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2014

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Hope Races Towards Repetition: *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"*

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

Jessica Herring

June 2014

Thesis Committee:

Professor Anthea Kraut, Chairperson
Professor Jacqueline Shea Murphy
Professor Wendy Rogers

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The Thesis of Jessica Herring is approved:

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals.

Without their unending support, the following pages would not be possible.

My chair, Anthea Kraut, who first welcomed me into UCR's Critical Dance Studies Department; my supervising committee, Jacqueline Shea Murphy and Wendy Rogers, who have provided the space and encouragement for me to find my own way; Professors Linda Tomko and Susan Rose who have been incredibly tough and immensely supportive since day one; and visiting professor Cristina Rosa, whose mixture of academia and the arts dovetails nicely with my own.

Jennifer Kavetsky and Emily Mattingly who were often the first pairs of eyes and ears to make contact with the ideas, thoughts, and movements bouncing around and through these pages.

My dance department colleagues who provided excellent company while drafting this document: Jennifer Albrecht, Chrissy Canady, Julie Freeman, Sangwoo Ha, Adanna Jones, Denise Machin, Meghan "Hansolo" Quinlan, Lee Singh, Brianna Skellie, Katie Nichole Stahl-Kovall, and Natalie Zervou.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends who continue to provide the maniacal laughs, supportive embraces, and enthusiastic kicks in the pants whenever I encounter a bumpy patch on this road called life: Jacob Herring, James Herring, Pia Herring, Sylvia Herring, Bojun Hu, Rebecca Lubart, Talli Jackson, Shayla-Vie Jenkins, Paul Matteson, Jennifer Nugent, Ken Schoolman, and Marcia Stone.

Dedication

During one of my moments of questioning, Dr. Linda Tomko told me that grad school is an opportunity meant to change the way one thinks. As such, she suggested it would provide challenging occasions to test a person's limits in the hopes of enabling the individual the chance to learn more about oneself, the surrounding world, as well as the subject of one's focus.

The following pages are dedicated to this segment of my evolution.

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Opening Thoughts

For me, dance has always been about stories and storytelling. I am not sure where this line of thought came from, but I remember the first time I took a dance class. I was five years old and suddenly found myself in Adult Modern with my mother's friend, Trisha. Although I do not remember the exact reason I was spending time with her, I recall being excited. Why? I do not know. Perhaps it was the idea of taking class, or maybe I was simply looking forward to spending time with Trisha.

The weight and image of her cat, Chewy, briefly traipse through my mind.

As we arrived that afternoon, I remember carefully climbing a set of old rickety steps in what appeared to be an abandoned warehouse. Upon reaching the second story, I recall being confronted by a large hollow space. This expansive area, lined by a series of windows and skylights, was filled with a soft warm light.

Looking back, I don't think I had ever seen such a space before then. The studio, which took up the entire floor, was so big, so empty, and yet there was something about it that seemed completely inhabited. *I find it interesting that I just described the studio as being "empty" because there were other bodies present. Some were Trisha's age, while others were a little older. All of them, mostly female, were engaged in some type of physical activity.*

While we waited to sign-in for class, I remember scanning the room. In particular, I was absorbed by bodies rummaging through oversized bags or splaying

themselves in various sweeping and unusual positions. After the teacher greeted Trisha with a joyful sense of ease and familiarity, I remember her eyes turned inquisitively down to me. Her gaze seemed to be asking: “And who is this? And what is she doing here?” Both questions passed quickly between the two adults. They may have been sparked by the fact that I was a child at an adult intermediate/advanced class or conversely by the fact that I did not resemble the pale, blue-eyed woman standing beside me.

Still preoccupied with the unusual sights occurring around me, I can't tell you what was said. Nor can I relay how Trisha cajoled the teacher into allowing me to stay. She must have convincingly argued my presence wouldn't create a disturbance. Whatever the case, I remember I was told I would only be allowed to remain as long as I was quiet, well behaved, and didn't get in anyone's way. The specifics of what followed are extremely vague. I am assuming we did plies, tendus, and a petite allegro before going across the floor. Likewise, I can assume the class involved stretching and some kind of grand combination. But again, I can't be sure. The only thing I do know is I must have done everything asked of me, for I was encouraged to come back as often as I pleased.

How many times I actually returned with Trisha, I cannot tell you. Nor do I know how many people might have been annoyed or even excited by my initial presence in class. Years later, the only thing I remember with any sense of clarity was falling for the freedom I felt as I threw my body into the vastness of that expansive space.

Stop

This paper is an attempt to integrate the various insights I have gained as a graduate student at the University of California, Riverside. Although this incarnation emerged from a series of courses I took with Professors Jens Giersdorf, Anthea Kraut, Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Wendy Rogers, Cristina Rosa, Susan Rose, and Linda Tomko, many of the questions and ideas raised here have been those which have haunted me since my very first dance class. As such, the form of this paper – which flirts with and challenges notions of memory, storytelling, bodily traces, ephemerality, narrative, and time – may appear just as it disappears. At times the text may jump forwards and backwards; it may straddle the past as well as the present; and it may spiral an issue until both dissolve and unravel into and around themselves. The text may repeat itself. It may repeat itself. I may repeat myself until that repetition and the accumulation of that repetition reveals a new, and perhaps more profound, reality.

There may be unexpected “INTERRUPTIONS!” by the voice that lives inside my head, a voice I affectionately refer to as both my inner critic and my inner child.¹ Likewise, there may be unexpected intrusions by the individuals whose bodily traces inhabit my being and, through such embodiments, consciously and unconsciously, influence and haunt me as well as this work.² As much as possible, I will create “space” for these voices to freely express themselves without trying to restrict that expression.³ By taking such an approach, I hope to not only trace and uncover my own “dark writing,” the emotional life that moves me, but also explicate the points these hauntings may be trying to make visible with their otherwise seemingly rude interjections.⁴

As this narrative – or more specifically, the line of questions posited by this narrative – began with a work I presented during a class entitled “Cultural Approaches to Dance Studies, “ I will start the current unraveling process there.⁵ By doing so, I hope to not only address a few of my own emotional recurrences, but also discuss the parallel process of learning to confront and live with such emotionally potent material as addressed by a specific dance-theater work.⁶ In particular, I hope to show how my bodily memory evoked an emotional reading of “*Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009)⁷, as created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.⁸ By focusing on my own corporeal experiences, I wish to share a reading that is personal and culturally specific, mournful as well as optimistic.

“WAIT! YOU NEED TO TELL THE READER THAT YOU’RE INTERESTED IN THE IDEA OF ‘REPETITION’ AND THAT ‘REPETITION’ WILL SERVE AS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND YOUR CRITICAL ANALYSIS. YOU NEED TO TELL HIM/HER THAT THE TEXT, OR RATHER THE THROUGH-LINE OF THE TEXT WHICH SUPPORTS YOUR ARGUMENT, MAY APPEAR, DISAPPEAR, AND REAPPEAR AT VARIOUS POINTS IN TIME. ALSO, YOU NEED TO TELL THE READER THAT THESE ‘IDIOSYNCRATIC’ MOVEMENTS MAY NOT ALWAYS MAKE SENSE!”

In taking such a non-linear (non-traditional) approach, I pray I can create the space in which others feel invited into this conversation. Furthermore, I hope my methodology, and the personal “revelment” embodied in this approach, sets the stage by which to address other narratives “inscribed” within me.⁹ With that being said, it is time to begin at one of this story’s multiple beginnings.

Go!

I am not sure how to say what I am about to say without simply stating it: By the time I took “Cultural Approaches to Dance Studies,” I was.... well... depressed. To be perfectly honest, I was extremely depressed. Why exactly is not the focus of this paper and, thus, will not be discussed overtly. However, I feel it is import to acknowledge and reveal this part of myself because the constant despondency, maddening isolation, foreign alienation, and misdirected rage were enough to initiate a quest of self-inquiry.

At the time, the only thing I wanted was to move past these constricted sensations and return to a state of openness and ease. After many failed attempts of avoidance and forcing my way towards reconciliation, I realized the only way to gain the peace I sought would be by addressing the problem directly. (I had learned that only through this type of intimate interaction would I be able to see and thus understand what was pissing me off and why.)

The last few sentences need a bit of clarification. Currently, they suggest I was consciously aware of the need to deal with my unhappiness. If only this were the case. Unfortunately or fortunately, this revelation to sit down and connect with the underlying issue at hand did not surface until nearly every other strategy had failed – and failed miserably.

Before I got to the point of surrender, however, I recall attempting to mindfully fixate on all the beautiful things that brought joy to my life. I thought if only I could focus on the positive, I would be able to change the way in which I was seeing and thus

interacting with the world.¹⁰ I had hoped that, from this divergent perspective, I would be able to resolve the despondency growing within me by the hour and return to a state of tranquility and peace.

Initially, this attempt to root myself took shape in a formal assignment presented by Professor Jacqueline Shea Murphy. Specifically, she asked each of the students in her “Cultural Approaches” class to choose a dance clip and tell a related story. Without much thought, I immediately selected *Edward Watson Preparing for Mayerling (The Royal Ballet)* (2013). I’d seen the YouTube clip several times and for some reason really enjoyed watching it. In terms of spectacle, this video is not the most exciting thing out there. It presents the viewer with what is assumed to be a typical day for the lithe Royal Ballet dancer as he prepares to perform the lead in Sir Kenneth MacMillan’s *Mayerling*. The camera records Watson doing physical therapy, taking company class, visiting the massage therapist, rehearsing, and trying on costumes before heading home for the day. Each of these truncated episodes appear as a six minute video montage and are segmented by a few interstitial sound bites from Watson as well as those with whom he interacts.

I believe the narrative I presented to the class suggested I was interested in this particular work because it encapsulated memories from my childhood. Also, I am sure I said something about having been completely absorbed by this ballet as a young adolescent. For, before I had stumbled upon *Mayerling*, I’d only seen the classic standbys: *The Nutcracker*, *Cinderella*, *Swan Lake*, and the like. So, of course I was

fascinated by MacMillan's work. In comparison, it seemed so contemporary – people were, after all, shooting each other on stage. Additionally, I recall being excited when I learned the characters were based upon real people and documented events that MacMillan had theorized through movement.¹¹

As the course progressed, however, and we were asked to construct alternate readings of our selections, it became increasingly apparent that my fascination with *Edward Watson Preparing for Mayerling (The Royal Ballet)* (2013) wasn't based upon my memories of *Mayerling* the ballet or my fascination with Mayerling the Incident. Instead, it seemed I was fixated on *Edward Watson Preparing for Mayerling (The Royal Ballet)* (2013) because of the historically situated responses invoked by its narration.¹² The exact source of these feelings, memories, and emotions, however, would not emerge until later in Professor Shea Murphy's course.¹³

Reminded of my role as the “storyteller,”¹⁴ this may be an appropriate moment to stop. Back up. And retrace a few steps. I see some contextualization is in order. Specifically, I need to introduce myself. And the only way to do that is by sharing some personal history. That is, I need to tell you a bit more about who I am and where I come from.¹⁵ As I do so, I would also like to use this as an opportunity to present “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009) as created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.¹⁶ To accomplish both tasks, I would like to borrow the rhetorical device used to construct many of the biographies (i.e. the solos) that form the counters of this one hour and fifteen minute multi-media dance-theater piece.¹⁷ To

be even more transparent with my methodology, I would like to state that what follows is modeled after the narration that marks and disseminates the lived experiences of Bill T. Jones himself.

Unlike Jones, however, I do not have the luxury of actually using the technically fluid, sharp, and precise body of Antonio Brown to stand in as a physical embodiment of my words. Nor do I have the privilege of really employing any of the other nine versatile bodies of the cast for this task.¹⁸ But, I can borrow their bodies and physical forms and use them within the context of this story. Consequently, I would like you to imagine an elegant body of your choosing. Visualize her as she emerges from behind a wall of sheer, white curtains that ellipse the proscenium stage. Follow her as she confidently transverses a narrow ramp and steps onto a circular platform that protrudes from stage left. Continue to watch as she crosses the threshold that separates the performers from the audience. As she/I/my figurative body passes through this portal, feel the pool of light that bathes her in warmth and drowns out everything except the sacred space surrounding her.

See this figure as she takes her mark. Raising her arms above her head, she delicately clasps one wrist. Pulling gently, she elongates her torso to the right and roots her crossed legs deeper into the ground. While she does so, observe how the tall and stately narrator, Jamyl Dobson, suddenly appears upstage right in another pool of light. As though animating her form, he speaks:

She was born November 14, 1984 in Denver, Colorado. Stop. At the age of eight years old, she auditioned for and was accepted into an arts magnet school. Stop. After attending this institution through high

school, she would attend similar colleges and universities. Stop. As such, her life straddled two worlds. Stop. Academia. Stop. The Arts. Stop. “Us.” Stop. “Them.” Stop. Black. Stop. White.¹⁹ Stop.

Phenotypically, she’s described as “exotic looking.” Stop. Often, others find it difficult to pinpoint her racial origins. Stop. Her olive skin and curly – sometimes frizzy, straight, or wavy – hair confuses people. Stop. As do the freckles that lightly sprinkle the bridge of her nose and high cheekbones. Stop.

Identifying and isolating her national or racial origins is task always complicated by her body in “space.” Stop. In the right context, she could be Ethiopian. Stop. Dominican. Stop. Brazilian. Stop. Spanish or Indian. Stop. It’s a good thing she’s in America. Stop. Land of the free. Home of the brave. The “melting pot.” Stop.

Here she’s always between; next to; in front of; behind; over; or under other bodies that are markedly the same and yet remarkably different.²⁰ Stop. Context is key. Stop. Always. Stop.

Like the young duckling from *Are You My Mother?*, she perpetually waddles between time and space. Stop. Asking. Stop. “Do I fit here?” Stop. “Are you my mother?” Stop.

An idealist to her core, she wants to believe all things are possible. Stop. That one day, she’ll no longer be classified, objectified, and glorified as the “Other.” Stop. That the qualifier “of color” will no longer matter. Stop. That she will simply be allowed to be. Stop. No longer a marked body. Stop. Either of colonization or conquest. Stop. Integration or progress. Stop.

She prays for the day when everyone has the same opportunities for success and failure. Stop. Happiness and sorrow. Stop. Freedom and connection. Stop. Regardless of gender. Stop. Sex. Stop. Race. Stop. Sexuality. Stop. Nationality. Stop. Ethnicity. Stop. Religion. Stop. Or lack there of. Stop.

She hopes that one day all people will be free to be. Stop. That saying what’s politically correct will no longer be the only way we know how to talk to one another. Stop. That discomfort will not keep us from doing the work that needs to be done.²¹ Stop. That we will actually move beyond the “Us/Them” dichotomy that defines “Us” as separate from, different from, “Them.” Stop.

She’s educated enough to know today is not that day. Stop. We’re not there yet. Stop. But there’s hope. Stop. There’s always hope.²² Stop.

....

Before we continue, it is important that I, as the teller of this tale, once again repeat that the aforementioned introduction was created to mirror the textual structure of the biography that represents the life of Bill T. Jones in the work *“Fondly Do We Hope.... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009). The previously mentioned work, which premiered September 17, 2009 in Highland Park, Illinois, was commissioned by the Ravinia Festival to celebrate the life of President Abraham Lincoln. As such, the work inherently involves uncomfortable issues within U.S. history, including the residual traces and tensions of slavery, the *Emancipation Proclamation*, and the Civil War.

While we are paused here, I believe it is also important to acknowledge (and explain) that I have purposely chosen to insert my body into this text. (At times, I may even place myself amongst the performers “on stage.”) I am aware that by choosing to situate myself in this manner I may be forcibly directing the reader’s attention to something that could otherwise be left out – i.e. my own raced, gendered, and national body. Additionally, I know that by presenting myself in this manner I may be conjuring a restless legacy, which is recorded in both our corporeal as well as our textual archives.²³ Such documents include *The Declaration of Independence*, which, although proclaiming all people to be equally entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, fostered a nation that has historically restricted access based upon an individual’s race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and/or nationality. While such an approach and invocation could potentially be seen as aggressive, please know this is not my intention.

Instead, by inserting myself here, now, like this, and resurrecting our painfully shared history of subjugation and strife, I am attempting to point out that despite the prevalence of socially conscious legislation, racial body politics continue to play a role in how one navigates American society. Likewise, in situating myself here, now, like this, I am attempting to illustrate my belief that, in spite of the prevalence of politically correct speech, which has removed negative racial slurs from everyday language, we as a nation have yet to resolve many of the same issues that plagued Lincoln during his time. If we had, me placing my marked body in this text wouldn't have evoked a potential sense of anxiety either on your end or on my end. Likewise, had we actually resolved issues regarding racial body politics – which is a claim that we as a nation desperately cling to – I don't believe the skin tone of President Barack Obama would be cited as evidence of this transcendence. For if such transcendence had occurred, his skin tone would be a moot point. He would simply be another man who had become President of the United States.²⁴ (But that is another story.) Furthermore, had we actually progressed beyond the state of racially charged body politics, I don't believe there would have been so many feelings of discomfort evoked by *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"* (2009) as created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. For instead of experiencing potential guilt and/or shame regarding the subject matter, many might instead have left feeling good about the progress we have made as a nation.²⁵

Returning to my decision to insert myself, here, now, like this, I would like to make clear that my self-disclosure was not done in an effort to elicit a “Pobrecita! Poor little mulatta” response. There is too much of that rhetoric already circulating within the social science literature. Instead, by inserting myself here, now, like this, I have two goals in mind. The first is to pay partial homage to what indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) calls “relational accountability” in his book *Research is Ceremony* (p. 22). In particular, I am referring to Wilson’s (2008) assertion that within an Indigenous Research Paradigm, relational accountability is key to one’s research endeavors. Specifically, he writes,

... it is imperative... that as a researcher I form a *respectful* relationship with the ideas I am studying. In order for you to be able to see this relationship and how it was formed, you need to form your own relationship with me as a researcher. You need to understand some of the factors that go into my side of things. (Wilson, 2008, p. 22, emphasis added)

Taking this notion of relational accountability seriously, I am presenting as much of what Wilson calls my “whole person” as possible (p. 32).²⁶ For clarity, I must mention that I am not presenting all of my “whole person” as Wilson (2008) illustrates. To do so, I would need to present a list of all the individuals and experiences that have influenced my life and shaped the way I see and think about the world. Instead I am presenting some of the thoughts, hopes, and dreams that have emerged from these presently unmentioned encounters.²⁷ In doing so, I hope you as the reader can better understand some of the “factors that go into my side of things” (p. 22). These things, for better or for worse, affect me and influence what I see and how I write about the world (which could,

in turn, affect you). It is my hope that from such an informed position, you might better be able to hold me with care as you hold me accountable to other perspectives that might exist.

This, of course, relates to the second reason I have inserted and highlighted my body in this text. That is, by interjecting myself here, now, like this, I am making visible that I hold a particular belief about the power of the personal (which is a belief I seem to share with Jones). In particular, I am referring to a work entitled “Bill T. Jones in Conversation with Ann Daly.” During this interview, historian and dance scholar Ann Daly (1998) asks Jones about the inclusion of the personal within a large portion of his work. He responds:

There was a lot of criticism at that time of a lot of performance work that I was doing and that others were doing that was confessional. It was called self-indulgent. But I felt that the more personal it was, the more it invited larger discourse. Suddenly the audience couldn't feign consensus. *We couldn't feign anonymity. We responded.* (Daly, 1998, p. 119, emphasis added)

So like Jones, by inserting the personal, I hope to create the space in which a larger discourse can take place by purposely eliminating the ability to “feign consensus” (Daly, 1998, p. 119). To accomplish this goal, I have placed myself in this text. Here. Now. Like this. Borrowing the words of dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild, I believe “the only way out of [our] habitual cultural biases and racial stereotypes is to go through them – to air them out and analyze them” (quoted in Goldman 2010, p. 14 – 15).²⁸ Like Gottschild, I too believe we cannot pretend that such biases do not continue to exist and to express themselves in our social interactions. In an effort to walk my own walk, I

would like to take the first step and present to you, the reader, some of the beliefs and ideas “inscribed” within me. Such inscriptions, for better or for worse, have helped shape what Wilson (2008) calls my “whole person” and through such inscription are informing this work (p. 32). While this approach could potentially be very messy and complicate the present narration, I hope it does not exclude anyone who wishes to participate. That being said, it is time to once again proceed.

Body Electric

“HEAD”

collapses forward and circles to the right, revealing the vulnerable

“NECK.”

Straight arms remain extended, pleading at her sides.
A slight contraction in the lower abdominals brings the weight of her head and

“HAIR”

forward. Turning slightly to the right, she offers the left side of her face and

“EARS”

to the audience.

Her hips swivel back as her weight falls forward.
Her left arm dangles loosely pointing towards the ground in front of her.
Her knees bend as her weight is sent back.
The top of her head, the pull of her

“EYES,”

doubles her torso forward towards the floor.
Dropping the right arm to match the left, she rises.
As though holding something, her lightly clasped fingertips mark her

“EYE FRINGES.”

Still connected, her arms jointly circle to the left, focusing like the

“IRIS OF THE EYE.”

Her weight sweeps from one side to another, finding balance on a bent left knee.
Pulling away in opposition, her right leg forms a straight line
sharply broken by the flexion of her right foot.
Swinging back, her weight circles and arcs to the right.

“EYEBROWS”

indicate the upward motion of her weight, as her pelvis pulls her onto the right leg.
Passing over her face, her

“MOUTH,”

her arms expand and elongate into an open attitude arabesque.
Yawning, her limbs lengthen and then close to reveal the interior

“TONGUE.”

Catch step. Her left leg meets the right, pushing the right leg forward, chomping down like

“TEETH”

as her arms extend forward, parallel to the floor.

....

The previous text is an excerpt from a vocal and movement score that serves as a recurring theme throughout *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009).²⁹ The audible portion of the above score, marked in “CAPS,” is from a work by American transcendental writer Walt Whitman called “I Sing the Body Electric.”³⁰ The text not marked in “CAPS” derives from my own repeated observations of video footage featuring the beautifully sensuous moving body of dancer Shayla-Vie Jenkins. Within the context of *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009), Whitman’s text, as well as the previously described movement vocabulary, makes various appearances. Each time these elements materialize, they confront a changing situational context. Consequently, each repetition has a different potential reading. Each repetition evokes a different possible reading. Each repetition conveys a different alternate reading.

The first time these two scores appear, they open the show. As such, they are without prior contextualization and convey a sense of innocence.³¹ This type of purity is, in part, suggested by Jenkins’s placement. Specifically, as she is placed within the

circular orb that hovers off stage left, her movements convey a sense of softness and safety. This quality is further emphasized by the warm lighting that suggests an expansive intimacy. Accompanying the articulate expressions of Jenkins's long moving body, an unseen child recites Whitman's text. As the speaker remains invisible, this cataloguing of the body reads as a type of an internal dialogue Jenkins shares with the audience.

The second time the textual and movement scores materialize they each inhabit two markedly different bodies. Within this iteration, the ruggedly handsome LaMichael Leonard physicalizes the gestural score previously performed by Jenkins, while the charmingly attractive Jamyl Dobson gives voice to Whitman's text.

"STOP! YOU NEED TO TELL THE READER YOU'RE HIGHLIGHTING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE DANCERS BECAUSE AS A DANCER YOURSELF, AS A PERFORMER, THIS CAST REPRESENTS AN IDEALIZED TYPE OF 'PERFECTION.' YOU NEED TO TELL THE READER THAT WHILE THIS SENSE OF 'PERFECTION' IS MOSTLY TIED TO THE PHYSICAL ACTS THEIR BODIES ARE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING, THIS IDEALIZATION DOES INFLUENCE YOUR READING AND CONNECTION TO THE WORK!"

Within the second presentation of both scores, Leonard's body is clearly marked as that of an "object." This marking – and subsequent change in reading – is made evident through the increased speed of both scores, the confined nature of Leonard's movement, as well as the fact that he is African American and male. Furthermore, descriptive qualifiers like "strong" and "broad" take Leonard's well-defined body from the present moment and relocate it to the site of a pre-Civil War slave auction as an object of value. The latter association is further emphasized by Leonard's positioning

on stage. While Jenkins had remained safely encapsulated in the adjacent orb, Leonard performs center stage surrounded by five white columns that suggest imprisonment.

During the third presentation, the setting has once again changed. This time, instead of one body representing the physical form referred to in the spoken text, there are many performers. However, none of these individuals adheres to the prior movement structure. Instead, they work collectively to lift and suspend the two “haves of Lincoln,” which are represented by Paul Matteson, who serves as the dancing body of Lincoln, and Jamyl Dobson, who serves as both the speaking body of Lincoln and the narrator of the work. As though fixed in time, the cast holds these two figures in mid-air. Mirroring each other, Matteson and Dobson sit in quiet contemplation, evoking the iconic image of Lincoln seated at the Lincoln Memorial.

Once again, the unseen voice of the child speaker returns. This time, however, the speed with which she goes through the text suggests a school lesson quickly rehearsed through rote memorization. As her speed builds, Dobson recurrently adds physical descriptors between momentary pauses:

Little girl:
Head

Dobson:
Crushed head

....

Little girl:
Eye. Eye fringes. Iris of the eye.
Eyebrows and the waking and sleeping of the lids.

Dobson:

And the deprivation of sleep.

Little girl:
Mouth. Tongue. Lips. Teeth. Roof of the mouth.

Dobson:
Beating and kicking. Slapping. Punching. Kicking through.

....

The insertion of words like “beating,” “kicking,” “slapping,” and “punching” suggests the physical harm that can be inflicted upon another human being. For those familiar with United States history, these words evoke painful memories of past tragedies including the brutal death of young Emmett Till who was beaten and kicked to death in August of 1955. Likewise, these words call to mind recurrent injustices enacted on U.S. soil. The latter reading is succinctly captured by the phrase “and the deprivation of sleep,” which sparks images of torture inflicted upon prisoners of Guantanamo Bay beginning in January of 2002.

Although the striking similarities between the second and the third iterations create an invitation to look back and to group all three sections together – i.e. by asking if the alluring black body of Shayla-Vie Jenkins was meant to invoke the legacy of rape and violence historically inflicted upon the black female body – I find myself hesitant to do so. For while such a reading is possible, and in fact is made visible during a later quicker repetition of the same material, I’m reminded of the words of dancer, scholar and anthropologist Cynthia Novack (1995).

In an article entitled “The Body’s Endeavors as Cultural Practice,” Novack (1995) examines various conceptions of “the body” from the perspective of a

dancer/choreographer as well as that of a scholar. In an attempt to highlight the potential limitations of either position, Novack (1995) questions the basic assumption behind each side's perceptions and experiences of the body. She writes:

Both tendencies noted here – the academic predilection for reducing lived experience to theoretical abstraction and the reactive, dancerly impulse to posit movement and bodily knowledge as privileged over all other knowledge – represent responses to virtually the same construction of the person in American Culture. In this construction, 'body' constitutes a biological absolute, a purely physical reality (sometimes with emotion and desire attached), and a separate realm of existence. The differences result from interpretations of the significance of this isolated body and what one might know or not know from one's experience of it. (Novack, 1995, p. 180)

Essentially, Novack (1995) argues that because the body is more than a material substance – and instead is a type of social text – there is no universal experience of “the body.”³² Accordingly, she asserts that when examining “the body,” one needs to “take a step back and consider whose body we're talking about in any given instance, how that person or people are experiencing their bodies, and whether or not 'the body' is even at issue” (Novack, 1995, p. 180). This notion of stopping, looking, and asking whether the body is “even at issue” is important because it sheds light on the importance of *contextualizing* how a person operates within a given cultural space *before making any assumptions* about what that body is or is not doing. Furthermore, taking this moment to stop and reflect is crucial when discussing works as intricate and politically driven as “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009). For in pausing, one may discover not only how such works might be attempting to challenge and question deeply ingrained social assumptions regarding how a body can or cannot operate through

space, but also how such works might be attempting to disrupt those established beliefs.³³

Before we continue, I would like to pause and clarify that although I support Novack's (1995) efforts to prevent the universalizing of one's corporeal experience, I do believe there may be some value in being able to see and read the body as a general, *all-inclusive*, symbol. More specifically, I would like to suggest that perhaps within the context of "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009), the dancers' bodies might be operating as symbols of the "ordinary," the everyday, the normal, and the mundane – i.e. the human body more generally. (This reading is based upon the fact that each of us as has a body that feels itself as it moves and interacts with other bodies within and through various environments – regardless of sex, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or lack thereof.)

I hear the voice of Professor Wendy Rogers chime in. In particular, she reminds me that this is one of the strengths of choreographic works – i.e. the human form can simultaneously represent the particular as well as the general.

Under this assumption, Jenkins's body, and the solo she performs at the top of the show, might be representative of that all-inclusive tie.³⁴ But, before I can get into that, I need to first establish the potential importance of contextualization when reading "the body."

Foster's (1998) "Choreographies of Gender"

In an article entitled "Choreographies of Gender," dance studies scholar Susan Foster (1998) addresses what she believes to have been one of the fundamental issues behind feminist scholar Theresa de Lauretis's warning against the widespread use of "essentialism" by feminist theorist and scholars.³⁵ Foster (1998) writes:

... de Lauretis argued that the charge of essentialism as ascribed to certain feminist theory or theorists promulgated a divisive factionalism within the feminist movement that would serve the patriarchal status quo far better than any antifeminist agendas. (Foster, 1998, p. 1)

According to Foster (1998), de Lauretis was concerned the charge of "essentialism" created a dichromatic division in feminism that undercut feminist efforts to highlight the role society played in the construction of one's gendered identity. This occurred because any observed differences were perceived to be the result of one's innate abilities or some type of social subjugation, but not both.

While Foster (1998) doesn't really explain why de Lauretis's concerns were not more widely heeded, the development of subsequent arguments suggests semantics may have been a contributing factor. In particular, Foster's (1998) analysis suggests the critical distinction between "performed" and "choreographed" behavior may have been one of the things that undermined the feminists' cause. She writes,

If, the argument goes, gender is 'only' a performance, albeit deeply routinized and ingrained, then the theoretical space exists wherein such behavior could be resisted, altered, and refashioned so as to alleviate the prescriptions for gendered behavior that are experienced as oppressive by so many. (Foster, 1998, p. 1)

In such a statement, Foster (1998) makes clear that “performance” and “performative” may have been as problematic to the feminists’ cause as “essential” and “essentialism.” For, in describing one’s gender to be the result of an individual’s performed behavior, there is the implied assumption that a person has the ability to choose to do something else, something that may be considered less “oppressive” to the individual. Likewise, there is the implied assumption that the solution to the “problem” of gendered inequality is simple. That is, change the “oppressive” behavior. However, as Foster (1998) notes, the task of separating the body from the particular behavior performed is easier said than done.

Drawing upon the work of cultural studies scholar Yvonne Yarbo-Bejarano, Foster (1998) suggests there is an interconnectedness between the expressions of one’s social identities (i.e. race, gender, and sexuality). She argues

... this theorization of gendered, racial, and sexual categories must incorporate the ongoing dynamics of their impact on one another: ‘Notions of *simultaneous* oppressions are not entirely successful in capturing the ways these categories interact and interdefine one another, while conceptualizing the *intersection* of these categories may communicate an excessively static, rather than a dynamic understanding of the process.’ (Foster, 1998, p. 2-3; original emphasis)

In citing Yarbo-Bejarano, Foster (1998) highlights the importance of examining the “intersecting” expressions of self and the interactions these social identities have with one another. Likewise, in referencing Yarbo-Bejarano, Foster (1998) stresses the value of looking at a given social phenomenon within its cultural and historical context. By doing so, Foster (1998) argues the divides created by various socially prescribed

behaviors become more apparent, as do the inherent difficulties of isolating one behavior from another. Restated, it thus becomes that by looking at separate co-occurrences as distinct yet related “performances,” one can uncover the larger structure that may be orchestrating, or “choreographing,” an individual’s behavior across these different forms of expression within a particular cultural context. From this vantage point, both scholars suggest one is able to see how such seemingly disparate behaviors could not only be influencing one another but also be different variations of the same choreographic structure.

Returning to Foster’s (1998) opening arguments, it thus becomes that gender may be a “choreographed” rather than “performed” behavior; meaning that, while the use of the term “choreography” highlights the contextually specific, deeply ingrained structure of a given behavior, the use of the word “performed” or “performative behavior” examines a specific instance of one’s adherence to that structure. From this vantage point, one can better understand why de Lauretis may have been so concerned about the widespread use of “essentialism.” For as Foster (1998) writes,

Choreography resonates with cultural values concerning bodily, individual, and social identities, whereas performance focuses on the skill necessary to represent those identities. Choreography presents a structure of deep and enduring cultural values that replicates similar sets of values elaborated in other cultural practices, whereas performance emphasizes the idiosyncratic interpretation of those values (Foster, 1998, p. 5).

Foster’s (1998) analysis thereby suggests that “choreographed behavior” might have been the term feminist scholars meant to use when they wanted to describe an individual’s gendered identity as being the product of a particular socialization. This

reading is inferred by the assertion that “choreography” emphasizes the relationship between a given set of behaviors and a particular cultural ideology (i.e. the context), whereas “performance” only references an individual’s execution of that socially prescribed behavior (Foster, 1998, p. 5).

Although a slight detour, Foster’s (1998) distinction between “choreographed” versus “performed” behavior presents us with an interesting opportunity by which to examine the conception of repetition, its use, and contextualization within a specific choreographic structure. For although not overtly stated, Foster’s (1998) notion of “performed” versus “choreographed” behavior is based upon the work of feminist scholar Judith Butler. More specifically, Foster’s (1998) arguments are based upon Butler’s assumption that a particular behavior becomes “natural” through multiple repetitions of a specific cultural patterning. (It is argued that this repeated patterning is employed with the goal of suppressing all other mannerisms that do not strengthen and reinforce the “patriarchal status quo” (Foster, 1998, p. 1).)

While this theory is acceptable in abstraction, and may provide insights as to why we do what we do in our specific social settings, there are may be some inherent problems with this conception of repetition when applied to a specific dance-theater piece. That is, there may be some drawbacks to this theory of repetition when applied to a dance-theater piece that openly deals with socially contentious issues such as race relations within the United States. To illustrate a few of these potential problems, I would like to return to “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009). In

particular, I would like to return to the three sections that reference Walt Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric."

Repeat: "Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray" (2009)

Commissioned to commemorate the bicentennial of President Abraham Lincoln's birth, "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009) premiered September 17, 2009. Within the context of this one hour and fifteen minute dance-theater piece, repetition is featured as a primary choreographic tool. Repetition is used to reference historical documents including *The Lincoln Douglas Debates*, *The Declaration of Independence*, *The Gettysburg Address*, as well as Lincoln's second inaugural address. Repetition in sound is used to reference the "Ghost Train" that carried the dead President's body home in 1865. Repetition in text used to cite segments of Whitman's "I Sing The Body Electric" (as well as other works by Whitman which form parts of the acoustic score). Repetition in narrative is used to cite biographical information that reconstructs the life and legacy of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln.³⁶ And repetition in movement shapes the dancers' use of space, gesture, and patterning.³⁷ As a result, various details recur throughout this seventy-five minute dance-theater work.

While one could spend a great deal of time examining each element of repetition (as well as the variations that occur within each iteration), I would like to focus on the repetitions surrounding Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric." I have selected these three sections because they highlight some possible limitations that may arise if repetition (a.k.a. "performance") is viewed only as a means by which to mask, instill,

and/or maintain a particular cultural ideology. To emphasize this belief, I must begin by once again revisiting the instances in which Whitman's text is front and center of this specific dance-theater work.

The first time Whitman's text appears within "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009) it begins the show. During this iteration, the voice of an invisible girl quickly runs through a small section of a poem entitled "I Sing the Body Electric." The undeveloped quality of her voice suggests the speaker could be about ten-years old. Her youthfulness, and our assumption of innocence, at times seems in tension to the fully developed and articulate expressions produced by African American dancer Shayla-Vie Jenkins.³⁸

Tied into this reading of contrast –e.g. between the maturity and sensuality of Jenkins's body and the innocence and youth of the pre-pubescent speaker – is the choice of costuming. In particular, the yellow and grey color of Jenkins's flowing floor-length gown, which features a low v-back, emphasizes the tone and sensuality of her dark skin. This subtle, yet presumed sensuality, sexuality, is particularly striking as Jenkins executes a series of extreme back bends or takes a Horton inspired hinge to arrive kneeling on the floor. In performing such actions, the soft and delicate image suggested by her elegant attire suddenly confronts the physical prowess of her dancing body. As she performs such actions, the dancer in me is reminded of the strength and power necessary to skillfully and repeatedly throw one's body forwards and backwards into such extreme backbends.

Scholar and activist bell hooks (1981) also comes to mind. I am reminded of her work Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism.³⁹ I wonder what she would think about the perceived tension evoked by these two images of Jenkins (i.e. the soft and delicate female body and the strong and powerful black female body). What might she think about the dancing body, the black dancing body, the female dancing body, and the black dancing female body in particular?

The next time Whitman's text appears, it occurs about forty-five minutes later. This time, the poem is recited by the visibly present, tall, and refined African American performer Jamyl Dobson. Please recall: Dobson serves as both the audible half of Lincoln as well as the "narrator." In the former position, Dobson recounts various speeches and events from Lincoln's life, while the eloquent Caucasian American dancer Paul Matteson provides a visual physical representation. As the "narrator," Dobson acts as the voice of the dancing bodies on stage, often "saying what they cannot or will not say" (*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*, 2009).

Occupying the space previously inhabited by Jenkins, Dobson recites Whitman's text. Meanwhile the good-looking African American dancer LaMichael Leonard serves as the referenced body enacting the previous movement score.⁴⁰ Despite the similarities in text and movement, Leonard's performance reads differently. First of all, he proceeds through his movement much more quickly than Jenkins. Whether the product of increased speed, or the more confined space in which he finds himself,

certain gestures appear smaller and more restricted. This contrast is particularly visible during the opening section of both solos and pertains to the amount of space each dancer occupies with his/her arms. While Jenkins's arms seem boundless and appear to extend infinitely, Leonard's appendages often remain close to his body, broken at the elbows, as though he's occupying all the space afforded.

Within the second iteration, another noticeable difference revolves around the continuity of the phrase. While Jenkins had proceeded through the score in a building, yet undisturbed manner, Leonard's movement is frequently interrupted by the sound of a cracking whip. With each strike, his body convulses before continuing through the phrase. During such instances, his arms momentarily elongate, thereby suggesting a plea for assistance.

In addition to the interruptions in movement sequencing, the second iteration features alterations to Whitman's original score. Specifically, while the text accompanying Jenkins performance only seemed to list parts of the body (e.g. head, neck, mouth, etc.), the text accompanying Leonard's performance includes qualifiers that describe the physical aspects of his body (e.g. "strong shoulders" and "broad back"). Such descriptors suggest the potential labor that can be extracted from his "strong shoulders" and "broad back." As Leonard is a tall athletic African American male, the insertion of such indexes easily evokes the legacy of slavery. The costuming showcasing Leonard's well-defined chest, toned torso, and muscular arms further emphasizes this reading. For unlike earlier instances, when Leonard wears a three-piece suit, here he dons a light-colored loose fitting shirt, a pair of non-descript brown

pants, and a pair of plum suspenders. (In short, he's dressed to look like a stereotypical cotton picker.)

The suggestion of enslavement is further supported by how Leonard's solo ends. After making contact with the floor – i.e. by rolling forward over his shins, ankles, and toes – Leonard retrogrades this movement to return to standing. His feet are placed in a wide fourth position. As his weight settles into the ground, his arms reach longingly outwards and upwards and his palms stretch open. The flattened image of his arms and hands suggests a captured being pressing himself against the glass container that confines him. This trapped image of Leonard is markedly different from that of Jenkins. For while Leonard's ending suggests he is resigned to his fate, Jenkins's ending suggests she is willing to fight. The later is suggested by the energy employed as she forcefully slaps the ground in front of her before the lights change.

The sense of bodily seizure and entrapment during the second iteration is further emphasized by Dobson's tone. In contrast to other sections of this dance-theater work, where Dobson's seems sympathetic to the dancing bodies represented on stage, here the tone and speed of his articulations suggest a pushy salesman attempting to auction Leonard to the highest bidder. He asks the audience,

Strong shoulders, do you hear me?
Strong shoulders.
Manly beard.
Scapula.
Ladies and gentlemen:
Do I hear hind-shoulders and the ample side-round of the chest?
...

Such wording establishes a clear connection between “the body” and slavery, and further focuses one’s attention on the black body in particular (Jones & Moyers, 2009). The direct meaning inferred by this section creates a different invocation than inferred by Jenkins’s initial solo, where it seems the viewer is free to develop one’s own interpretation of the juxtaposition of the words and the movement.

The third time Whitman’s text is referenced within “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009) the environment has once again shifted. To begin with, this iteration follows a brief blackout. Out of this darkness, Jenkins emerges and quickly transverses a thin panel of light that marks the area between the proscenium stage and adjoining platform. Matteson, as though on a slight delay, follows Jenkins into the light. His progression, however, is cut short. He stops at the beginning of the lit path, while Jenkins’s continues walking towards the orbiting performance space she previously occupied. The deep and hollowed sound of someone singing “I know, I know, I know, I know, I know” fills the air with an internal density that seems to cause spectators to instantly feel the increasing tempo of their own heartbeat.

Upon reaching the center of the platform, Jenkins repeats her initial solo. This time, however, the movement is performed at a quicker, more frantic pace. The contrast between her earlier performance and the current reiteration is drastic, to the point that similarities between the two solos are hard to recognize. While Jenkins had seemed calm, sensual, and relaxed at the top of the show, there is now a rushed, agitated, and unending quality to her movement. The audience watches tensely, as she hurriedly jumps up, between, and through recurring movements, gestures, and shapes.

It's only after noticing the continued presence of the motionless Matteson that Jenkins' movement stills. As though collecting herself, she briefly pauses and then aggressively walks towards the dancing body of Lincoln. The two figures forcefully lock hands before she continues past him. Seemingly stunned by the encounter, Matteson remains frozen in the light before turning to catch a final glimpse of Jenkins, as her body is engulfed by the surrounding darkness.

Once again fixed in a hushed paralyzed suspension, Matteson's gaze searches for an answer. Dobson emerges from the darkness that just engulfed Jenkins's body. His eyes meet Matteson's. Facing one another, the two figures step forwards and backwards, towards and away from each other and the audience for a few beats. As they do so, their paths cross and re-cross the threshold marked by the lighting and the scrim, the latter of which has been partially closed to reveal a small opening. The slow and steady sound of drums echoes in the distance, as the sound of a whining violin pierces the air.

Traveling into the darkness one last time, the two figures raise their arms in what suggests an embrace. Their contact, however, is interrupted. As though from thin air, the cast suddenly lifts and suspends Matteson and Dobson into the air. Affixed in this ungrounded space, Matteson and Dobson face one another in positions mirroring the black and white ingrained images of Lincoln seated at the National Mall. The weight of their bodies is fully supported by the dancers hoisting them.

The young female speaker's voice once again returns to recite Whitman's words. As she runs through this catalogue of the body, the cast reinforcing the floating halves

of Lincoln begins to slowly inch their way forward. As before, Dobson places various interjections in-between Whitman's text. This time, however, his insertions read as a type of echo that express the things the young girl "cannot or will not say" about the types of physical damage that can be inflicted upon the human body (*"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray," 2009*). For example, following the young girl's listing of the human skull, Dobson interjects "crushed head" (Ibid.). After she names the nose and mouth, he responds, "Water poured over the nose and mouth" (Ibid.). As this section continues, and more violent descriptors are slid in between the lines of Whitman's sensual text, the physical severity of these actions appears to knock the white dancing body of Lincoln (i.e. Matteson) over. From the audience's vantage point, it appears Lincoln's/Matteson's fall coincides with the accumulating examples of violence historically inflicted upon darker bodies within the United States.

In my mind, the voice of Rodney King calls out, "Can't we all just get along?"

After catching, suspending, rotating, and reorienting the dancing body of Lincoln to face the audience, the dancers sustaining both halves of Lincoln begin to retreat into the darkness. The scene quickly dissolves as both representations of the sixteenth president are lowered to the ground and a series of tableaux are formed.

These particular sections from *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"* (2009) were selected because they not only reference Whitman's "I Sing the Body

Electric,” but also because they provide an opportunity by which to more closely examine the role a given conception of repetition/performance might play in how one reads a particular choreographed work. To be even more transparent with what may follow, I have selected these three sections because I believe that how one reads *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009), as a whole, largely depends upon how one conceives of the use and purpose of repetition/performance.

Returning to Foster (1998)

Returning to Foster’s (1998) “Choreographies of Gender,” I would like to repeat that the aforementioned essay was a type of response to the work of queer feminist scholar Judith Butler. In particular, Foster’s (1998) analysis grounds itself in Butler’s books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). By referencing these specific works, which look at the socially constructed notion of gender and the materiality of the body, Foster (1998) works to clarify Butler’s assertion that one’s gendered identity is a culturally constructed, historically, and contextually specific behavior that has obtained “normalcy” through multiple repetitions (i.e. “performances”) of a particular (“choreographed”) structure. Foster (1998) writes,

Performativity for Butler ... exercises power through *compulsory reiteration*. In order for gender to appear as natural, as the inevitable product of the body’s sex, the acts through which it is constituted are *repeated* so frequently and interminably as to foreclose any possible apprehension of their constructedness: *‘Performativity is thus not a singular “act,”* for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or

dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition.’ (Foster, 1998, p. 4 – 5, emphasis added)

In citing Butler, Foster (1998) appears to acknowledge that she agrees with the idea that a socially constructed behavior “becomes” “natural” through multiple repetitions. These “compulsory reiterations,” as Butler calls them, work to solidify, reinforce, and normalize the execution of a specific set of cultural prescribed behaviors and practices, while simultaneously masking the presence of the structure shaping and governing those social patterns (Foster 1998). Thus, no particular repetition/performance is ever an isolated event, but instead exists along a chain of events that collectively works to reinforce a particular cultural ideology.

Under this notion of repetition, the different iterations of Whitman’s text could be viewed as different “performances” of the same choreographic structure. This is a possibility, despite variations that occur between iterations of textual and movement material, based upon subsequent arguments in which Foster (1998) asserts that “choreography” is that which “endures.” Specifically, she writes that as a

... plan or framework of decisions that implements a set of representational strategies, [choreography] is what endures as that which is augmented, enriched, or repressed in any given performance. It is that which changes slowly over the multiple performances. (Foster, 1998, p. 16 -17)

If choreography is the framework that “endures” across variations in “performance,” the three references to Whitman’s “I Sing the Body Electric,” as well as the movement score initially performed by Jenkins, could thereby constitute three different repetitions/performances of the same choreographic structure.⁴¹

Under this assertion of repetition/performance, the following inferences may be made regarding *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"* (2009). First, if each of these sections is a repetition/performance of the same choreographic structure, one could argue the work is suggesting there has been little change in race relations within the United States since the *Emancipation Proclamation*.

Such a pessimistic reading is suggested by the inclusion of words that describe not only the objectification of the black body (e.g. "broad shoulders" and "strong back"), but also the types of physical abuse that historically have been experienced by that "object" (e.g. "beating," "kicking," and "punching"). For an individual familiar with U.S. history, words like "crushed," "beating," "kicking," and "slapping" take the viewer on a journey of times pasts. Specifically, these words remind an informed viewer of periods in our national narrative when darker bodies were "property," and as such could be bought, sold, or treated as the owner saw fit. These words also recall Jim Crow era laws when darker bodies were legally stigmatized, segregated, and punished if they were thought to act out of place. Furthermore, these words conjure memories of public outcry over continued instances of this type of racially motivated violence – e.g. The Rodney King/L.A. Riots.

I see the mutilated and disfigured Emmett Till come to mind. Specifically, I recall my initial impulse to gag when I first saw his maimed and collapsed skull restlessly lying in his open casket. He was only fourteen when he died. I was only fifteen when I saw this image of his maimed body in my "U.S. History" class.

I attempt to think about something else. I feel compelled to wash away the visceral horror elicited by my memories of this part of our national history. And yet, I can't. There's a part of me that worriedly fears something like this could still happen – perhaps to one of my brothers – simply for whistling at a white woman or some homophobic white man.

This fear, this worry, as well as this reading of the persistence of such a violent cultural ideology is possible if one adheres to the claim that repetition/performance is the means by which to maintain a particular social, cultural, and/or political ideology (Foster, 1998, p. 1). For as Foster (1998) asserts, the “representational strategies” of a particular “framework” are “augmented, enriched, or repressed” in order for a particular ideology to “endure” across time and place (Foster, 1998, p. 17).

Before we continue, I need to stop, back up, and emphasize that I am taking Foster's (1998) arguments regarding the socially constructed nature of gender and applying them to the equally arbitrary notions of race. Likewise, this might also be a good place to clarify that I am taking Foster's (1998) notion of repetition/performance and taking it to its extremes as I use it to look at a specific dance-theater work by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. I believe I am at liberty to take such actions as Foster (1998) not only grounds her essay in the work of cultural studies scholar Yvonne Yarbo-Bejarano, but also uses an analogy of the lone choreographer to support her beliefs about the choreographic nature of gender. This

reframing of Foster's (1998) arguments is not to imply a cause and effect relationship, but instead is to suggest that this type of reframing and recasting is not unusual within the realm of academia.

Returning to *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"* (2009), and the idea that the three sections referencing Whitman's "I Sing The Body Electric" are examples of three different repetitions/performances of the same underlying ("choreographic") structure, the following message may also be received: Racial body politics not only influenced social relations during Lincoln's time, but also continue to play a role in how one navigates American society today. Under the previously mentioned notion of repetition/performance, one is encouraged to cluster all similar patterns together as expressions of the same unifying structure. This thereby invites one to group Jenkins's initial solo with the subsequent movement material performed by Leonard and the suspended Matteson and Dobson. Furthermore, under the aforementioned notion of repetition/performance, one may be encouraged to look at the long legacy of slavery and ask if perhaps this painful period in American history might have been a symptom, versus a cause, of ever-persistent racial tensions. This somewhat depressing possibility comes to mind based upon the concept of "heuristics."

Referred to as mental short cuts within the field of cognitive psychology, "heuristics" are believed to help an individual quickly make a decision based upon past information. Although these mental short hands enable one to quickly come to a decision, the information one relies upon is often unchecked stereotypical

information. (E.g. a house has four walls and a roof. And a house can “only” have, “must” have, four walls and a roof.)

Taking this notion of heuristics and applying it to the present discussion regarding repetition/performances, the following thoughts come to mind. If heuristics are mental short cuts repeated time and again for convenience and efficiency – and if “in-group” versus “out-group preferences” are two of those cognitive short cuts that enabled our ancestors to survive (i.e. by rewarding similar others and those who stuck together) (Brewer, 1999) – then is change ever possible?⁴² Is inclusion ever possible? What happens in places as diverse as the United States that are home to many people of different races, genders, nationalities, religions, or sexualities? What happens when it is not always clear “who’s in” and “who’s out”? Is trust or progress ever possible when an individual’s actions and thinking go unchecked and are simply repeated indefinitely?

Taking these questions and returning to “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009), it seems possible the work might be suggesting that slavery was the product of some deeply ingrained mental short cut gone horribly array. This heart wrenching reading is possible if one adheres to the notion that repetition/performance is a tool of social control that can vary its expression over time with the purpose of masking and maintaining a particular cultural ideology (Foster, 1998). For in this instance, slavery becomes simply an efficient means of identifying and separating “Us” from “Them.”

If this reading wasn't depressing enough, by the time the viewer arrives at the end of this one hour and fifteen minute dance-theater work, and the elegant Taiwanese American dancer I-Ling Liu performs the final solo, one might walk away from this piece thinking things may never change. This less than optimistic reading is inferred by the text accompanying Liu's solo. Enshrined in a warm pool of light, Liu executes a series of suspended back bends, long spinal twists, and expansive leg spirals in the area of the adjacent platform. As she does so, Dobson recites the following:

I was born in 2009.
I've lived a hundred years.
We *too* fall in love and kill each other.
Like you, we sometimes *violently* disagree.
For us, as for you, Lincoln is a story we tell ourselves.
We think about that man born 300 years ago,
his times and his big questions.
We *still* dedicate, consecrate, ourselves
to his *unfinished work*.
But for us, you are our big question.
The world I live in, you would not recognize.
However, *some things never change*. Like
waiting,
disappointment
and still believing
in great men
and
great women.

While this solo mirrors many of the qualitative and compositional elements presented in Jenkins's initial solo, the wording here could be interpreted as a type of hopeless resignation. For, if repetition/performance is a device that works to solidify, mask, and instill a particular cultural ideology over an extended period of time, then it is possible to believe that things haven't changed since Lincoln's time, they haven't changed in our

lifetime, and they may never change. This extremely narrow and overly pessimistic reading could in part explain why some individuals walked away from “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009) so dissatisfied (Hercules & Quinn 2011; Kourlas, 2010; Weinstein, 2010).⁴³

Fortunately or unfortunately, this is not the only reading one may derive from this work. By simply redirecting one’s focus, and changing one’s understanding of the purpose and use of repetition/performance, it is possible to obtain an alternate, more hopeful, reading of this work by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.

Where is the Body?

“Wait!”

“Stop!”

*One of the voices inside my head
perhaps that of the dance scholar(?)
has pushed her way to the page.*

“Where is the body?”
she breathlessly asks.

“It’s right there!”

*I point emphatically towards the section describing my racial/physical form
And then to subsequent sections reporting the racial classifications of the individual
dancer’s in “Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray” (2009)*

*Shaking her head,
dissatisfied with my response,
she once again presses,
“Where’s your body?”*

*Squirming,
I exhale with a heavy sigh.*

“Ugh.”

*I wish she’d stop shaking me like a rag doll with these questions.
I don’t know what she wants me to say.*

*Can't she see I am being as mindful as I can?
That I am exhausted by the constant accusations
that I am objectifying her,
me,
them
us
through the use of language?*

*Retreating slightly, before circling around, I ask
"And how do you expect me to talk about
you/me/my/OUR/their
perceptions without prepositional forms of speech?"*

*Sensing the confusion and annoyance in the question,
her finger shakes disapprovingly,
"It's not enough to show the body."
Redirecting the wagging appendage
she pokes me in the sides.
"What is the body doing?"*

*I retract in mild annoyance.
I squelch the building laughter
that somehow feels inappropriate considering the seriousness of the matter.
Sensing my discomfort, she stops.*

*"Well?"
the hands on her asymmetrically balanced hips ask expectantly.*

*A dryness forms in my mouth.
My intestines begin to twist.
Sweat drops from unseen places,
I begin to scramble for a response.*

*"Where's my body?" She tries for a third time.
The playfulness in her voice has dissipated.
Like a deflating balloon, her head drops.
She's upset that after twenty-five years dancing
I feel unable to answer this question.*

*Yawning, a thought dawns on me
Maybe this isn't the scholar speaking?
Could she be my own dancing body?*

*"Crap!"
This must feel like a betrayal,
a real punch in the gut.
Choking,
unable able to speak,
my eyes nervously wonder what she wants me to say?*

*That I feel as invisible as she's suggesting
I've made her in this text?
That I feel guilty for having bought into this belief
that she, that I, must remain quiet, well behaved,
and out of anyone's way in order to stay?
That I haven't made space for her
here, now, like this,
because I feel there's no space
for her or for me,
to breathe
either
inside or outside of it?*

*"Where's your body?" she asks extending a hand.
I begin to fidget.
Is she asking me to perform?⁴⁴
I feel I am always performing.
I'm tired of performing.
Of always
tossing and turning,
cautiously crossing unsettled ground,
to inch my way
forwards, backwards,
between, over, under, or around
places where I don't feel I quite belong.*

*My breath is shallow,
chest constricted,
my head swims and throbs in pain.
This whole subject is beyond uncomfortable.*

"Where is the body?" she once again asks optimistically

...

Returning to Me Via Foster (1998)

Before we continue, I feel I need to situate Susan Foster's (1998) arguments a bit more. Specifically I sense I need to clearly demonstrate how her arguments relate to me, and the present narrative I am weaving about repetition/performance. In order to provide this contextualization, I feel I need to repeat that Foster's (1998) "Choreographies of Gender" was based upon the work of queer feminist scholar Judith Butler. Likewise, I feel compelled to point out that Foster's (1998) essay was an attempt to reframe Butler's notion of performative behavior (i.e. the "compulsory reiterations" of culturally prescribed actions) in dance specific terms (p. 4). Relatedly, my gut tells me I should stress that in reframing Butler's assertions, Foster (1998) was attempting to direct scholarly discourse away from "individual execution or enactment" of a given behavior (i.e. "performance") and refocus attention on the "historical and cultural specificities" shaping an individual's performance (i.e. "choreography") (p. 27).

Additionally, my head tells me I should emphasize that Foster's (1998) arguments were based upon the underlying assumption that repetition/performance has the accumulated effect of making something seem natural, normal, and ordinary. Using this theory, it is assumed that over time these multiple iterations mask the organizing structure directing one's behavior because the aforementioned structure becomes internalized as a result of one's mastery over the frequently repeated behavior. Borrowing the words of dance anthropologist Sally Ann Ness (2008), one could say that this culturally prescribed behavior becomes "inscribed" into one's body through the "multiple acts" of repetition (Foster, 1998).⁴⁵ And through such inscription, one could

argue, the organizing structure creating and reinforcing a particular cultural ideology becomes inconspicuous while an individual's execution of that invisible framework is highlighted.

“WAIT A MINUTE! YOU DIDN'T SAY THAT YOU TOOK FOSTER'S (1998) NOTION OF REPETITION/PERFORMANCE AND PUSHED IT TO ITS EXTREMES REGARDING RACIAL IMPLICATIONS. NOR DID YOU TELL THE READER, THAT IT WAS THROUGH THIS PUSHING THAT YOU ARRIVED AT THE PREVIOUS READINGS OF “*FONDLY DO WE HOPE ... FERVENTLY DO WE PRAY*” (2009).”

“YOU NEED TO TELL THE READER THAT IT WAS THIS PUSHING THAT LED YOU TO THE POTENTIALLY DIRE READINGS ABOUT SLAVERY BEING A POSSIBLE SYMPTOM OF SOME DEEPLY INGRAINED CULTURAL PATTERNING/HEURISTIC AND THE CONCLUSION THAT THINGS MAY NEVER CHANGE.”

“OH! AND DON'T FORGET, YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE THE READER UNDERSTANDS THAT ‘CHOREOGRAPHY,’ NOT REPETITION/PERFORMANCE, IS WHERE CHANGE IS POSSIBLE FOR FOSTER (1998).”

Returning to “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009) – as well as the various narratives I've placed into this text – the following questions come to mind: Could the various histories, *memories*, narratives, theories, experiences, and “INTERRUPTIONS” inserted inside and outside this text be examples of multiple repetitions/performances of the same choreographic structure? If so, what cultural

ideologies might be inscribed, reinforced, and potentially masked in, by, and through these repeat performances? What may be at stake in believing that each of these histories, *memories*, narratives, theories, experiences, and “INTERRUPTIONS” are iterations of the same choreographic structure repeating itself in different forms?

Though I have no intention of answering any of the previously posed questions, I have noted them because it seems the model of repetition/performance that we are currently dancing around and with grounds itself in the belief that a particular cultural ideology is perpetually produced, reproduced, and reinforced through repeated behaviors. Such reinforcement is believed to persist across time, space, and variation (Foster, 1998). For, as previously noted, it has been assumed the cultural “choreography” is that which “endures” as an individual repetition/performance is changed or “augmented” (Foster, 1998, p. 16- 17). This model thereby makes the inscription of a particular social structure a process that requires constant reiteration (Foster, 1998, p. 4-5).

While we are paused here, I feel it might be good to note that I have chosen to revisit Foster’s (1998) notion of repetition/performance because something about the idea that repetition/performance is a means of maintaining a particular “status quo,” whether racial or patriarchal, does not sit well with me. Specifically, I find myself asking that if repetition/performance is used to maintain and reinforce a specific cultural ideology, and if this structure has the ability to change its expression in order to continue to maintain that cultural ideology, then how is change possible? Although Foster (1998) argues (new?) “choreography” is the way out, I find myself asking how

such “choreography” comes into existence? For as a product of a given social environment, the “choreographer” (whether an individual body or a collective group of bodies) has already been influenced by a particular set of cultural inscriptions that have been repeatedly performed and inscribed into the body (Brewer, 1999; Foster, 1998; Mauss, 1973). Consequently, isn’t it possible that any new “choreography” is merely a repetition/performance of an older “choreography” that is attempting to retain the mask that invisibilizes its power and its influence over the social movement of a group of bodies? After all, she did argue that the choreography is that which “endures,” even as the repetition/performance is “augmented, enriched, or repressed”(Foster, 1999, p. 17).

Consequently, I find myself struggling to wrap my head around the possibility that a “choreographer” could be aware enough of one’s cultural inscriptions, and the impact of those inscriptions, to be removed from their effects in order to make “strategic choices” that comment on how one’s own body or other bodies are moving in and through a particular social space (Foster, 1998, p. 10). Couldn’t any form of “choreography,” therefore be another repetition/performance (albeit in a different form) established to maintain the “status quo”? Couldn’t the “choreographer” simply be another repeating/performing/dancing body carrying out a particular score unaware that that s/he is carrying out this score?

One of the voices in my head asks, “Does this mean there is no hope? That we will continue to repeat/perform/dance social structures that are in someway oppressive?”

Does this mean I have no agency in my life? That I cannot change the things I feel may not be serving me well as I would like? That I may always feel marginalized as an exotic other who doesn't quite fit in?"

The chant of Cesar Chavez, echoed by then Presidential nominee Barack Obama, rings through my ears: Sí, se puede! Sí, se puede! Yes, we can! Yes, we can! Yes, we can! The repetition of this call to action mirrors that delivered by Martin Luther King, Jr. while standing at the feet of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963. Delivered at the height of the Civil Rights movement, the message, then, as it is now, is that there is hope and with hope there is the possibility of change!

Repeating Questions

1. What does it mean to repeat something?
2. Is repetition the act of revisiting something that has passed?
3. Must two things look alike to be considered acts of repetition?
 4. Can there be variation?
 5. Is there "space" for variation in repetition?
 6. What do such variations mean?
 7. Who can make these changes?
8. Is there a particular directionality to repetition?
9. Is repetition confined to a particular sequential format?
10. Is repetition performed on stage the same as repetition performed in everyday life?

11. What's the difference?
12. Is there a difference?
13. Could repetition be a means to notice difference?
14. What does it mean to repeat something?
15. Could repetition be a type of narrative?
16. Could repetition be a means of naming and reclaiming a particular narrative?
17. Could repetition be a type of empowerment?
18. A means of education?
19. Is it possible that repetition doesn't just invisibilize or visibilize?
20. Could repetition be a means of establishing familiarity?
21. Of forming connections?
22. Of taking action?
23. What does it mean to repeat something?
24. Is it possible to ever answer this (or any of these) question(s)?
25. What might be the purpose of the repetitions embedded within and across this text?

A Case for "The Body"

In the opening chapter of an anthology co-edited with fellow dance scholar Sally Ann Ness, Carrie Noland (2009) looks at the kinesthetic agency that exists within an individual's body. Using the graffiti writer as analogy, Noland (2009) suggests that a close observer can notice small degrees of change that occur in performances across

time, space, and bodies – even while the individual carries out a specific socially constructed script. She writes,

In the magnified scope of the graffiti gesture, writing affords the writer an opportunity to impress the individual shape and vitality of the body's motor power onto the counters of the cultural sign. Yet if the writer performs the motion repeatedly, his own body will eventually be inscribed, the muscles and ligaments physiologically altered, by the gestural routine that expresses and confines his body at the same time. (Noland, 2009, p. 1)

By making such a claim, Noland (2009) argues that over time, through the act of repetition/performance, a particular gesture works to inscribe itself into the musculature of an individual's body. While this assertion is clearly made in reference to Ness's (2008) book *The Inscription of Gesture: Inward Migrations in Dance*, Noland (2009) seems to take a slight divergence in suggesting that inscription may be a two-way street. Specifically, she writes,

As I observed the writer, his gestures revealed themselves to be simultaneously a repetitive routine and an improvisational dance; a *script* was obviously at the root of the performance and a script was its ultimate, durable product, but in between, as I could plainly see, a body was afforded a chance to feel itself moving through space. (Noland, 2009, p. 1)

In this phrase, Noland's (2009) use of the word "script" mirrors the socially constructed behaviors (i.e. "choreography") that Foster (1998) previously argued shape one's movement through a particular social landscape. However, Noland's (2009) notion of repetition/performance suggests that space exists "in between" the script and the execution of that script where an individual can exercise one's individual agency. For Noland (2009), this opportunity for change exists for everyone, "despite the enormous

pressures of social conditioning” (p. 1). Referred to as “variations in performance,” Noland (2009) suggests that small changes occur in the execution of a particular script due to the accumulated knowledge an individual acquires through repeat performances of the same behavior (p. 3).

Elaborating on this notion, Noland (2009) argues that as one moves through time and space the individual’s acquired

...kinesthetic experience, produced by acts of embodied gesturing, places pressure on the conditioning a body receives, encouraging variations in performance that account for larger innovations in cultural practice that cannot otherwise be explained. (Noland, 2009, p. 2-3)

In making such a statement, Noland (2009) makes clear that although the body may be a type of social text, it does not passively submit to all forms of cultural inscription (i.e. repetition/performance) without leaving its own mark. Noland (2009) suggests that because the body thinks, moves, breathes, and feels itself as it makes its way through space, it responds to and alters its execution of behaviors required to carry out a given set of culturally specific patterns. According to Noland, in responding to these sensations, and slightly altering one’s behavior, the body asserts its own agency.

By making such a bold argument in support of the will of the body, Noland (2009) provides the grounding for subsequent arguments in which she asserts that “variations in performance” occur as a result of accumulated corporeal knowledge and not as some fluke. She writes,

If moving bodies perform in innovative ways, it is not because they manage to move without acquired gestural routines but because they gain knowledge *as a result of performing them*. (Noland, 2009, p. 7, emphasis in original)

In light of earlier discussions that have appeared within this paper, Noland's (2009) previous comment is particularly noteworthy because it suggests that change occurs within the execution of a particular cultural script, not in an effort to retain the mask that hides its prevailing influence or because the individual has made some mistake, but because the individual bodies enacting a particular cultural ideology may have begun to register (and thus resist) the presence of the structure that may be influencing their movement through space.⁴⁶

In a discussion explaining why such variations might occur, Noland (2009) writes

In some cases, the subject *attends* to the clear message, or 'dynamic mentality,' of the neuromusculature; she becomes 'conscious' of the kinesthetic directive.... In other cases, the subject may remain largely unaware of why she has altered or repeated her routine. Either way, the gesture – communicative, instrumental, or aesthetic – draws on a kinesthetic background; in order to move, the subject must rely not only on learned routines and personal or collective desires but also on her engagement, her *embeddedness*, what Mark Heidegger calls her 'everyday being in the world.' (Noland, 2009, p. 16, emphasis in original)

The fact that Noland (2009) argues that such variations occur – regardless of one's conscious awareness of a particular social script – is particularly empowering because it suggests that change is possible, even on a minute unconscious level, for those who might otherwise be caught in an detrimental social structure. Furthermore, Noland's (2009) belief that such changes stem from the kinesthetic experiences obtained from one's "everyday being in the world" is encouraging because it suggests there is space for the inclusion of bodies otherwise marginalized, excluded, or objected by, with, or through most models intended to maintain a particular "status quo." In short, the space

provided by Noland's (2009) model of repetition provides the opportunity to look more favorably at "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009) as created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.

Back to "*Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009)

As a work, "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009) occupies three separate platforms. First, the seventy-five minute dance-theater piece includes a proscenium stage, which serves as the ground where national narratives unfold. Such histories include the life and legacy of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln as well as topics of domestic debate including slavery, immigration, and equal rights.

Secondly, the dance-theater work includes a circular platform that juts out from stage left (house right). Within the confines of this performance space, smaller narratives play out. Such stories include the somewhat fictional narrative of an Iraqi War Veteran (performed by Peter Chamberlin), a contemporary concert dancer (performed by LaMichael Leonard), and a politically conservative southerner (performed by Jennifer Nugent). Within the confines of this satellite platform, Shayla-Vie Jenkins performs a solo to Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric," as well as a later repetition of the same movement score. Additionally, the satellite stage houses a series of duets, trios, and quartets that unfold at the top of the show and are repeated just before the shows end.

Meanwhile, the third performance space is more transient in nature. Specifically, the third platform is marked by the sheer white scrim that often surrounds the proscenium

stage, forming a giant oval. When closed, video and text appear on the translucent curtains. Sometimes the silhouette of a vaudevillian/minstrel performer jovially dances in the background. There are other instances when the audience sees a mourning Mary Todd (performed by Asli Bulbul) wander the present day streets of New York. There are also moments when text is scribbled across the screen, informing the audience of key events. One such example includes the phrase “another war came,” informing the reader the United States became embroiled in a civil war (*Fondly Do We Hope... Fervently Do We Pray*, 2009). This theatrical device, consequently, has the means of instantly transporting the audience to a given period in time, while preserving one’s ability to see the dancers’ bodies presently moving in the background.

Within the context of *“Fondly Do we Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009), the music plays another key role in the work’s reading. Composed and performed by musicians Jerome Begin, Christopher Lancaster, George Lewis Jr., and Clarissa Sinceno the original score includes jarring sections that employ the sound of a chugging train, a series of electric guitars, and other stringed instruments. These heavy and weighted musical components are often offset by Sinceno’s piercing voice or Lewis’ folksy sound. Both singers perform text derived from a variety of historical and literary texts.

Relatedly, *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009) is shaped by the use of text that is often delivered by the “narrator,” Jamyl Dobson. The performed text is an assortment of fictional and historical documents, including Whitman’s “I Sing The Body Electric” as well as segments of *The Declaration of Independence*. Spoken words are frequently used to address personal and cultural narratives.

While Dobson serves as the main speaker throughout this work, “often saying what they cannot or will not say,” there are instances in which the dancers perform the audible text (*“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray,”* 2009). The latter occurs in a section that I am choosing to call “The Debate.” In this section, the audience is presented with a cacophony of movement and sound material that touches upon major social and political issues over the last two hundred years. Sporadically jumping across time and space, “The Debate” covers a variety of issues including state’s rights, immigration reform, equal rights, and the penal code. While the voiced perspective, and body representing that political viewpoint, constantly shifts as the dancers replace one another at one of four microphones on stage, there is one voice that remains constant throughout. The emphatic refrain “I’d rather die first,” as danced by the arresting Jennifer Nugent, creates a haunting contrast that leaves the viewer internally tied in knots. As this section continues, and issue upon issue is introduced and layered upon others that have come before, the viewer feels forced to think about one’s own political stance.

I remember fidgeting in my seat as I watched this section. My breath shallowed and my heart raced, as I felt the work tugging at me from both sides. All I could think about was the internal conflict between my own desire to be free and live my life as I saw fit and the constraining fear that motivated my need to protect that right.

Accompanying such cyclical text, *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009) also includes a complex score involving recurring movement vocabulary. Such vocabulary makes use of the dancers’ hyper-extended and fluid spines that skillfully execute a series of extreme backbends; loose and mobile hip sockets that both freely swing and suspend their long legs for extended periods of time; as well as pairs of lithe and willowy arms that reach and spiral well beyond the physical limits of their frames. Such corporeal capacities result in breath-taking moments of rapture, even when the text addresses socially uncomfortable issues.

Back to a Case for “The Body”

As the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company is one of the most widely recognized professional dance companies in the United States, it is not surprising that as a viewer, one may notice the high level of similarity between each of the performers’ execution of thematic movement patterns. However, as Noland (2009) suggests, a close observer will notice the variations that emerge across and between the various bodies on stage with each repetition/performance. Nowhere is this more evident than within in the three sections that reference Whitman’s “I Sing the Body Electric.”

The first version, as performed by Shayla-Vie Jenkins, has a slow and sustained quality to it. Accordingly, the movement seems somewhat sensual, yet untainted. In contrast, the second iteration, as performed by LaMichael Leonard, although fast and staccato, has a weighted quality to each gesture. The movement, consequently, has a much more urgent and desperate quality to it. The third repetition, once again

performed by Jenkins, is quick and airy. Specifically, she appears to jump through each movement and gesture as though the floor might burn her feet. This iteration, accordingly, suggests a sense of haste, anxiety, and disease.

While these may be small examples of difference that emerge across the various iterations of a particular movement score, these qualitative differences may be demonstrations of the individual performers expressing their own agency. A careful observer might, in the words of Noland (2009), be able to see how each person impresses “the individual shape of the vitality of the body’s motor power onto the counters of the cultural sign” that is also simultaneously shaping their form (p. 1).

“AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT THE INDIVIDUALS ARE EXERCISING THEIR OWN AGENCY? HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE THAT ANY PERCEIVED DIFFERENCES AREN’T THE RESULT OF SOME CHOICE MADE BY BILL, JANET, OR YOU AS THE VIEWER?”

In order to maintain my own “relational accountability” to this work, I will not attempt to speak for the dancers on stage. However, the aforementioned “INTERUPTION” has made a valid point. How can I be so sure that the perceived differences are the result of the decisions made on the part of the individual dancers and not some external force either on my part, Bill T. Jones, or Janet Wong?

To answer the previous questions, I decided to ask the well-renowned dancer, choreographer, and performer Jennifer Nugent (2014). (Please recall Nugent is one of the versatile bodies within the cast of *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”*

(2009). Specifically, she performs the role of “Lady Liberty” as well as the solo of the conservative white southerner.) With her permission, I have printed our exchange below:

ME: Jenn, it seems to me that you create and perform work that deals a lot with theme and variation (and repetition of both), and I was wondering how do you keep track of all the subtle changes for yourself? And perhaps more importantly, what is it that you notice/pay attention to that signals there is a subtle difference between the repeating/varying sections?

NUGENT: I think of how things should progress in terms of phrasing and musicality, quality, stamina, and rigor; what is being conveyed by dancing fully earnest - full-out; what is being conveyed by marking or approaching movement from a distant or softer quality. It is like having a conversation, composing -- making choices to be repetitive either blatantly or with some mischief, an intellectual build, or following a musical structure, or pure intuition. Sometimes it deals with how many times I have done the movement; alone it might be connected to acceleration and de-acceleration. With a partner it might be how to convey what I am saying physically in new ways, dealing with speed, quality, emotional connection, comedy, and/or timing.

...

ME: I am writing about repetition for my thesis and have been asked to talk about repetition in the rehearsal process for a rep class on Monday. The thing is, I haven't been in a rehearsal process in years and so don't really know what to say and so I was hoping I could pick your brain for inspiration and the jarring of memories.

NUGENT: Repetition has so many memories in it. The memory of what you just did. It can be an accumulation, and how we accumulate daily can change, how we experience movement on a daily basis is always changing. There is something

satisfying in coming back to something repetitively -- a second chance, a history of knowing what might happen, could happen; maybe being surprised or just satisfied about the execution and specificity of the task at hand. The listening during repetition is heightened, and being on automatic pilot is not a great idea.

As Nugent (2014) makes clear in the previous statements, the dancers repeating/performing an established script are constantly making discoveries and decisions about the movement they are performing as well as their execution of that movement. As she explains, even one's repetitive actions are based upon cognitive processes of "how things should progress," memories of past experiences, as well as "pure intuition" (Nugent, 2014). They are not operating on pure autopilot, nor are they simply adhering to the requests of an external force. They are making decisions!⁴⁷

Before we continue, I would like to emphasize the similarity between Nugent's (2014) notions of "pure intuition" and "heightened listening" to Noland's (2009) notion of kinesthetic responses. In both instances, an individual's execution of a particular script may vary as result of the biofeedback received. In both instances, the moving body and the thinking body are engaged in a "conversation" (Nugent, 2014). This feedback is solely available to the individual body repeating/performing a particular script. As such, it is outside the reach of the other forces including that of Artistic Director Bill T. Jones, Associate Artistic Director Janet Wong, me as the viewer, or you as the reader of this text.

Stop! Go Back! Repeat!

Before I had stumbled upon *Mayerling*,
I'd only seen the standbys:
The Nutcracker, Cinderella,
Swan Lake, and the like...

I was **fascinated** by
MacMillan.
People were, after all,
shooting each other
on stage.

Reminded of
the "storyteller"
I need to introduce myself ...

hold me with **care**
as you
hold me accountable

Follow her
as she confidently transverses
a narrow ramp
that jettisons out from
stage left.

*Her life **straddled** two worlds.*

Context is key.
Always.
Stop.

"Are you my mother?"

*An idealist
to her core,
she wants
to believe
all things are possible,
that
the qualifier*

"of color" will no longer matter.

*There's **hope.**
Stop.
There's always hope.
Stop.*

Uncomfortable issues
Paused.... here, now, like this ...

Discomfort **evoked.**

"Relational accountability:"

the inclusion of the personal ...

“We couldn’t feign anonymity. *We responded*”

Borrowing the words
“inscribed” within me

[Foster, Gottschild, Rose, Rosa, Kraut, Wilson, Gilpin, Schneider, Bill and Jenn].

Repeat!
Hold me
with **care**
as you hold me accountable.

“HEAD”.... collapses forward ... pleading at her sides ... A slight **contraction** ... she **offers**
“**essentialism.**”
Factionalism.

Fondly Do We Hope
separating body
from
behavior.

Small
details ...
evoke the legacy

Wait! Where is the Body?????

Variations include
recurrence.

The audience watches tensely.

Contact
however
is interrupted.

Dancing Lincoln
trying to convey
the same socially constructed structure.

“You are our big question.”

changes slowly
appear as natural
accumulated effects

“Wait!”
“Stop!”
take a slight divergence.

“Script” mirrors
the

'everyday being in the world.'

Such variations occur
as a result of performing them -

What's THE STORY YOU'VE BEEN TELLING?

Black and **White** binary.
Belonging uncertainty
was triggered.
Conscious
and
"othered."
"The rule" instead of "the exception."
A
little
hope exists.

Repetition in Performance

In an article entitled "Lifelessness in Movement, or How do the Dead Move? Tracing Displacement and Disappearance for Movement Performance," performance studies scholar Heidi Gilpin (1996) grapples with the ephemeral nature of performance and the impossibility of ever being able to recreate it. Based upon the assumption that performance is marked by its disappearance, Gilpin (1996) argues that performance is an inherently "unstable" entity registered only by the traces that remain after it has passed (106). Using the work of Polish visual artist and director Tadeusz Kantor as an example, Gilpin (1996) argues, "movement performance is a mechanism for survival" (p. 107). To support this argument, she turns to the work of Austrian neurologist and psychologist Sigmund Freud and Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard.

In a section entitled "Freud, Kierkegaard, And Repetition, Or How To Manifest Disappearance," Gilpin (1996) argues that performance is constructed around the

“impossible desire to stop disappearance” (p. 110). She writes, “If disappearance is a condition of performance, repetition is a crucial strategy that calls attention to the very act of disappearance” (Gilpin, 1996, p. 110). Here Gilpin (1996) suggests that repetition is one of the basic tenants of performance, and may actually be an interchangeable term that also calls to mind the act of disappearance that has occurred.

In developing this argument, she turns to the work of Sigmund Freud. Arguing that performance may be a means by which an individual can address and confront a past trauma, Gilpin (1996) writes

... through the repetition of a traumatic experience, [one] could take on an ‘active part’ in relation to that traumatic event. This repetition, which allows one to take on an active role in relation to the trauma experienced by enacting the very event that caused the pain, is an act, a re-presentation, a performance. Performance, in this sense, is a survival mechanism, for Freud a form of healing, a cure. (Gilpin, 1996, p. 110)

Before we continue, it is important to note that Gilpin’s (1996) use of the words repetition and performance align closely with that posited by both Foster (1998) and Noland (2009). Specifically, the three scholars suggest a particular repetition/performance is often governed by an underlying structure. Additionally, it critical to note that like Noland (2009), Gilpin’s (1996) conception of repetition/performance proposes there is a degree of agency afforded to the individual engaged in the act of repetition/performance. For Noland (2009) this agency enables the individual to alter the way in which one executes a particular cultural script. In a slightly different vein, Gilpin (1996) suggests repetition/performance may be the means by which an individual can actively deconstruct a previously established behavioral pattern or script. The latter inference is suggested by Gilpin’s (1996) reliance on Freud, who

argues repetition/performance enables a person to resolve and dissolve old traumas and/or behavioral patterns through the conscious act of recreating and revisiting the initial incident in question.

This theory of revisiting and re-creating the past has found grounding in the recent work of social psychologists Judy Mullet, Nels Akerson, and Allison Turman (2013). In an article entitled “Healing the Past through Story,” Mullet et al. (2013) discuss how narratives can help adults reframe painful stories from their childhood. Through such reframing, and the repetition involved in the rewriting of previously established narratives, Mullet et al. (2013) suggest an individual may be able to develop healthier relationships and attachment styles.⁴⁸

Following the first phase of their study, the initial story telling phase, each participant was asked to rewrite his/her initial story from three alternate perspectives. Participants were asked to recount the narrative from the perspective of someone else present during the previously recalled event. Afterwards, participants were asked to write about the same event from the perspective of an objective outsider looking in. Meanwhile, the third prompt asked participants to write about their lives as though the event in question had never happened. In each stage, an individual was asked to repeat a given event and then look for the space where an alternate reading/perspective might be possible. The researchers found that with each repetition, and more importantly the reframing of narrative involved with each repetition, an individual was often able to resolve past traumas and in doing so develop newer, “healthier,” attachment styles.

Although a slight divergence from the dance and performance studies scholars I have heavily relied upon throughout this analysis, the findings of Mullet et al. (2013) are

particularly important because they suggest that in order for one to even imagine the possibility of an alternate narrative – a.k.a. another story – one may need to first revisit, recall, retell, and REPEAT a particular narrative until the individual is able to find, create, or see places where space exists where an alternate reading of events might be possible.

Taking the findings of these social psychologists and applying them to “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009), the following potentially optimistic readings might be possible. Perhaps the initial solo as performed by the beautiful black body of Shayla-Vie Jenkins was an example of a stunning dancer performing sensuous movement. Perhaps her initial solo was a variation of earlier solo work created and performed by Bill T. Jones where he would articulately catalogue his body while on stage (e.g. *21, Floating the Tongue*, etc.). Perhaps this initial solo, as performed by Jenkins, was Jones taking a step to translate the questions that motivated his initial inquiries as a black male dancer onto a black female dancing body.

Relatedly, one might look at the numerous repetitions of Whitman’s text, particularly the second and third iterations, and ask if the solo performed by LaMichael Leonard was Jones revisiting unresolved issues from *The Last Super at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land or Chapel/Chapter*. (While the former dealt primarily with slavery (among other things), the later addressed the penal system.) Under this light, perhaps “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009) could be an attempt by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, and Jones in particular, to continue to highlight, unearth, address, and resolve issues regarding racial body politics in the United States. This possibility is suggested by Mullet et al.’s (2013) assertion that repetition/performance may be a means out of an otherwise “oppressive”

ideology. Borrowing the words of Gilpin (1996), repetition/performance may thus enable one to “master, or at least comment upon, the event being repeated” (Gilpin 1996, 110 – 111).

Before we continue, my head tells me that it may be a wise idea to stop. Back up. And briefly summarize (repeat?) what has been argued thus far: Noland (2009), Mullet et al. (2013), and Gilpin (1996) suggest that repetition/performance may be the means by which an individual is able to exercise one’s agency and potentially shape, reconstruct, or deconstruct a previously established cultural script, or narrative. While Noland (2009) focuses on the kinesthetic and physical responses that evoke such changes, Gilpin (1996) and Mullet et al. (2013) seem more interested in the psychological and emotional responses involved with these reiterations.

Applying this notion of repetition/performance to *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009), it could be argued the numerous reiterations that occur throughout this piece could be examples of the individual dancing bodies, the artistic staff overseeing the work, or the work itself attempting to confront, address, and perhaps resolve a particular legacy and trauma associated with racial body politics in America. This attempt to work through our shared “emotional muck,” in the words of indigenous dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy and indigenous choreographer Jack Gray (2013), could be an attempt to create a new, alternate experience by which people can more freely circulate within American society without the heavy burdens of guilt, pain, shame, or embarrassment over past actions undermining every step.

Seen under this lens, repetition/performance could be more akin to a mnemonic device within society rather than an invisibilizing and/or forgetting agent. This possibility is supported by subsequent arguments in which Gilpin (1996) asserts that Freud believed that “resistance” – i.e. the failure to produce a new behavior in favor of executing an old behavioral pattern, a.k.a. repetition/performance – may have resulted when an individual did not want to remember something he/she perceived to be potentially traumatic.

Returning to artistic works (“INCLUDING THIS ONE?”) that use repetition as an organizing structure, the following questions come to mind: If the “compulsion to repeat” is one’s “way of remembering” (or way of not remembering), what is to be remembered (or to be forgotten) within a specific creative work that uses repetition as a organizing structural device (Gilpin 1996, 111)? Could repetition be a means of reinforcing a particular cultural ideology? Could repetition be a means by which the “creator,” the performers, or the work itself is attempting to deconstruct a particular narrative? What might the repetitions of bodies, the cataloguing of parts, and/or the different means of torture suggest in *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009)? Are these various repetitions – in sight, sound, and movement – attempting to reinforce the same narrative about there being an “US” and a “THEM,” an “insider” and an “outsider”? Or could these repetitions be attempting to direct the viewer’s (and performers’) attention elsewhere? Specifically, what story might these repeating narratives be attempting to convey or resolve? Where do they leave us as the spectator wanting to believe in a democracy “of the people, by the people, and for the people”? Borrowing the words of Gilpin (1996), “What do these repetitions reveal about what they [WE/I] consider traumatic? What do the specific elements chosen for repetition

reveal about what might be revisited or what does not want to be recollected?” (Gilpin, 1996, p. 111) And how might any of this relate to my first experiences in the studio, and then every subsequent (repeated?) experience there after – inside and outside this text?

Before attempting to answer any of these questions, it may be important to quickly return to Gilpin (1996) to note her use of the work of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. I would like to direct your attention to Gilpin’s (1996) assertion that Kierkegaard believed that “pure”/true repetition was impossible. That is, according to Kierkegaard, a true repetition was one that exists without any difference between the initial act and subsequent iterations. Gilpin (1996) suggests Kierkegaard held this assumption because “pure” repetition would also recreate the movement, sense of “transcendence,” that may have initially caused one to want to repeat the initial act in the first place (p. 113).

For Kierkegaard, the impossibility of repetition became evident when – in the attempt to recreate, reenact, or repeat a given experience – the individual became aware of the discrepancy between the initial act and the resulting reiteration. The awareness of this divergence, according to Kierkegaard, resulted in the individual experiencing a profound sense of loss for the thing that could not be recaptured (Gilpin, 1996, p. 114). Gilpin (1996) writes:

This loss must be recuperated through the act of recollecting, which according to Freud, is a substitute for repetition. Either way, we repeat the performance of absence, of abandonment, or we recollect the disappearance of this performance. The use of repetition in contemporary European movement performance productions could be read as an attempt to recollect what cannot be recollected; as an acknowledgement of the impossibility of recollection; or more specifically as a critical

acknowledgement of the impossibility of understanding, or capturing somehow, that which cannot be recollected. (Gilpin, 1996, p. 114)

In terms of *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"* (2009), Gilpin's (1996) assertion that repetition is both a means of remembering what has been lost as well as a substitute for that memory suggests the three iterations of Whitman's "I Sing The Body Electric" may be the work's attempt to recreate the traumatic legacy of slavery. Conversely, the various repetitions could be a means by which to highlight that we do not really remember that legacy in the first place. For despite the social tensions that persist, I believe that we as a nation have progressed to the point that racial body politics, although still present, are not as palpable as they were prior to the Civil Rights Movement. That is to say, I believe that there are many of us within the United States (myself included), who are fortunate enough to never have personally witnessed or experienced the infliction of bodily harm simply because of one's racial classification. Many of us within the United States (myself included), are lucky enough to have never smelt burning flesh, felt the weight of a whip quickly strike the body, tasted our own blood or heard the resulting sounds of pain echo from these and other acts of bodily abuse.⁴⁹ Many of us within the United States (myself included), consider it an unacknowledged blessing that we do not remember what that type of open, widespread discrimination looks like, tastes like, feels like, smells like, or sounds like. Many of us within the land of the free, the home of the brave consider ourselves favored to live at a time where we've never had to question where we stand on this issue of political ideology and human decency. And perhaps, the numerous repetitions/performances of Whitman's text within *"Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray"* (2009) may be trying to call us out on that

privileged position. Specifically, *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009) may be attempting to make us recognize that privileged position, by forcing us to acknowledge our forgetfulness through the multiple repetitions/performances of Whitman’s text and the insertion of words that evoke that legacy. Words like “beating,” “kicking,” and “punching” may therefore be making physical contact with our bodies in order to turn our heads to that which we may have turned away from.

During the closing remarks of the section entitled “Freud, Kierkegaard, And Repetition, Or How To Manifest Disappearance,” Gilpin (1996) turns to the work of English and comparative literature professor Cathy Caruth. In discussing Caruth’s analysis of what happens after a period of latency, Gilpin (1996) writes

The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known; but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. (Gilpin, 1996, p. 115)

This notion of delayed memories, and the traumas that are only registered through the awareness that one has even forgotten something, is a particularly interesting thought in light of *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009). This idea of delayed recall suggests that possibly many audience members may have had such a powerful reaction to *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009) because they may have forgotten about the recentness of past injustices inflicted upon darker bodies.

“IT WAS ONLY FIFTY YEARS AGO THAT THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT WAS PASSED! BEFORE THAT, PHYSICAL ABUSE BASED UPON ONE’S RACIAL COMPOSITION WASN’T OUT OF THE ORDINARY!”

Consequently, it is possible the numerous repetitions/performances within the context of this one hour and fifteen minute dance-theater piece may have worked to remind one of this forgetting. Such a possibility – as well as the connections that can then be drawn between that (forgotten) legacy and current events (e.g. the Trayvon Martin/George Zimmerman case, the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, etc.) – could in part explain why some people left the theater so angry and upset.⁵⁰ For it is possible that such individuals may have felt attacked by the work in more ways than one. I note this possibility because perhaps the recurring images, sounds, texts, and movements also elicited my own emotional reading of this work created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.

This idea that something may only be experienced after it has been forgotten may have been what sparked my emotional response to the question a peer posed in Professor Shea Murphy’s “Cultural Approaches” class. For in that instant, as I was asked to think about the emotional recurrences that were motivating my own research endeavors, I realized I had a greater level of investment in my cause to “save ballet” than I was willing to admit. (Although I will not fully revisiting the paper I submitted for Professor Shea Murphy’s class, here it is important to quickly note that at the I wanted to “save ballet” from the negative

host of “isms” that surround the field as an elitist, racist, sexist art form based upon my own feelings of exclusion within that domain.)

I note the potential influence of these latent memories based upon Gilpin’s (1996) assertion that if

... forgetting an event allows us to experience it for the first time; if the departure of movement preserves movement; and if history can only be grasped ... in its ungraspability, then the fundamental fact of performance is that it is enabled by its vanishing, that it exists through its disappearance, that it is made possible by its vary impossibility. (Gilpin, 1996, p. 115)

Stop. Go. Back. Repeat.

In an article entitled “The Body’s Endeavors as Cultural Practice,” dance maker, scholar, and movement practitioner Cynthia Novack (1995) examines conceptions of “the body” from the perspective of a dancer/choreographer as well as that of a dance scholar. In an attempt to highlight the potential limitations of either position, Novack (1995) questions the basic assumptions behind each side’s beliefs and experiences of the body. She writes:

Both tendencies noted here – the academic predilection for reducing lived experience to theoretical abstraction and the reactive, dancerly impulse to posit movement and bodily knowledge as privileged over all other knowledge – represent responses to virtually the same construction of the person in American Culture. In this construction, ‘body’ constitutes a biological absolute, a purely physical reality (sometimes with emotion and desire attached), and a separate realm of existence. The differences result from interpretations of the significance of this isolated body and what one might know or not know from one’s experience of it. (Novack, 1995, p. 180)

Here Novack (1995) suggests that because the body is a type of text inscribed with social meaning, there is no universal experience of “the body.” Thus, when talking about “the body,” one needs to acknowledge that it is often being used as an isolated, generalizable “thing” instead of as a temporally situated, socially constructed, but still culturally specific idea. Accordingly, Novack (1995) argues that when discussing “the body,” one needs to “take a step back and consider whose body we’re talking about in any given instance, how that person or people are experiencing their bodies, and whether or not ‘the body’ is even at issue” (p. 180).

This notion of stopping, looking, and asking if the body is “even at issue” is of particular importance because it sheds light on the need to contextualize how a person operates within a given cultural space before making any assumptions about what this body is or is not doing. The latter is especially true when considering the notion of repetition/performance, for as previously discussed there are many reasons that one might be repeating a particular set of gestures, movements, sounds, or texts and what may be gained or lost through such behavior. Consequently, it is important to stop, look, and ask what a particular body may be repeating, and why, in order to understand if repetition/performance is even at issue, or if instead the individual might be attempting to get at something else through that repetition/performance.

While I am still attempting to figure out what repetition/performance may be doing for me, this text, as well *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009), the following can be asserted based upon the previously referenced work from Foster (1998), Noland (2009), Gilpin (1996), and Mullet et al (2013): Repetition/performance

may be a means by which to instill and transmit a particular cultural ideology (Foster 1998). It may be the means by which to accumulate knowledge and change the sculpting of a particular cultural script (Noland, 2009). Repetition/performance may be the means by which to remember (or to forget) a particular event and/or heal and resolve a past trauma (Gilpin, 1996). It may be a means by which to reframe and discard old narratives (Mullet et al., 2013). Repetition/performance might be the means by which to create a brighter future. Or it might be many other things that have not been discussed within the context of this narrative.

Concluding Thoughts

It's been almost twenty-five years since I took my first dance class. Over the years, I have found myself in an assortment of studios, in a variety of different places and spaces. Currently, I am sitting on the grey Marley floor of a studio located on the fifth floor of New York's *City Center*.

It's Monday. As I begin to prepare my body for the dancing day ahead of me, a few thoughts sprint through my mind. Attempting to catch the tail of the cheetah, I quickly rummage through my oversized purse in search of a pen and paper. All I find is the dance article I was reading this morning on the train. I flip the paper over and begin anxiously scribbling down the following notes.

I arrived at 9:20 am. Many dancers have trickled in since then. With coffee in-hand, they briskly, confidently, and yet unencumberedly walk through the room to secure a spot

at the barre. Like me, they unceremoniously drop their oversized bags to the floor to mark what will be their space for the next hour or so.

I find it amazing that I no longer find it strange to see so many people splayed in such random positions. Some are engaged in variations of downward facing dogs. Others are dutifully completing the Pilates one hundred. Meanwhile, another group is propped up on a series of spherical objects of a varying sizes and densities that both inflict and relieve pain. I'm also surprised that I do not question my own participation in these exercises and culturally prescribed behaviors.

As this thought slips from my mind, I find it interesting that I have a longing to return to the age of five. At that age, I must have looked at the world around me with a sense of innocence, awe, and a curious fascination that was grounded in an unexplainable sense of complete security instead of mild anxiety.

The sound of a piano has made its way down through the ceiling, and traveled along the walls from the floor above. I wonder if any of the young bodies up there have or may be experiencing some version of the questions of belonging that have haunted me in one way or another since my first dance class. I wonder if they have identified what the potential sources of that social anxiety may be, or may have been, or if such questions have even occurred to them at all.

“THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO WORRY ABOUT ANY OF THAT. YOU NEED TO CONCENTRATE!”

Class is about to start. I need to put away this pen and paper and return to my body and what it is telling me about how I am feeling today in order to prepare to repeat/perform the series of plies and tendus that will set me up for the rest of my day.

As I begin to gather my things, and return them to the large bag from which they were retrieved, I look up and see that Renee Robinson and Wendy Whelan have walked in since I began following the previous train of thoughts. While attempting to contain my excitement, I find myself thinking that throughout the past few weeks, I have been struggling to figure out how to end this paper, this story, this narrative. I recall thinking that if I were to return to New York and take class again, I would find the “perfect” ending. This thought, this hope, persisted despite my inner critic repeatedly suggesting that I needed to go back, repeat, and reframe the beginning, summarize everything that preceded this section, and then point towards some larger “take-away” message.

While I have tossed and turned over this issue, thrown myself into the rehearsal process of a dear friend, and then prayed and meditated my way through possible alternatives while practicing yoga in Tribeca, it seems there may never be a clear ending to this work which, like Jill Dolan’s (2005) notion of “complex universalism” is never quite complete (p. 162).

One more thought enters my mind: Robinson and Whelan are well-known dancers in their own right. Robinson is former principal dancer of Alvin Ailey Dance Theater. She danced with the company for at least 31 years. Whelan, a principal dancer at New York City Ballet, has been dancing with that company for an equal length of time. Both women’s

careers have lasted longer than I have been alive. These last series of thoughts make me smile in amazement. I can't believe I currently find myself in a room with these beautiful, elegant women, the three of us about to take class.

My mind begins to wonder what these two dancers might think about repetition. I asked Jenn (Nugent), but I wonder what they would say from their perspectives. For like Jenn, they have rehearsed, repeated, and performed the same works countless times and often to much acclaim. Is repetition something they consciously struggle with as women or as artists? Is it something they think about with regards to their race, their gender, sexuality, nationality, or ethnicity? Do they think about repetition as having an inscribing or erasing factor on their bodies? Is repetition something they find to be healing and restorative? What role, if any, has repetition played in their lives and the stories they tell themselves, and others, about their lives? Reminded that class is starting, these may be questions that may have to wait. In the meantime, we begin.

NOTES

The following notes were assembled to provide you, the reader, with the opportunity to track, trace, and perhaps follow the mental pathway taken while drafting this paper. Although the following comments refer to specific moments within the preceding text, these notes may be read in any order as a means of finding some grounding in the unnamed ideas that circulate throughout this paper.

¹ My “inner critic/inner child” was influenced by the work of dance scholar Priya Srinivasan (2012). Specifically, I am referring to her conception of the “unruly spectator” as described within the context of her book *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor*. Through the lens of the “unruly spectator,” Srinivasan (2012) critically engages with her research from a feminist perspective as an active participant and an observer. From this perspective, Srinivasan (2012) uncovers “the ways that power can be negotiated” through the examination of “dance mistakes” (2012, p. 9). In a similar vein, I am using the idea of my inner critic/inner child to highlight issues of belonging that may be the source of the internal criticisms or tantrums that emerge as I write this paper and navigate the world. To be clear though, I am using this conception of an inner critic/inner child, and its “tantrums” in a positive light. Specifically, I believe these emotional outbursts represent a type of intelligence that may only be revealed through one’s unfiltered emotional responses.

² In an article entitled “Notes on Choreography,” dance studies scholar Sally Gardner (2008) suggests there is very little language that describes the subjective kinesthetic experience of choreography. As a result, she argues that most choreographic experiences become “traceless” (Gardner, 2008, p. 55). As a counter example, however, Gardner (2008) notes the words of New York based choreographer Twyla Tharp, who believes her movement takes up “residence” in the bodies of the dancers with whom she works (p. 58). In a similar vein, I believe the training received as a dancer, academic, artist, teacher, choreographer, sister, daughter, friend, and/or lover have taken up residency within my thoughts and actions.

³ In an article entitled “‘I Don’t Want to do African... What about My Technique?:’ Transforming Dancing Places into Spaces in the Academy,” dance scholar Raquel Monroe (2011) argues for the reconfiguration of “technique” requirements within the university setting. Of note for the current paper is Monroe’s (2011) reference to philosopher Michel de Certeau’s discussion of “space” and “place.”

According to Monroe (2011), de Certeau believed a “place” was governed by a particular set of fixed rules. These rules, which de Certeau defined as “the Law of the Proper,” told an individual what movements and behaviors were and were not permissible within a defined “place” (Monroe, 2011, p. 47). In contrast to the rigid

notion of “place,” Monroe (2011) argued a “space” was defined in more open manner in which fluid and spontaneous gestures could freely occur (Monroe, 2011, p. 47).

Thus, by using the word “space,” I hope to create an environment where spontaneous and unrestricted movements and thoughts may occur without having to adhere to any particular set of rules.

⁴ In the introductory chapter of his book *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance, Design*, social geographer Paul Carter (2009) discusses the unacknowledged traces that define and shape a particular environment. Carter (2009) refers to these unacknowledged human traces as “dark writing.” He writes the presence of dark writing is so potent that even in instances where it “cannot be represented, its absence can be registered” (Carter, 2009, p. 2- 3).

Although Carter’s (2009) inquiry is focused on cartography and architecture, both of which he uses to (re)trace the “footsteps” of the bodies that produced various maps and blueprints, his idea of reinserting the body into the final cultural product (i.e. a map, building, or picture) is equally applicable when thinking about one’s ethnographic research. For in attempting to “recover... a movement that occurs in between the makers of marks and the marks that they make,” one is able to assume a different vantage point that in turn might enable one to better understand the relationship one has to one’s work (Carter, 2009, p. 4).

Applying this concept to the present paper, I hope to create the space in which you and I are both able to understand the work I am creating and why by retracing my own steps.

⁵ Although the work submitted for *Cultural Approaches to Dance Studies*, served as the springboard for this project, it will not be revisited within the present context. The decision not to review, revisit, or summarize this prior work was made solely due to time constraints. However, I do feel the need to note the aforementioned paper, entitled *The Dark Writing Within: What’s the Story?*, was my attempt to retrace my own footsteps in order to figure out why I felt the need to “save ballet” from the plethora of negative “isms” that surround it as an elitist, racists, and/or classist genre.

⁶ In an article entitled “Manaakitanga in Motion: Indigenous Choreographies of Possibility,” indigenous dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy and indigenous choreographer and researcher Jack Gray discuss their attempts to work through the “baleful post-colonial space [that exists] between us all” (2013, p. 242). Although this work will not be openly addressed in this text, it has an underlying influence throughout. In particular, the authors’ assertion that in order to move forward as a society, we need to “create possibilities for connection ... by bringing out stories that honor and acknowledge tensions, pain, and losses, as well as stories that move

toward joy and light” (Shea Murphy and Grey, 2013, p. 245). This is a sentiment I share with Shea Murphy and Grey (2013).

⁷ The title of the piece created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company is based upon a line from Lincoln’s second inaugural address.

⁸ Throughout this work, any time I refer to the composition “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009), as created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, I will refer to it as being constructed and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. The purpose behind this cumbersome wording is to honor the collaborative nature in which this work was created, while also providing space to include everyone who worked to bring this dance-theater piece to life.

⁹ Across this writing, I may use the word “inscribed” to describe the inscriptive aspect of a particular gesture, movement, thought, or idea. This word is used in direct reference to the conception of inscription offered by dance studies scholar and anthropologist Sally Ann Ness (2008). In the opening chapter to *Migrations of Gesture*, an anthology she co-edited with dance studies scholar Carrie Noland, Ness (2008) explores the limits of the conception of “gesture as inscription” (p. 1).

Arguing that physical gestures are visibly written into the body, Ness (2008) suggests there are qualitative characteristics to her notion of gesture as inscription. She writes:

Inscriptions must pierce deeply enough into their host materials that they create permanent marks, but do not submerge themselves completely, they do not lose themselves inside their hosts, and they do not penetrate them so as to alter the material’s enduring character” (Ness, 2008, p. 4-5).

Thus in order to count as an instance of inscription, a given gesture must penetrate the “host material” deep enough to leave it permanently altered (Ibid.). However, this gesture cannot pierce so deeply that its traces are lost (Ibid.). As I trace my own “dark writing,” I am employing the word “inscription” to suggest that the various gestures, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas, inscribed within me, have permanently altered my being (both mentally and physically) and left traces of that alteration.

¹⁰ In an article entitled “Healing the Past Through Story,” psychologists Judy Mullet, Nels Akerson, and Allison Turman (2013) explore the correlation between childhood attachment theories and an individual’s subsequent engagement in the world. In particular, Mullet et al. (2013) look at how re-writing old narratives may enable a person to form healthier attachment styles in adulthood (p. 72).

I have chosen to include the work of Mullet et al. (2013) within this paper because prior its publishing, it was assumed that within the field of Developmental

Psychology, one's childhood attachment styles would shape all future relationships. Consequently, if one had a happy, healthy childhood, one was likely to have an equally happy, healthy, and productive adulthood. However, if an individual had a less than ideal childhood, one was destined have an equally disappointing adulthood. Both outcomes were assumed to be inevitable because it was believed an individual was unable to form alternate attachment styles and would consequently repeat previously acquired relationship patterns.

¹¹ The term "theorizes" is used in direct reference to the work of dance studies scholar Susan Foster (1998). In particular, I am referring to her essay entitled "Choreographies of Gender." In the previously mentioned work, Foster (1998) argues that choreography "theorizes physicality, where as dancing," i.e. performance, "presents that theory of physicality" (1998, p. 10). In the main body of the text, by using the word "theorizes," I am suggesting that Sir Kenneth MacMillan used movement to speculate what may have happened during the Mayerling Incident.

¹² I have used the word "invoked" to suggest that *Edward Watson Preparing for Mayerling (The Royal Ballet)* (2013) revealed the presence of an underlying social structure regarding race. As with the previous endnote, the word "invoked" was used in direct reference to Susan Foster's (1998) "Choreographies of Gender."

¹³ In a work entitled *How Societies Remember*, sociologist Paul Connerton (2006) looks at different forms of social memory and the effects that such memories have on the individual living in the present. He writes:

..our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present. And we will experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present. Hence the difficulty of extracting our past from our present: not simply because present factors tend to influence – some might say distort – our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experiences of the present (Connerton, 2006, p. 2).

Here Connerton (2006) essentially argues the past, and our awareness of the past, influences how we experience the present. In relation to the larger narrative, one could say that when I was feeling the need to "save ballet," I was not consciously aware of how my past experiences, and my own feelings of exclusion, were shaping

my then present desire for inclusion by protecting ballet from the negative host of “isms” that circulate the genre.

¹⁴ The idea that an academic paper is a type of “story,” and the scholar a type of “storyteller,” is a concept I am borrowing from indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson (2008). Both concepts are thoroughly discussed in his book entitled *Research as Ceremony*.

¹⁵ According to co-authors Shea Murphy and Gray (2013) one’s family lineage, one’s “whakapapa,” is how one comes to know one’s self and others within the Maori Culture. Through the sharing of this familial history, i.e. one’s “pepeha,” a listener is provided with the context by which to position the speaker. In a similar vein, I would like to present you with some background information so that we might better be able to connect with one another.

¹⁶ Here I would like to note that in the present paper I will not discuss every element of *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009). This decision is not intended to suggest I do not feel a longer, more comprehensive analysis could not (and should not) be done. Instead, I am simply noting I do not have the time to write about this piece in its entirety within the confines of the present narration.

¹⁷ Within *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009), there are ten solos that define the contours of this one hour and fifteen minute work. Seven of these solos recount the real or imagined lives of people living within the United States. These “biographies” convey the narratives of both historical figures as well as the average American. These solos represent figures Abraham Lincoln, danced by Paul Matteson; Mary Todd, danced by Asli Bulbul; a veteran, danced by Peter Chamberlin; Bill T. Jones, danced by Antonio Brown; an old white woman from the south, danced by Jennifer Nugent; a child born today, danced by I-Ling Liu; and a young artist, performed by La Michael Leonard. Other solos that occur within this work address larger national narratives. Such stories are represented by: Lady Liberty, danced by Jennifer Nugent; The Auction Block, danced by La Michael Leonard; and Body Electric, danced by Shayla-Vie Jenkins.

¹⁸ The dancers of *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009) include: Antonio Brown, Asli Bulbul, Peter Chamberlin, Talli Jackson, Shayla Vie-Jenkins, LaMichael Leonard, I-ling Liu, Paul Matteson, Erick Montes, and Jennifer Nugent. Jamyl Dobson performs as the “Narrator,” while Jerome Begin, Christopher Lancaster, George Lewis Jr., and Clarissa Sinceno provide the musical accompaniment. At times, Lewis Jr. and Sinceno appear on stage with Dobson and the dancers.

¹⁹ In her book *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon To Cool*, dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild (2003), argues that within the United States, everyone – including immigrants of various racial and ethnic backgrounds – is subjected to the “black/white dichotomy” that pervades American society. To ground this argument, she engages in a discussion of different perceptions of the “Black” versus “White” dancing body. This discussion of binaries between “Black” and “White” within the United States is one Gottschild (1996) previously introduced in her work *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*.

²⁰ Returning to Gottschild (2003), she writes, there is a ... paradox: namely there is and there isn't a black dancing body, or that white and black bodies are and are not the same. I attribute the differentiation to cultural factors – familial, social, communal, and aesthetic values, preferences, proclivities, and habits (physical and mental) absorbed in utero and reinforced thereafter during each period of development from infancy through childhood, adolescence, and maturity. Nobody disputed this contention, although they addressed the fact that differences were present. (Gotschild, 2003, p. 28)

In this comment Gottschild (2003) argues there is and there isn't a black or white dancing bodies. Both conceptions have been ascribed with different cultural meanings that are context specific. I have noted her comment because I feel that as a racially ambiguous person, others often attempt to place me in this odd binary – sometimes without much “success.”

²¹ This comment about “the work to be done” is made in reference to Shea Murphy and Gray (2013) article “Manaakitanga in Motion: Indigenous Choreographies of Possibility.”

²² In the opening chapter of his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then And There Of Queer Futurity*, author and performance studies scholar Jose Esteban Munoz (2009) argues that queerness is an ideal that does not yet exist, but instead is something we are constantly working towards. Munoz (2009) argues that queerness, like the future, is a concept that is formed by re-examining the past for moments of potentiality that point towards an alternate existence which he defines as a “concrete” utopia.

According to Munoz (2009) a concrete utopia is one that is based upon the “educated hope[s]” of historical reality that have the potential to be actualized in the present through careful and conscious reframing of old narratives (p. 3). This reframing of previously told stories creates the space and opportunity for a future that coincides more closely with one's ideals.

Although at times a seemingly optimistic approach, Munoz (2009) argues this approach, based upon educated hope and its “insistence of a possibility,” is what is embodied by the term “queer” (p. 3). In a similar vein, I believe there is hope to create a more inclusive future, one without racial body politics mitigating our every step, if we are able to look back and find instances in which an alternate narrative might be constructed about past tragedies.

²³ In a work entitled *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, dance studies scholar Diana Taylor (2003) discusses the difference between information that is stored and transmitted through acts of bodily transfer (i.e. the repertoire) and information that is stored and transmitted through material objects (i.e. the archive). For a thorough summary of Taylor’s (2003) argument please see the third chapter of performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider’s (2011) *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*.

²⁴ Other examples of “tokenism” include Justice Sonia Sotomayer, the first Hispanic female elected to the Supreme Court. It is my assertion that if we were further along in resolving our history of racial body politics, I would not be witnessing so many “firsts” of racial inclusion within my lifetime.

²⁵ Within the documentary *Bill T. Jones: A Good Man*, directors Bob Hercules and Gordon Quinn follow the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company through the making and debut of “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009). Of note for the present discussion, are the responses recorded following the work’s premiere in Highland Park, IL. Specifically, there were many patrons who reported they didn’t feel comfortable having art engage with politics. One person in particular framed her entire dissatisfaction with the piece on this opinion alone.

While it is possible that such individuals may have disliked any art form with a political message, it is also likely that many of their responses were sparked by the physical discomfort evoked by “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009). I could imagine such feelings of discomfort were particularly strong for those who left feeling attacked by the piece and the baleful history of the subject matter.

²⁶ I feel that in order to see and experience my “whole person,” one would need to spend time with me across various settings and situations. In doing so, one would have a better understanding of how my desire to maintain “relational accountability” changes depending upon the “ideas I am studying” and the people with whom I feel the need to maintain relational accountability (Wilson, 2008, p. 22).

²⁷ While Wilson (2008) stresses the importance of highlighting one’s familial origins as the basis of his introduction to the reader, I believe one’s self-selected family

plays an equally important role in shaping the development of one's ideas and sense of self. For me personally, such individuals include former and current dancers, teachers, choreographers, actors, artists, musicians, and writers.

²⁸ This phrase comes from *I want to be Ready: Improvised Dance Practice as an Expression of Freedom* by author Danielle Goldman (2010). The aforementioned work, conceptualizes improvisation as a means by which to navigate one's historically and socially situated "tight places" – i.e. the "social and historical positions in the world [that] effect one's ability to move, both literally and figuratively" within the surrounding environment (p. 5). Drawing upon the work of Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Goldman (2010) argues that we can only move beyond our historically situated "tight places" by working through them instead of avoiding them (p. 14- 15).

²⁹ The text used to describe the movement and vocal scores of "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009) derived from multiple observations of the work. Such observations occurred via recorded footage as well as an attendance of the work's February 12, 2012 performance in Purchase, New York.

³⁰ "I Sing The Body Electric" is one of the poems featured in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

³¹ My comment that Jenkins's initial solo appeared without prior contextualization is made in direct disagreement with Paul Connerton's (2005) assertion that "all beginnings... involve recollection" (p. 4).

³² Comparative literature scholar Eve Cherniavsky (2007) argues that the body is a type of "social text." She notes this idea has recently gained attention within the field of American Studies, as scholars have begun to focus on the embodied experiences of visibly marked bodies that inhabit the "marginal" "arenas of cultural production and political representation" (Cherniavsky, 2007, p. 28).

³³ In the documentary *Retracing Steps: American Dance Since Post-Modernism*, Bill T. Jones tells viewers that early in his career he was intentionally creating work that challenged (and rebelled against) the social perceptions that he "was his body, his gender, his past" (Blackwood, 1988).

³⁴ The idea of "the body" being an all-inclusive symbol, inside and outside the contexts of "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009), was sparked by the writings of Jose Esteban Munoz (2009). Specifically, I am reminded of his assertion that in the quest for a "queer" ideal future, one must be able to look back with the

generous assumption that whatever happened occurred as a result of an individual attempting to create the best future he/she thought possible. Munoz (2009) writes, Thus, futurity becomes history's dominant principal. In a similar fashion I think of queerness as a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity. (Munoz, 2009, p. 16)

According to Munoz (2009), this "field of possibility," in which an individual's actions were taken" in the service of a new futurity," is embedded within everyday acts and gestures. His prime example is the Coke Can that was used to convey a sense of common ground. Specifically he argues that a can of Coke was believed to be equally attainable by people of various stations in life, as suggested by the works of pop artist Andy Warhol and writer Frank O'Hara. In a similar vein, perhaps within the context of "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009), the body of Shayla-Vie Jenkins, who's initial solo opens the show, could be a symbolic representation of that commonality between and amongst all of us as living, breathing, thinking, and feeling individuals.

³⁵ Jennifer Kavetsky, one of the faithful readers of this text, has told me I need to mention the initial charge of essentialism came under scrutiny within the twentieth century because it often excluded non-white feminine bodies. Kavetsky cites Sojourner Turner's *Ain't I a Woman?* as an example of this oversight. This is a something scholar bell hooks (1981) discusses in her book entitled *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*.

³⁶ In particular, historical accounts of Lincoln's life are addressed through solos that suggest Lincoln's perspective, that of his wife, and subsequent generations. These solos are respectively performed by Caucasian-American dancer Paul Matteson, who represents the dancing body of Lincoln; Turkish American dancer Asli Bulbul, who represents the dancing body of Mary Todd; and African American dancer Antonio Brown, who represents the dancing body of Bill T. Jones.

While I ordinarily do not enjoy emphasizing a person's racial/national origins, it feels difficult to discuss a work about racial body politics, without using these social markers. It is for this reason alone I have included them here and at various points within the text.

³⁷ The repetition of the movement phrases within "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009) occurs because the various movement phrases that occur throughout this dance theater piece are different variations of a movement score initially generated on the body, by the body, of dancer Shayla-Vie Jenkins (Hercules & Quinn, 2011.).

³⁸ I will use (and have used) the words “Black” and “African American” interchangeably throughout a majority of this text. Likewise, the terms “White,” “Caucasian American” and “of European Descent” have been (and will be) used non-discriminately. I understand such labels have their political legacies and limitations, but for the present moment, they enable me to quickly convey to the reader the bodies that are typically represented by, through, or with such terms.

³⁹ Within the opening chapter of *Ain't I A Woman?: Black Women and Feminism*, author bell hooks (1981) looks at the relationship between feminist studies and African American studies. In particular, hooks (1981) is interested in better understanding the various reasons why black women often have not identified with feminism or feminist ideals throughout the twentieth century.

⁴⁰ Over the years, and while preparing this paper, I have had the opportunity to see various iterations of “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*” (2009). As a result, I have seen the variations that have occurred as the work continued to develop. For example, in some performances, I noticed that Leonard’s movement mirrors Jenkins’s movement precisely, while in others, the size, shape, and orientation of the two scores slightly varies. For the present moment, I am not focusing on the variations that occur across productions.

⁴¹ The phrase “repetition/performance” is being used to refer to the socially constructed and enacted behavior as discussed by both dance scholar Susan Foster (1998) and queer feminist scholar Judith Butler.

⁴² In an article entitled “The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate,” social psychologist Marilynn Brewer (1999) looks at the function of in-group and out-group preferences. Brewer’s (1999) analysis attempts to address a comment posed by social psychologist Gordon Allport in the 1950’s in which he argued that, contrary to popular belief, in-group love did not need to result in out-group hate (429).

Referencing early twentieth century human psychologist William G. Sumner’s work on ethnocentrism, Brewer (1999) writes,

For Sumner (1906), the proposition derived from his structural-functional theory of the origins of groups in the context of conflict over scarce natural resources. In an environment of scarcity, individuals needed to band together in groups to compete successfully with other groups for survival. Hence the exigencies of warfare gave rise both to institutions that maintain ingroup loyalty and cohesion and combativeness towards outgroups as ‘common products of the same situation.’ (Brewer, 1999, p. 431)

For Sumner, the origins of in-group versus out-group preferences stemmed from the availability of resources, and issues of trust regarding the allocation, distribution, and protection of said resources. According to Sumner, the dependence upon shared resources resulted in “group living” becoming the “fundamental” strategy for human survival (Brewer, 1999, p. 433). According to most social and evolutionary psychologists, in-group cohesion required the development, and maintenance, of a particular set of traits that marked an “insider” from an “outsider.” Brewer (1999) argues that in addition to phenotypical features, a particular set of “codified behaviors” became one mean by which individuals could recognize members of their own group (p. 433 – 434). Adherence to a particular set of codified behaviors thus signaled inclusion and who could or could not be trusted (Brewer, 1999).

⁴³ Other examples of individuals dissatisfied with the political focus within “*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do WE Pray*” (2009) include New York Times critic Gia Kourlas (2010) and Times Union dance writer Tresca Weinstein (2010). While Weinstein (2010) simply states the work seemed too “heavy-handed,” Kourlas (2010) writes

...in “[Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray](#),” Mr. Jones has created a pedantic production inspired by Lincoln — overly emphatic in terms of theater and breezily limited in terms of dance — that is less forceful than force-fed. (Kourlas, 2010)

She continues:

Mr. Jones alienates his audience with a heated sentiment and then undercuts it with a line like — referring to himself — ‘He is still surprised that he never stops believing in great men, though he keeps it to himself.’ It’s hard to swallow. (Kourlas, 2010)

⁴⁴ For a discussion on the issue of performance and race see Jacqueline Shea Murphy’s (1996) *Words Like Bones: Narrative, Performance, and Reconfiguration of U.S. Literatures*. In particular, her second chapter discusses the issue of race and performance with regards to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land* as created and performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. For additional analysis on the *Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land*, consult Randy Martin’s (1996) “Overreading the Promised Land: Towards a Narrative of Context in Dance.” Both works provide an insightful reading on a pivotal work by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.

⁴⁵ Although Ness’s (2008) discussion about the “inscription” of gesture is focused on three specific dance techniques (e.g. ballet, Bharata Nataym, and Balinese classical

dance), I believe that if one looks at “technique,” as suggested by Marcel Mauss (1973), to include all cultural behaviors, then Ness’s (2008) notion of inscription is still applicable to the present discussion regarding the inscription of socially created behaviors.

⁴⁶ I believe Noland’s (2009) notion of “variations in performance” differs from Foster’s (1998) idea of changes in performance/repetition. This perceived difference between Foster (1998) and Noland (2009) is based upon a section from Foster’s (1998) “Choreographies of Gender” in which she argues,

... throughout the viewing of a dance, one can perceive the guiding score for the action as distinct from the execution of that score. One can see the residue of strategic choices concerning representation as distinct from the bringing to liveness of those choices. (Foster, 1998, p. 10)

In making such a statement, Foster (1998) suggests there is a significant difference between the actions of the choreographer and those of the dancer/performer. While one (i.e. the choreographer) is assigned the privileged position of shaping the movement of bodies through space, the other (i.e. the dancer/performer) is assigned to carry out that movement. Under this assumption, only a choreographer can change how a particular body moves through space and shape the significance of that movement, while any variations that occur in that choreography during a performance must therefore be some mistake or deviation made by the dancer/performer executing the script.

⁴⁷ Dancer Shayla Vie-Jenkins was another individual I contacted with questions regarding the rehearsal process of *“Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray”* (2009). In doing so, I learned that during the initial stages of the rehearsal process Jones presented each performer with a list of suggested materials about Abraham Lincoln, The Civil War, Mary Todd and other pertinent figures (Jenkins, 2014). According to Jenkins (2014), the purpose of this task was to “familiarize and drench” the dancers’ minds with information about the period that they would be dancing (Ibid.). Jenkins (2014) was asked to research the life of Mrs. Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Todd’s maid. Afterwards, she was then instructed to “shadow, dress, and/or help” Asli Bulbul in order to internalize possible mannerisms from Keckley (Ibid.).

Jenkins (2014) comments about “shadowing” Bulbul, relates to Nugent’s (2014) notion of the dancers’ intuition coming into play as they executed a specific phrase. Specifically, both dancers’ comments support Noland’s (2009) assertion that space exists for variations in performance to emerge, but also suggests that such variations occur due to one’s kinesthetic responses. As discussed by Jenkins’ (2014), the dancers were provided with information intended to “familiarize and drench” their minds (and bodies) with information of the period. However, there

was space for each of them to discover something new through the act of repeating/performing the same material numerous times (Nugent, 2014).

⁴⁸ Designed to examine adult learning patterns, the work of Mullet et al. (2013) asked participants to write about a specific childhood memory. Based upon an individual's response (i.e. the story one told), the researchers classified each participant according to one of four attachment styles previously noted by developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth. Although it is not important to revisit each relationship style identified by Ainsworth, it is important to note that with the exception of the "secure" attachment style, it is often argued the other styles are not as "healthy" and/or "beneficial" to the individual.

⁴⁹ If one considers the notion of the "archive" and the "repertoire," as discussed by dance scholars Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider (2011), one could argue these traces remain within the body and are passed along and between generations. Specifically, I am reminded of Schneider's (2011) discussion of the presumed ephemeral nature of performance in comparison to the perceived stable nature of text. She writes:

The idea that flesh memory might remain challenges conventional notions of the archive. By this reading, the scandal of performance relative to the archive is not that it disappears (this is what the archive expects, this is the archive's requirement), but that it remains in ways that resist archontic 'house arrest' and 'domiciliation.'
(Schneider, 2011, p. 104-105)

Schneider (2011) argues the "archive," the objective material-based house for documents, would not exist without the "repertoire," the subjective bodily-based behavior, agreeing to disappear. She pushes the issue further by suggesting the repertoire – one's behavior exercised through repetitive performance – never really disappears, but instead is transmitted across time and space through its storage within the body.

In terms of the current discussion, it might be possible that although I do not contain a conscious memory of the bodily tortures and/or other extremely overt forms of discrimination based upon one's racial markings, I may retain traces of those experiences through the bodily transmissions passed along by those who preceded me. Such individuals may have experienced the physical abuse described in the subsequent repetitions of Whitman's text within "*Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray*" (2009).

⁵⁰ Such individuals include New York Times critic Gia Kourlas (2010) and Times Union dance writer Tresca Weinstein (2010).

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