historical methodology makes evidence central in a foundational conception of the discipline, and (direct) evidence is just what you can’t have for claims that are by definition contrary to fact.” Bunzl, “Counterfactual History: A User’s Guide,” *American Historical Review* 109.3 (2004): 845–58, at 845.
11. See Catherine Gallagher, “Telling It Like It Wasn’t,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 45 (2010): 12–25, for discussion of trends over time in counterfactual historical narratives. Gallagher identifies an “impulse toward historical justice” in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s as guiding the increase in counterfactualism (18). This impulse, in combination with the humanities-wide influence of postmodernism, distinguishes counterfactual history of the past fifty or so years from previous counterfactual histories (often in the field of military history) whose use-value lay in thought exercise rather than in producing actions leading to a more just or equitable state. While counterfactual and public history are distinct fields, both are open by definition to points of view other than those that dominate the historical record and consider these alternatives legitimate elements of historical practice. In their counterfactual

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representations of the Eliza figure, BTJ/AZ draw upon the experiences of history's "users" (as David Thelen would put it; see n. 12) in the present, these users being the dancers, thus combining counterfactual and public historical approaches.

12. David Thelen, "But Is It History?" *Public Historian* 22.1 (2000): 39–44, at 44.

13. Richard Ned Lebow, "Counterfactual Thought Experiments: A Necessary Teaching Tool," *History Teacher* 40.2 (2007): 153–76, at 162.

14. Gallagher, 12.

15. *Ibid.* Gallagher also describes the moment of the 1990s as particularly ripe for counterfactual thinking in both history as a discipline and in historical fiction (*ibid.*, 22). *Last Supper* participates in this interdisciplinary interest while revising the utility of counterfactual thinking through the medium of dance.

16. Bunzl, 846.

17. For a detailed description, see Ann Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 136–43.

18. Not unlike Stowe's later character of Simon Legree, Shaw is well known for his cruelty.

19. Hagedorn, 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 to the slave hunters: "You've arnt your liberty, and you shall have it, for all me." *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 82. All subsequent quotations from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are from this edition of Stowe's text. Although this essay deals primarily with textual representations of Eliza in Stowe's original novel, the character also has a long stage and screen history of performed representations. See John W. Frick, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" on the American Stage and Screen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

20. Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 371.

21. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, "Unrest and Uncle Tom: Bill T. Jones/Armie 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, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 81–105, at 93.

22. See Murphy for a detailed discussion of representations of dancing in Stowe's novel. For movement analysis of "The Cabin" and "The Promised Land" sections of the work, see Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997); and Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

23. *Bill T. Jones: Dancing to the Promised Land*, dir. Mischa Scorer (New York: VIEW Video, 2004).

24. The interrelationship of Christianity, blackness, and understanding histories haunts Jones throughout this work as he juxtaposes history, religion, and art as meaning-making practices. Although space precludes a sustained engagement with Jones's representations of black Christianity, this is a particularly rich topic for analysis. For the relationship between Stowe's characterization of Eliza and the novel's sentimental Christianity, see Elizabeth Ammons, "Heroines in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Literature* 49.2 (1977): 161–79, at 164–6.

25. For example, the 1910 Louisiana state court decision in *State v. Treadway* concluded that "the person too black to be a mulatto and too pale in color to be a negro is a griff. The person too dark to be a white, and too bright to be a griff, is a mulatto. The quadrone is distinctly whiter than the mulatto. Between these different shades, we do not believe there is much, if any, difficulty in distinguishing." Quoted in Jennifer Hochschild and Vesla Weaver, "Policies of Racial Classification and the Politics of Racial Inequality," in *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy in an Age of Inequality*, ed. Joe Soss, Jacob S. Hacker, and Suzanne Mettler (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007), 159–82, at 162. Hochschild and Weaver offer a detailed account of racial categorization in the U.S. census and in U.S. legal policies.

26. Richard Yarborough, "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), 45–84, at 51.

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27. Stowe, 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"; *ibid.*, 21.

28. There are several worthwhile studies of race, femininity, and hybridity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, including Ellen J. Goldner, "Arguing with Pictures: Race, Class and the Formation of Popular Abolitionism through *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 24, nos. 1–2 (2001): 71–84; Carlos Hiraldo, *Segregated Miscegenation: On the Treatment of Racial Hybridity in the U.S. and Latin American Literary Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Jo-Ann Morgan, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" as *Visual Culture* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

29. Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 72. Fleetwood further claims that "colorism cannot be divorced from the institution of slavery" (75).

30. James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dial Press, 1963), 16.

31. Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 66.

32. Stowe, 18.

33. *Ibid.*, 91.

34. For more on the spectacular qualities of Tom shows, see Frick.

35. Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 11.

36. Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 22.

37. "Knowing your world thus requires exquisitely fine adjustments of muscular tension and exertion, calibrated via the tensive qualities that you feel in your body." *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, 24.

41. *Ibid.* For the original essay, see Iris Marion Young, "Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3.2 (1980): 137–56; repr. in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 27–45.

42. Fleetwood, 72.

43. *Ibid.*, 87.

44. The racial diversity of the Elizas also speaks to the possibility of what Susan Manning has termed "cross-viewing," wherein "spectators may catch glimpses of subjectivities from social locations that differ from their own. . . . Cross-viewing has the potential to alter how publics read bodies in motion and thus to effect social and artistic change." Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004), xvi. By creating a broad spectrum of possible empathic connections between performers and spectators, Jones invites the kind of cross-viewing practices that Manning describes, often in spite of more narrowly conceived racialized performance in the mid-twentieth-century concert dance scene.

45. Jones, 212.

46. *Ibid.* See *Bill T. Jones: Dancing to the Promised Land* for Jones's description of a particular gesture of a woman folding her hands over the top of a hoe and putting her weight on one hip as derived specifically from his mother and grandmother.

47. Andrea Woods Valdés, interview with the author, 29 January 2013.

48. For the full text of Truth's speech, see Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" in *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, ed. Paul Halsall, accessed 28 October 2013, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp>.

49. Gaddis, 125.

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50. I want to acknowledge that my assumptions about the "reading" ability of spectators are firmly rooted in a contemporary U.S. place and time and that I assume most spectators were aware of the history of violence and racism performed on nonwhite bodies in the United States that is heavily referenced in the work. It is also worth noting that when the piece travels, these assumptions change to greater and lesser degrees. For example, Sage Cowles shared an anecdote about touring to Lyon, France, where "at [the presenters'] opening night, everyone was dressed as old Southern mammies. I don't think they had a clue what to do with this [the work], really. Everybody had turbans on their heads, the menu had grits. It was like going back to the plantation, kind of. They were all very hopeful that this was a fine thing to do, and we were just aghast." Sage Cowles, interview with the author, 12 March 2013.

51. Truth.

52. Woods Valdés, interview with the author, 29 January 2013.

53. Heidi Latsky, interview with the author, 31 January 2013.

54. Stowe, 86, 90.

55. Jones describes the dogs as "ludicrous"; Jones, 213. In a practical sense, their function is to provide choreography for the male members of the company while the women dance the Elizas. The dogs dance at the edge of playfulness and seriousness: Arthur Aviles described the dogs' dancing as "macho play" but contended that there remained "a seriousness to that. That [choreography] was supposed to be about the people being hunted." Arthur Aviles, interview with the author, 21 February 2013.

56. Jones, 214.

57. Ibid.

58. Yarborough, 65.

59. Hortense J. Spillers, *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 184–5.

60. Spillers's 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."

61. Jones, 214.

62. It is important to say that 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 an utter lack of control. Thus I am not claiming here that Saffrin as a dancer has no tension in her limbs but rather that Eliza 4 *as a character* has a baseline of minimal tension.

63. Gaddis, 116.

64. Lauren Berlant, "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70.3 (1998): 635–68, at 642.

65. 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 in the company's archives at New York Live Arts) and during its tour. Thus, the version recounted in Jones's book may seem in some ways to be distinct from the version I watched. Many similarities, of course, remain.

66. Stowe, 18.

67. Ibid., 21.

68. Ibid.

69. "With her [private] room came the mission to write what became America's best-known novel, and the mission fell to her, she believed, because she was a mother"; Ammons, 161.

70. Ibid., 167, 174.

71. Melissa Blanco-Borelli reminds us that matrilineal networks are also implicated in the circulation of what she terms the "mulata-product," and thus Stowe's assumption of the immaculateness of maternal affection was in fact much messier: "when negotiations for plaçage took place, it was a mother, an aunt . . . who took charge of the young mulata and made the arrangements with the white man. A matrilineal, matri-focal, or woman-centered production of knowledge circulated the mulata-product in these libidinal market economies." Blanco-Borelli, "Hip Work: Undoing the Tragic *Mulata*," in *Black*

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Performance Theory, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 63–84, at 79.

72. Jones, 215.

73. Gregg Hubbard, interview with the author, 3 February 2013.

74. Murphy, 96.

75. Hubbard interview.

76. Hubbard 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." Hubbard interview.

77. Jones, 205.

78. Quoted in R. J. Campbell, "A Test of Faith: Choreographer Bill T. Jones Confronts Religion, Racism and AIDS in *The Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 March 1991, 5.

79. Seán Curran, interview with the author, 19 February 2013.

80. Gallagher, 20.