The Harmonics of Intercultural Play:
Participatory Theatre Within Interfaith and Interracial Initiatives

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sonja Kuftinec, Advisor

October 2014

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank the congregations of Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue, who welcomed me into their communities and supported this research. I learned with and from these communities – not only about participatory theatre programs, but also about dialogue, about ritual, about relationship-building, about the pursuit of justice, about power, and of course, about race, class, and religion. I hope that this marks only the beginning of a much longer journey of learning that I will have the honor to continue to undertake with these congregations. Special thanks goes out to the people with whom I worked most closely on this project: Minister Brian Smith, Rabbi Andrea London, Reverend Velda Love, Avi Stein, Rachel Hudgens, Deacon Jerane Ransom, Minister Taurean Webb, Emily Nidenberg, Pastor Mark Dennis, Pastor Karen Mosby, Second Baptist historian Rhonda Craven, and the participants of Bibliodrama and Sankofa.

Beyond Second Baptist and Beth Emet, there is a wider circle of Evanstonians and Chicagoans who have supported this work, and I want to thank them, too. The YWCA of Evanston is engaged in ongoing anti-racist work, through a diverse series of programs that are organized and run by Eileen Heineman. I attended many of these programs during my fieldwork, and through them, I was put in touch with a generous and thoughtful group of Evanstonians, from whom I learned a great deal. I am also grateful for the support of the Shorefront Legacy Center, which houses an impressive archive of African American history on Chicago's North Shore. Dino Robinson, who maintains the archive, was very helpful, as was Doria Johnson, who worked alongside me in the archive on several occasions, in her capacity as a scholar-in-residence.

I also want to thank my advisor, Sonja Kuftinec, for the superhuman investment of time and energy that she made in this work and in me as a student. I am fortunate to have a mentor who is so engaged, so rigorous, so wise, so kind, and so devoted to the pursuit of a more just society. Alongside Sonja, I am immensely grateful for the mentorship that I received from my committee, including Tim Lensmire, Teresa Gowan, Margaret Werry, and Cindy García.

Of course, I cannot possibly write about my personal growth as a scholar in graduate school without also thanking my peer group. Learning does not happen in a vacuum, and in my case, it could not have happened without an exceptional group of friends and mutually-invested young scholars who loyally and lovingly supported one another. I am particularly indebted to Rita Kompelmakher and Mike Mellas, who have offered their wise and provocative feedback at so many stages of this journey, and who I hope will continue to challenge and shape my thinking for the rest of my career. My debt of course extends to the wider circle of scholars who have offered tremendous support of various kinds as we have moved through graduate school (and beyond) together: Stephanie Lein Walseth, Carra Martinez, Shannon Walsh, George McConnell, Eric

Colleary, Kimi Johnson, Kelly McKay, Kristen Stoeckeler, Jesse Dorst, Wade Haynes, Pabalelo Mmila, and Alicja Binder.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, who are a constant wellspring of encouragement, enthusiasm, and support. For thirty-five years, they have been teaching me how to thrive as an academic by example – but much more importantly, they have been teaching me what it is to be a citizen in pursuit of greater justice, a member of a community, a good listener, and an empathetic person. Their values and concerns run deep through this dissertation, and I recognize those values and concerns as my own with great gratitude. And of course, I want to thank Naomi, who is the most encouraging, supportive, patient, and loving partner that I could imagine. As I have worked on this dissertation, Naomi has shared in the exciting moments of realization alongside the humbling moments of self-doubt, and she has helped me to nurture and develop these ideas into the form they take today.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates how diverse communities in the US encounter one another within the framework of dramatic play. I examine the interaction between a Reform synagogue and a black Baptist church, which jointly instituted a theatre project as one of several initiatives to nurture relationship-building and dialogue between their congregants. My research includes ethnographic investigation of the theatre project (which I co-facilitated) and of the communities' other initiatives. I ask: How do participants engage one another within the various initiatives for intercultural encounter? Does theatre-making, as a form of play, invite a different interaction than other initiatives do? To what extent can a robust theorization of play illuminate both the potential and the limitations of the initiatives?

I argue that grave historical inequities have produced a status quo of minimal and superficial interracial interaction in the suburb where the two communities are based – but that play sometimes empowers people to deviate from those norms, allowing for productive tension. This tension allows for more nuanced interpersonal relationships and more political, critical dialogue. However, I also argue that while the context of role-play may enable this tension to thrive where it might not otherwise exist, it also obscures people's embeddedness within existing and unequal power systems. Thus, I argue, while dramatic play can be a powerful tool for cultivating intercultural encounters with productive tension, it may be most influential when facilitators also periodically push the players to abandon their assumed identities and reflexively interrogate the intercultural dynamics of their "real" lives.

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Introduction

This dissertation contributes to a growing body of research on the capacity of participatory theatre projects to foster intercultural dialogue between estranged or isolated groups. It does so through an ethnographic study based in an inner-ring suburb of a major US city, and it examines in what ways, to what extent, and with what limitations participatory theatre-making can alter a status quo of infrequent and superficial intercultural encounter. It contributes to the scholarship on applied theatre, a discipline that interrogates the ways that the creative processes of the theatre are harnessed within participatory contexts to catalyze dialogue, provoke change (whether personal, societal, or international), and/or stimulate growth.[i]

The dissertation proposes that theorizing participatory theatre-making as a form of *play*, rather than as a spectacle or an incentive for collaboration, can enable scholars of applied theatre to contribute to, and to work with, a theoretical framework that resonates beyond our narrow discipline and that articulates the tensions between the "real" and the imagined. It also argues that the playful interaction within participatory theatre processes can embolden participants to engage one another with greater intimacy and greater tension than the status quo of infrequent and superficial interaction generally enables. To some extent, then, the playful engagement of intercultural theatre projects promotes both intercultural relationship-building and critical dialogue about social inequities. However, the potentiality of play has its limits, and the relationship-building it promotes does not necessarily outlast the structured, finite realm that it creates. Moreover, the critical

dialogue that it promotes by encouraging participants to engage and challenge one another *in role* is limited by the fact that it inherently absolves the individuals from considering their real-world embeddedness in unequal structures of power.

Mine is not the first study to interrogate intercultural, participatory theatre projects, but the interest in this topic is relatively young. In 2008, when I wrote my MA thesis on a similar topic, I could point to no major book that interrogated intercultural encounters in participatory theatre making as its primary point of focus. Since then, however, the field has changed significantly. In 2009, James Thompson, Jenny Hughes, and Michael Balfour coauthored *Performance in Place of War*, which profiled and studied over twenty-five theatre initiatives that took place during (or directly following) extreme conflict, many of which involved intercultural groups of participants. Also in 2009, Sonja Kuftinec published *Theatre, Facilitation, and Nation Formation in the Balkans and Middle East*, interrogating a number of theatre projects with groups of intercultural youth in the former Yugoslavia and Israel/Palestine. In 2010 and 2011, Cynthia Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker published a two-volume anthology, *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*, documenting and analyzing participatory theatre projects devoted to peacebuilding. By the time I submit this dissertation, a new major volume will be published, edited by South African scholars Hazel Barnes and Marie-Heleen Coetzee, entitled *Applied Drama/Theatre as Social Intervention in Conflict and Post-Conflict Contexts*.

Across this body of literature, scholars emphasize and attempt to model the value of carefully investigating the theatre projects *in context*. One can only understand the

significance of what's happening within the rehearsal room and on the stage if one understands how it reflects and inflects the ways people interact (or avoid interaction) outside the context of the theatre project. Cynthia Cohen addresses this concern with the metaphor of a "porous membrane" that separates the theatre project from – and connects it to – its cultural context. Inside the "membrane" of the theatre project, people are able to embody, confront, and question otherwise-overwhelming elements of life. They then reenter the "quotidian world" with the insights, the courage, and the enhanced consciousness that they take from the safer space defined by the membrane (Cohen with Varea and Walker 162). Kuftinec suggests that she is working within contexts in which cultural groups see one another as cultural Others (capital O), and that participatory theatre projects have the chance to rerender those "Others" as "others" (lowercase o), without collapsing otherness into sameness (28-29). She frames many of her chapters with experiences that she has in the regions about which she writes, interweaving the analyses of theatrical engagement with narratives of checkpoints that dehumanize, bombed bridges that separate, and skeptical potential-participants that fearfully keep their distance from one another. Thompson, Hughes and Balfour articulate the importance of context with a linguistic emphasis on *imbrication*: performance, they contend, is not simply a response to violence, but rather, performance and violence are imbricated within one another. "Performance and wider cultural activities report, remember, sponsor, provoke and prevent violence, and are subtly 'imbricated' in all aspects of warfare," they write (14). By calling attention to the ways that performance is imbricated within violence, or by evoking the image of a permeable membrane between

art and society, or by framing the analyses of these projects with other, "non-theatrical" narratives that call attention to how people typically interact (or how they avoid interaction), these writers have established the value of integrating an attention to the everyday into an analysis of participatory theatre projects.

This study attempts to honor those pioneers by going two additional steps in that direction. First, as I further detail in the methods section of this introduction, I spent most of my research time *outside* of the context of the participatory theatre project that takes center stage in this dissertation. I knew that the theatre project would ultimately become my primary focus, but I deliberately conducted most of my fieldwork elsewhere. I wanted to understand how peoples' actions within the scope of the participatory theatre project related to their actions in other spaces, within the same locality. Second, I have attempted to conduct my theorization of applied theatre on the fertile ground of play theory – a body of scholarship whose scholars interrogate the complex relationship between "real life" and embodied alternatives to (or variations on) "real life." If it is vital to study participatory theatre projects *in context* (as the theorists on whose shoulders I stand suggest), then it makes sense to explore, wield, and contribute to a body of theory that is designed to illuminate the complex, paradoxical relationship between that which seems to be "real" or stable, and that which we invent.

In theorizing intercultural participatory theatre projects as a form of play, I diverge from some of the dominant ways that scholars and practitioners write about such initiatives. First, scholars and practitioners in this field often write about theatre-making as a superordinate goal (Banks; Kuftinec). Drawing explicitly or implicitly on Realistic

Conflict Theory (a model of intergroup conflict developed by social psychologists in the 1960s and 1970s), these theorists suggest that the collaborative challenge of creating theatre can bind people together in pursuit of common objectives, even if their cultural groups are in tension with one another (Nadler 16-18). Second (distinct but related to the idea of superordinate goals), Theatre scholars write about how theatre-makers negotiate cultural differences off-stage, and thus come to understand their differences better, in ways that audiences never see (Filloux; Van Erven and Gardner). Laura Edmondson calls this dialogue the "meta-text" of a performance, and while these meta-texts do not always suggest a triumphant transcendence of cultural differences, many scholars suggest that this dialogue can be informative and valuable, even if difficult and painful. Third, scholars and practitioners describe how the challenge to render participants' understandings of cultural conflict aesthetically, through bodies in space, can provide those participants with a fresh perspective on the conflict and their position within it, avoiding rehearsed argumentation and psychological entrapment within fixed understandings (Kuftinec; Volkas). Fourth, many scholars and practitioners attest to the value of public intercultural performances as opportunities to model intercultural collaboration (Thompson, Hughes, and Balfour 46-51, 153-160; Varea). Particularly when cultural groups are in conflict, these scholars assert, people may need a space to present an alternative vision of how to be together differently. While this dissertation does not dispute any of the above ideas, they do not drive my theorization of applied theatre. Instead, as a few other scholars have begun to do, I draw on play theory to

consider how the act of engaging one another in role might contribute to – and also sometimes limit – intercultural encounters.

In doing so, I ultimately set my scope broader than applied theatre. I do contribute to the literature on participatory, intercultural theatre projects, but I also write about how play (which can take many forms) can alter the patterns of life in a city. This city is Evanston, IL – an inner-ring suburb of Chicago – and the key players come from a black Baptist church (Second Baptist Church of Evanston) and a Reform synagogue (Beth Emet The Free Synagogue). These institutions identify religiously as Christian and Jewish, and while both cater to congregants from a diversity of racial backgrounds, the former identifies itself as black (or African American, terms they use synonymously) and the latter recognizes itself as predominantly white (a racialized term that Beth Emet's population sometimes uses with hesitation and ambivalence, and that I will return to and complicate later in this introduction). I write about how – using a variety of methods (including but not limited to participatory theatre programs) – these congregations work and play together with a desire to advance social justice, even though the individuals involved don't always see completely eye to eye about their goals or their methods.

Historicizing the Communities and Choreographies of Evanston

Throughout this dissertation, I write extensively about the *choreographies* that structure the lives of Evanstonians, with a particular focus on the congregants of Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue. In other words, I write about how

Evanstonians relate to and interact with one another, and I suggest that there exist norms and conventions that structure and limit peoples' speech and action, their silence and stillness. With inspiration from dance scholars Susan Leigh Foster and Cindy García, I use the term "choreographies" to describe these "broad contours of action within which variation might occur" (Foster, *Choreographing Empathy* 2; García 199).[ii] In Evanston, I argue, intercultural encounter happens through choreographies of segregation and consonance. That is to say, people often avoid intercultural encounters entirely (segregation), and when they do engage in these encounters, the parties involved often do so carefully, politely, and reservedly (consonance). I'll explain these ideas much more fully in Chapter 1, paying particular attention to how and why the different communities perform these choreographies. I will also argue that both of these choreographies are problematic for advocates of a democratic, pluralist, equitable community. I'll spend the rest of the dissertation – Chapters 2, 3, and 4 – analyzing the extent to which play (within and beyond participatory theatre programs) allows and encourages deviations from these choreographies. But first, I want to back up – way up – and to discuss the historical emergence of Evanston's choreographies and institutions. As Foster argues, people's choreographies are "historically specific" and "redolent with social, political, economic, and aesthetic values" ("Choreographies of Gender" 29). To better analyze these choreographies throughout the dissertation, then, it is necessary to confront some of the circumstances in which they emerged. The same, I would argue, is true for the institutions themselves. What follows is a brief historical introduction to the communities

of Evanston, of Second Baptist Church, and of Beth Emet Synagogue, and to the norms and conventions that structure the habitual actions of Evanstonians.

Over the course of 200+ years, the transatlantic slave trade brought hundreds of thousands of Africans to the shores of the United States as slaves for European settlers and their descendants. The descendants of the laborers would come to know themselves as African Americans, but in the 17th century, some historians argue that they likely saw themselves as barely different from the poor, European servants who worked alongside them in the tobacco plantations of Virginia. The embodied practices of their daily lives resembled each other closely: both groups of laborers spent most of the hours of their days working for, and submitting to, their wealthy, European masters. According to historian Edmund Morgan, they also would commonly "run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together, . . . [and] make love together" (327). Occasionally, they would also rebel together, as they did during "Bacon's Rebellion" of 1676 (Thandeka 45).

By the beginning of the 18th century, however, wealthy, elite Europeans in the American colonies established a racial classification system to protect their economic interests from the poor masses whose shared class interests posed a threat. The racial divide that they legislated into being, establishing dominance of light-skinned (European) people over dark-skinned (African) people, secured the economic position of the rich by dividing the allegiances of the poor (Thandeka 42-51, Morgan 316-337). Property (livestock) was confiscated from black people and redistributed to poor whites. Poor whites were permitted to whip black slaves, up to thirty lashes, if those slaves were to lift

a hand in opposition to a person of European descent. Poor whites were provided with provisions, money, and land at the end of their servitude (Morgan 329-333). In some places, laws were passed that forbade white servants and black slaves to "'company' or to drink together" (Allen 231). According to Morgan, these new laws – and the new embodied practices that they engendered – deliberately generated "racial contempt" for black slaves among poor white people (328). The contempt grew so strong that by 1825, poor white Virginians commonly refused to work in the fields alongside poor black people, even when doing so left them destitute (Russell 147). Thandeka argues that this racial contempt marked the beginning of an important historical transition in the American colonies, when an era marked by some "camaraderie among persons of different colors" gave way to a new era marked by "racial antipathy" and an end to "common [interracial] class interests" (47). The elevated sense of status that poor white people experienced was largely illusory, as the class difference between poor and rich white people remained intact, but the racial separation was real, as the lived experiences of black slaves began to diverge sharply from those of poor whites (Thandeka 47, Morgan 341). While Thandeka, Morgan, Russell and Allen write about this emergence of racial consciousness primarily in terms of the legal and attitudinal changes that took place, I would also argue that there was a choreographic shift – a shift in the embodied practices among black and white bodies that the existing social structure promoted. The tendency of poor people to drink together, make love together, steak hogs together, and take up arms together gave way to a tendency of poor white people to assault black people and to increase the distance between white and black bodies. Meanwhile, small

numbers of black people managed to escape from the plantations on which they worked, but black people largely learned to endure the physical and emotional abuse that they suffered there.

Slavery in the U.S. legally ended with the Civil War, but the economy of sharecropping and later emergence of Jim Crow laws preserved many of the old patterns of life, particularly in the American south, where most African Americans lived. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, many African Americans continued to practice a choreography marked by limited mobility and displays of deference. According to Isabel Wilkerson's account of the Great Migration, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, most averted their eyes and moved off the sidewalk in deference to white people, at the risk of violent assault or death. They learned where it was safe for them to be seen, and carefully navigated their lives within those boundaries. Their bodies learned to seek out, and gravitate towards, the secondary public facilities that were designated for them (Wilkerson, part 2). That said, not all African Americans performed these choreographies all of the time, and they certainly didn't all do so in the same exact way. Wilkerson also writes about the "silent, everyday rebellions" that some African Americans enacted in the first decades of the 20th century, noting how they tore down "Colored Only" signs to use as dartboards and sat at white soda fountains before darting away (part 2). Yet cautious acquiescence became (at least outwardly) the dominant response to Jim Crow, reinforced as it was by the threat of lynching. Meanwhile, white bodies learned to preserve a physical and emotional distance from black bodies. Some learned to "taunt, police, humiliate, mob, rape, lynch, jibe, rob, jail, mutilate, and burn Negroes" (Thandeka 77).

Of course, the white community, like the black community, was not monolithic, and there were individuals who behaved differently. As Wilkerson wrote in her profile of Ida Mae Brandon Gladney, one of three migrants of the Great Migration whose journey she traces, "Ida Mae soon discovered that when it came to white people, there were good ones and bad ones like anything else and that she had to watch them close to figure out the difference." The "good ones" behaved like Julie McClenna, who lived across the pasture from Ida Mae in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, noticed the poverty in which Ida Mae's family lived and the extra stress that followed her father's death, and habitually hired the young Ida Mae to collect eggs from the hen house and carry them for door-to-door sales, often gifting her chickens as well (part 2). Yet such acts of compassion might also be considered part of the complex choreography of oppression, as they did not alter the basic rules of engagement. These opportunities to express kindness and provide modest material support may have even prolonged the unjust system, as it may have temporarily alleviated a sense of responsibility.

Through this history of legal classification and oppression, economic exploitation, and social division, race has become a "central axis of social relations" in the United States (Omi and Winant 61). According to Omi and Winant, race came to "determine [and continues to influence] the 'presentation of self,' distinctions of status, and appropriate modes of conduct" (62). The evolution of our racial taxonomy – which consists of a complex and evolving landscape of racial identities but is still arguably anchored by the identities of "white" (or Caucasian) and "black" (or African American) – has occurred through a process that social scientists Omi and Winant have called "racial

formation" (61-62). They use this term to underscore both that race is socially constructed, not innate, and that racial consciousness looms so large in U.S. society that it is difficult to recognize as such (66-67). To those who live within the United States, these categories often seem "obvious, 'natural,' and 'common sense,'" yet they are a result of "social, economic, and political forces," many of which were deliberately set in motion (61-62).

Throughout the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, African Americans fled the American south in massive numbers. They sought relief from legalized discrimination, lynchings, and other violence, and they followed the promise of industrial jobs. As they did so, they adapted to the new landscapes in which they found themselves. Chicago was one of the prime destinations for these African Americans, and though they didn't find Jim Crow style segregation in their new home, they found that free-market practices tainted with racial discrimination created something eerily similar, which they sometimes dubbed "James Crow" (Wilkerson, part 3). The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) refused to ensure mortgages on blocks that had black residents, or on blocks adjacent to those blocks where black people lived. The real estate companies were under tremendous pressure to not sell to African Americans, as doing so would destroy the economic viability of the neighborhood – not just due to white prejudice, but due to the immediate changes it would create for the classification of all surrounding property.

Black families therefore moved into existing black neighborhoods, which quickly deteriorated due to predatory lending practices that thrived in Chicago's real estate market. Since the FHA would not ensure loans in black neighborhoods, many black

families bought property "on contract"– a system in which white landowners would retain the title until the new black buyers paid off the entire price of the building in monthly payments. These "contract sellers" were not required to disclose the prices at which they had purchased the property, so they would often buy property and then immediately sell it "on contract" for 2-3 times what they had paid. These contracts usually enabled the title-holders to reclaim the property if the buyers missed a single payment, creating a system in which black families were often evicted after paying back more than the property was really worth (since the actual value of the property was kept secret, and the families were bound to contracts that required much more). These arrangements drove black families into poverty, creating circumstances in which they often had to work two jobs, and couldn't afford the upkeep of their homes. Some divided up their properties into tiny rental units in order to continue making these extortionary payments. Slum clearance programs then destroyed many of these homes, forcing black families into homelessness (Satter 48-49, 393).

In her book *Family Properties*: *Race, Real Estate, and the Exploitation of Black Urban America,* Beryl Satter describes how these skewed business practices remained invisible while black people were blamed for the decay of their neighborhoods:

> If black contract buyers saw themselves making heroic sacrifices against impossible odds to keep from falling behind on their payments, this was not how their white neighbors viewed the situation. Whites saw population densities doubling, while garbage collection and other municipal services stayed the same or declined. They saw unsupervised children flooding the

> neighborhood. They noted that buildings bought by African Americans rapidly decayed. Small wonder that whites blamed their black neighbors for the chaos they observed. (5)

This perception of African Americans as "bad neighbors" propped up other technologies of exclusion, including exclusive neighborhood covenants and racist policies of the Chicago Real Estate Board. Covenants often forbid non-white people from both owning and renting properties, creating an inflated market for rentals in confined, black slums. As Beryl Satter has written, "the very federal housing programs that would enable Chicago's white ethnics, along with millions of other white Americans, to purchase new homes in the suburbs worked to fortify the black ghetto in Chicago and in cities across the nation" (40).

In Evanston, slightly higher levels of interracial trust and the greater availability of land made the situation not quite as dire – and the constriction of black movement not quite as severe – as it was in Chicago. Still, a "James Crow" situation gradually evolved. The black community north of Chicago had begun as a servant class, and thus white and black residents were relatively well acquainted, which slightly ameliorated white fear of African Americans. When the first African Americans made their homes in Evanston, they lived throughout the city (Robinson 8). But as the numbers of black Evanstonians swelled during the Great Migration, with thousands of immigrants coming to Evanston straight from southern towns, Evanston's evolving laws and lending practices confined them onto the least desirable land: farthest from Lake Michigan, vulnerable to flooding, separate from the rest of Evanston by three sets of train tracks, and separate from the

nearby settlement of Skokie by a sanitary canal (Wiese 442). This western area of Evanston, where land was cheaper, had long been the center of gravity of Evanston's black community, but after the turn of the century, it became nearly impossible for black Evanstonians to secure loans for property anywhere else. As white Evanstonians lent money to black buyers to buy more and more land in deeper and deeper parts of west Evanston – which later became known as the "Fifth Ward" – they effectively reduced congestion along the railroad boundary and thus preserved the railroad tracks as a firmer, "safer" boundary between black and white Evanston. No expansion of black residential areas took place east of the railroad tracks between 1910 and 1940, so by 1940, the boundary between black and white Evanston was clearer than before the Great Migration began (436-7). As Wiese writes, "[Whites] established segregation while (and by) expanding the supply of housing available to black Evanstonians" (449).

As Evanston's black population grew, and as its geographic boundaries constricted, its churches evolved as crucial centers of cultural life, political activity, and identity formation. According to historian Evelyn Higginbotham and Religious Studies scholar Eddie Glaude, African Americans, who were excluded from and/or shunned within the dominant social and political structures of US cities, towns, and suburbs, have often leveraged their churches as "mediating structures" standing between African-American individuals and the "racially alienating institutions" of the state (Glaude 340; Higginbotham 194). Churches thus became vital centers of political discourse, social solidarity, activist resistance to oppression, and black identity formation.

Christian organizations had served this role in the African American community since the mid-18th century, when an ecstatic Christianity spread through the country with the first great awakening. Slaves, who had until this time been largely excluded from Christian worship, found themselves welcome within these Baptist and Methodist gatherings, albeit as second-class citizens (West and Glaude xx; West 84-85; Lincoln 171-177). Gradually, black congregants began to form their own, independent communions, where they would not be confined to the back pews and "nigger heavens" of white institutions (Lincoln 163). But in Illinois, like the southern, slave-holding states that it borders, it was illegal for African Americans to congregate under African American leadership until after emancipation. African Americans in Illinois thus worshipped as second-class congregants of white Baptist and Methodist churches, often with separate, unofficial black subgroups. When it became legal to do so, in the late 19th century, African Americans then began to break away and form their own churches. Consistent with national trends, Evanston's first two African American churches thus included a Methodist church and a Baptist church. They were both founded in 1882, several decades before their numbers would swell with the influx of the Great Migration. The Baptist church took the name "Second Baptist," distinguishing itself from, but simultaneously affiliating itself with, the white "First Baptist" church from which it broke away (Robinson 21-23). It established itself on the margins of downtown Evanston, not far from First Baptist church, where its members were used to worshipping. It still stands there today, outside the Fifth Ward, where the Black community has become

concentrated, testifying to the fact that Evanston's African American community was not always ghettoized in the neighborhoods west of the railroad tracks.

Black churches like Second Baptist thus became African American centers of identify formation, spiritual worship, and political maneuvering (Glaude 340-341; West 86; Higginbotham 190-191). Through ecstatic and celebratory worship infused with original liturgy and Biblical exegesis/commentary, African Americans repositioned themselves in relation to a divine authority, displacing the primacy of the white (human) authorities to which black Americans often had to defer and define themselves (West and Glaude xx; Glaude 357-358; Lincoln 176-177; Higginbotham 191). According to Religious Studies scholar Eddie Glaude, African Americans cultivated the inner and collective strength to survive the humiliation and the physical threat they faced outside the walls of their churches through the "frenzy of black religious practice" (Glaude 347-349). Moreover, alongside the God-centric "ecstatic celebration" of worship, churches enabled African Americans to establish pragmatic infrastructures for economic uplift and self-care, including "schools, circulating libraries, concerts, restaurants, insurance companies, vocational training [and] athletic clubs" (West, *Prophetic Fragments* 163, qtd. in Glaude 347; Higginbotham 192). Additionally, through the regional and national church networks and associations, African Americans cultivated a national discourse and national strategy concerning racial in/justice (Higginbotham 192-197; Glaude 341-348; West and Glaude xxii).

Meanwhile, throughout the early twentieth century, at about the same time as African Americans were migrating north, another group of people were arriving in US

cities on boats from Europe: Jews. Fleeing the pogroms in eastern Europe, and hoping for both greater safety and economic opportunity, Jewish migrants initially clustered together in dense, poor, homogenous ethnic enclaves within US cities. The new immigrants found jobs predominantly in the expanding garment industry, and opened small independent businesses (Goldstein 76, 144). They were not the first Jews to come to America: they discovered a significant German Jewish population that had come in the mid-19th century, and initially sustained an ambivalent relationship with those American Jews, who didn't want to be associated with the poor masses from eastern Europe (Goldstein 127). However, as this immigrant community swelled, it quickly dwarfed the community of German Jews who had preceded them, emerging as the predominant cultural group within the Jewish American community (165-167). They began to move out of their ethnic enclaves, in cases when they were financially able to do so, in the 1930s (Goldstein 152-153). In Chicago, as in other cities, this move was motivated in part by the desire to move away from African Americans, who gradually became a larger presence in West Side neighborhoods where Jews lived. As historian Eric Goldstein explains, the Jews of this time didn't entirely see themselves as white, and the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who defined whiteness didn't entirely view Jews as white, but the African Americans who moved into the industrializing North during the Great Migration did see Jews as white, and when racial tensions rose during race riots, Jews were sometimes attacked by African Americans (145). Moreover, anti-Semitism was on the rise in the early 20th century, and the proximity of Jewish and African American neighborhoods made Jewish Americans fear that white Americans would increasingly see

them as non-white (142). But the Jewish migration in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was also, as historian Beryl Satter explains, motivated by a desire to escape their own past: they associated their urban neighborhoods with their own history as marginalized immigrants, and a younger generation wanted to establish themselves as more "American" in more prosperous neighborhoods (Satter 29). The combination of these motivations brought Jewish Chicagoans north – to Rogers Park, to the suburb of Skokie, and, in smaller numbers, to Evanston.

Jews' real estate prospects were limited in these new areas, as they were often seen as being only marginally white. Beryl Satter explains how appraisers evaluated neighborhoods based on a racialized paradigm that devalued property in black and "ethnic" areas, which created economic incentives for white people to exclude potential non-white and marginally-white neighbors:

> Appraisers . . . ranked properties, blocks, and even whole neighborhoods according to a descending scheme of A (green), B (blue), C (yellow), and D (red). A ratings went to properties located in "homogenous" areas – ones that (in one appraiser's words) lacked even "a single foreigner or Negro." Properties located in neighborhoods containing Jewish residents were riskier; they were marked down to a B or a C. If a neighborhood had black residents it was marked as D, or red, no matter what their social class or how small a percentage of the population they made up. These neighborhoods' properties were appraised as worthless or likely to decline in value. (41)

Thus, Jews still found themselves in rather homogenous enclaves. However, by mid-twentieth century, the embodied practices of Jewish life in the United States looked quite different than they did a half-century earlier. They still interacted primarily with other Jews, both in their neighborhoods and their workplaces. But they lived in closer proximity to – and felt increasingly comfortable with – a growing group of other "ethnic whites," and once they began to settle in the growing suburbs, where the many cultural institutions of their urban neighborhoods became concentrated in the suburban synagogue, their patterns of life began to more closely resemble, and began to intersect more comfortably with – those of their Protestant neighbors. The embodied habits that had once differentiated them from their "white," "American" neighbors – the rhythms of the Yiddish language, the strictures of Sabbath observance, the back-and-forth *shuckling* of traditional Jewish worship, the physical labor of garment-industry piecework – gave way to new habits that white, Protestant Americans recognized: mowing the lawn, commuting by car, operating the cash registers of their independent businesses, standing silent and erect in a place of worship, etc.

As Chicagoland's Jews initially moved to Skokie and Rogers Park in much greater numbers than they moved to Evanston, no synagogues existed in Evanston until 1950. At that time, Rabbi David Polish (who became the founding rabbi of Beth Emet Synagogue) was leading Temple Mizpah in Rogers Park, and alienated his community by enthusiastically embracing the Zionist movement and the young State of Israel. Zionism, which inherently asserted a Jewish particularism, was out of fashion in the mid-20th century, as American Jews worked to establish themselves as mainstream, white,

suburban Americans (Goldstein 212). Polish was thus forced out of his congregation, and founded "Beth Emet The Free Synagogue" with the prime value that rabbis and other leaders should have absolute freedom of speech from the pulpit. Beth Emet's founders lived predominantly in southwest Evanston, adjacent to the African American enclave in west Evanston and the Catholic enclave in southeast Evanston. Neighborhood covenants and unofficial real estate practices restricted them from the other areas of the suburbs – particularly from north Evanston, where white Protestants lived. Beth Emet's location, southwest of downtown Evanston, is also (much like Second Baptist's) a testament to an era that many Evanstonians have forgotten: in this case, an era when Jews were only marginally white, and seen as undesirable neighbors and a financial liability by the Protestant elite that defined whiteness.

Beth Emet's Jews (and indeed, the Jews of the US) now self-define as white with much greater comfort than they did in previous generations. They move freely and comfortably throughout Evanston's many neighborhoods (except, perhaps, for black neighborhoods like the Fifth Ward), and throughout the nearby suburbs of Skokie and Wilmette. The era in which they were restricted from living or worshipping anywhere feels very remote. When I asked Rabbi London, the current figurehead of Beth Emet Synagogue, if there are any members with my complexion who would *not* identify as white, she said, "No; I think, at this point in Jewish history, it's hard to not feel white" (n. pag.). To borrow a term from Thandeka, a Unitarian Universalist theologian and social theorist who writes about the social construction of whiteness, Jews have gradually become "whited" in the United States (73).

But London also expressed that Jewish whiteness is complex. Jews are generally racially classified as white, but they're also culturally distinct from other white people, and depending on the circumstances, their Jewishness sometimes surpasses their whiteness as their primary cultural affiliation. "When we're in the black community, we're seen as white, and when we're in the white community, we're seen as Jewish," she said. "We're not *quite* white; we're also not black" (n. pag.). This ambiguity and inconsistency that London expresses about racial-cultural identity is one that American Jews continue to negotiate, even in this era when Jews benefit from white privilege and face very little discrimination. Throughout this dissertation, I will vacillate between using the terms "white" and "whited" to describe the racial identity of Jews of Eastern European descent, in a nod to the complexity that both London and Thandeka have noticed (Thandeka 73). This maneuver allows me to foreground the complexity and the constructedness of Jewish whiteness without obscuring the fact that Ashkenazi Jews are now relatively secure as white people.

Both Thandeka and Goldstein argue that Jews have long negotiated their complex and marginal whiteness with a careful eye to the black American "other" against which whiteness is defined. During some eras of Jewish American history, when Jews felt secure and accepted in white American circles, an identification with black people served a Jewish need to differentiate themselves from the white mainstream. For instance, as early as the 1880s, some prominent Jews publicly asserted a similitude between Jewishness and blackness, based on a parallel history of slavery (Goldstein 17-18). In other eras, when anti-Semitism was more prominent and Jews felt more oppressed, Jews

developed an ambivalent relationship to African Americans. For instance, when US anti-Semitism reached its height during the interwar years of the early 20th century, Jews were "increasingly torn between their desire for acceptance and their growing distaste for white intolerance" – an intolerance which they understood was directed both at them and at black Americans (Goldstein 138). A considerable number of Jews prominently took up the cause of civil rights for African Americans during this era, linking their own sense of marginalization with that of black America, but most preferred to "disappear as a visibly distinct group" during such times (147-149, 50). Some, like Norman Podhertz, described a social pressure to become a "facsimile WASP," and developed a complex hatred and envy for the black Americans among whom they lived (Thandeka 29-34).

Rabbi Polish, who remained in Beth Emet's pulpit from its founding in 1950 until his retirement in 1980, counted himself among the Jewish activists of the Civil Rights movement. He notably invited Martin Luther King to speak at Beth Emet in 1958, and he personally traveled to Alabama in 1965 to march with King from Selma to Montgomery. However, the local laws, real estate practices, and movement patterns largely kept Evanston's Jews separate from its African Americans, living in separate neighborhoods, patronizing separate businesses, praying in separate houses of worship, and socializing in different spheres. When I interviewed Claire, one of Beth Emet's founding members, and Claire's daughter Monica, who grew up in Evanston in the fifties and sixties, they explained to me that when they first moved to Evanston, the real estate agents subtly steered Claire and her husband toward the Jewish enclave in the southwest corner of town.[iii] Claire said that if she had asked for a house in north Evanston, the realtor would

have subtly discouraged it. “It was an understood thing [that Jews couldn’t buy property in north Evanston],” she told me. I asked how the realtor knew that she was Jewish, and she told me that he, too, was Jewish, as were the builders. Her response didn’t directly answer my question, but her inability to answer it and her indication that even Jewish professionals reinforced this segregation does reveal how pervasive it was. The real estate agent didn’t need to be told that Claire and her husband were Jewish; he just knew, and even though his own upward mobility was circumscribed by segregation, he preserved it. While Monica and Claire, like many congregants, were proud of Rabbi Polish’s engagement with the Civil Rights movement, they themselves kept their heads down in the face of political controversy. Monica explained to me that in the sixties and seventies, when Holocaust survivors began telling their personal narratives to the broader Jewish community, there was an ethos in the Jewish community to be wary of too much political involvement. “You stayed out of trouble, you didn’t go looking for trouble,” she said. “You stayed in your neighborhood, people were like you in your neighborhood, and things were easy” (Monica and Claire, n. pag.). Monica’s and Claire’s narrative stands in tension with the (more prominent) narrative of heroic Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights movement; it explains why the vast majority of northern Jews conformed to dominant practices of staying put, keeping their heads down, and telling stories about the *other* Jews who were taking heroic risks.

One mile away from Beth Emet, at Second Baptist Church of Evanston, Senior Pastor C.N. Hawk was not inclined to reach out to Beth Emet’s activist rabbi. Rhonda Craven, Second Baptist’s current historian, explained to me that Hawk, who led Second

Baptist from 1947-1970, encouraged his congregants to focus on scripture, not politics. Zina Jacque, a Northwestern undergraduate student who conducted historical and interview-based research on Second Baptist in 1976, when the church was beginning to change its orientation to civic affairs, reported that many congregants reflected on Hawk's tenure as a time of insularity and piety. "The church is not a place to be worldly," Jacque reported one congregant saying, remembering Hawk's era with nostalgia, "I can get all of this politicing [sic] out in the streets. I come to church to hear about the bible [sic] and Jesus not what's happening in the respective social organizations around the city" (Jacque 18). When Jacque reached out to Hawk (via postal mail) for comment, he wrote back, "The church's most important role is to lift up Jesus, and this can't be done with warrior's hands, that are so busy trying to alter the world" (Jacque 21).

The Second Baptist Church of the mid-twentieth century stands in marked contrast to the black Baptist churches of that era that have become more high profile, such as the churches led by Rev. Dr. Marin Luther King. But, as Ric Hudgens, one of Second Baptist's minsters, explained to me, most of the black Baptist churches of the time were skeptical of King's political activism and distanced themselves from it. This led King and his allies to break away from the black Baptist movement of his day and form their own denomination – the Progressive Baptist Convention – which Second Baptist later joined (Hudgens, n. pag.).

Second Baptist's shift came in 1971, when the congregation ousted Hawk, who Craven said was growing senile. A year later, they hired Rev. Dr. Hycel B. Taylor to assume leadership of the church. Second Baptist then became explicitly and deliberately

political. Jacque wrote in 1976 that half of the Sunday morning announcements were "concerned with activities going on outside of the church," including job opportunities, social activities, and "information and knowledge of all kinds" (21). Jacque's interview subjects reported a concern "with the here and now and with [their] ability to effect a change in that here and now." Several expressed pride in their influence over local elections (22).

Taylor is now remembered within Second Baptist for his outreach to a wide array of religious leaders. This included black Christian leaders, white Christian leaders, Jewish leaders, Nation of Islam leaders (he famously formed a relationship with Louis Farrakhan), and local leaders of the Unification Church (of Sun Myung Moon). While Taylor's relationships with this final group proved controversial, and while the church ultimately forced his resignation out of displeasure with his outreach to the Unification Church, most members of Second Baptist are proud of his worldly orientation, which they remember nostalgically. During this time, the church began to operate a lunchtime soup kitchen once a week in partnership with a Reform synagogue in Skokie, and they conducted at least one joint service event with a Reconstructionist synagogue in Evanston. However, most Second Baptist members with whom I have spoken suggest that his most significant relationship with a Jewish leader was with Rabbi Peter Knobel, the successor to Rabbi David Polish at Beth Emet Synagogue. Rooting through the Beth Emet "archives" (a closet in a stairwell, stuffed with boxes and bags full of miscellaneous old stuff), I found a cassette tape of a Shabbat service in the mid-nineties at which Rev. Dr. Taylor gave a guest sermon. It seems clear, from the gentle jokes that he publicly

made at Rabbi Knobel's expense, that these two leaders had spent significant time together, and had developed a comfort with and affection for one another ("Shabbat Service at Beth Emet Synagogue with Guest Sermon by Hycel Taylor" n. pag.). Many congregants at both institutions fondly recalled how Dr. Taylor immediately reached out to Rabbi Knobel on the morning of September 11, 2001, and how the two of them jointly gathered the rest of the Evanston clergy to organize a collective memorial service that evening.

Yet despite the intimacy between their religious leaders, the membership of two institutions rarely interacted. The successors of Taylor and Knobel – Rev. Mark Dennis of Second Baptist Church and Rabbi Andrea London of Beth Emet Synagogue – would ultimately try to change that status quo, and their efforts furnish the backdrop of this dissertation. This effort began shortly after London was installed as Beth Emet's Senior Rabbi in 2010, when Dennis – who had been serving as Second Baptist's Senior Pastor since 2003, reached out to her. Like his predecessor, Dennis has a reputation for forming broad coalitions, and for involving the church in the civic affairs of the broader community. In fact, in Spring 2014, after I left Evanston but before I completed this dissertation, Dennis announced that he would be leaving Second Baptist to become the CEO of Evanston's YMCA, where he may be able to engage in even broader coalition-building. Dennis suggested to London early in her tenure as Senior Rabbi that they ought to expand their institutional relationship, and perhaps even explore the possibility of sharing a building. While this last and most ambitious idea has since faded, Dennis found

an eager partner in London, and the two have tried to not only engage one another as colleagues, but also to engage their congregants in each other's lives.

However, these two congregations have developed very different institutional cultures, a reality that encumbers their efforts to collaborate. As a result of the groups' different histories – not only in Evanston but throughout the US – and their resulting cultural and class differences, they have developed different patterns of interaction, leadership structures, and economies of labor. As I explain in Chapter 1, the choreographies of Beth Emet bring congregants together in small groups, at times that they frequently renegotiate. Worship occurs weekly on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, but attracts only a small minority of congregants; members are more likely to see each other at committee meetings on weekday evenings, volunteering for the soup kitchen on Wednesday nights, taking children to religious school on Sunday afternoons, studying Torah on Friday mornings, or gathering for significant holidays (which shift according to the lunar calendar). In the meantime, they stay in touch with each other (and figure out when they will see each other next) through the digital dispersion of the internet. Meetings are planned, emergency decisions are made, and updates are distributed through extensive email chains, which congregants know to expect. Second Baptist members have very different practices of coming together: they fill the pews on Sunday mornings, and have to schedule two back-to-back worship services to accommodate their congregants. Many linger after the services to connect with each other face-to-face, and there is some time built into the service itself for mingling and greeting one another (while the organ underscores). If congregants need to check in with one

another about their availability at a particular time, for a particular meeting, they're likely to do it in person, on Sunday, rather than over email. Some congregants also gather in smaller groups throughout the week – particularly for Tuesday night choir rehearsals, for Wednesday night Bible study, or for miscellaneous meetings – but there is a sense that the congregation gathers as a whole every week on Sundays.

The two congregations also have distinct leadership structures. Beth Emet runs largely on professionalized labor. The congregation hires a six-person senior staff, all of whom work 5-6 days per week, plus four full-time and two part-time administrative support staff, and a four-person custodial staff. The payrolls for the organization also include the full-time teachers who work in the preschool, the part-time teachers who teach religious school once or twice a week, the part-time employees who supervise youth group events, the community members they hire to teach occasional classes to high school students or adults, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutors, song leaders, etc. While there is a much larger team of congregant volunteers who run much of the programming, plan the events, raise much of the money, map out institutional priorities, and oversee the professional staff, the institutional practices orient the community around a professionalized center of gravity. At Second Baptist Church, where congregants are on average less affluent and the institution thus has less money to hire professionals, the paid, professional staff is comparatively tiny. It includes the two pastors (Mark Dennis, Senior Pastor, and Karen Mosby, Pastor of Administration and Pastoral Care), the church secretary, two custodians, two part-time music leaders, and one part-time book-keeper. While the full-time, salaried senior pastor is almost always deferred to as an ultimate

authority, much of the church's programming is facilitated by the 10-15 person ministerial staff, a volunteer team of clergy whose availability fluctuates as they juggle other professional responsibilities. There is also a wider circle of deacons and trustees who take on extensive volunteer commitments, in addition to other congregants who step up to take on other volunteer responsibilities as asked.

These differences in leadership structures, practices, and choreographies of assembly reflect different institutional assets. Second Baptist Church's assets include a wide circle of highly-committed volunteers, a pervasive enthusiasm for congregational participation, and a strong sense of common faith. These assets reflect a history of reliance on one another, on God, and on the institution of the church for spiritual, emotional and material support that would not come from any other institution. Beth Emet's assets include a highly educated and well-compensated community of congregants, a wide network of accomplished professionals who contribute various kinds of expertise in both volunteer and paid capacities (as lawyers, teachers, graphic designers, artists, musicians, etc.), a robust and committed full-time staff, and a strong sense of a shared cultural tradition. These assets reflect a history of a community that has been admired and rewarded within the US for its professional labor. It also reflects a culture that emphasizes self-reliance, cultural preservation, and institutional responsibility (in which individuals feel responsible to the institution and expect the institution to be responsible to them). [iv]

My personal history with these institutions begins with the Beth Emet payroll. In 1998, as a freshman at Northwestern University, I sought out the only synagogue in

cycling distance from my dormitory as a potential place to teach conversational Hebrew. I was motivated by the joy of teaching, but I likely would not have made the commitment without the incentive of earning spending money (which amounted to much more money per hour than my friends were making at their work-study jobs on campus). Like many Beth Emet congregants, I almost never showed up to Shabbat worship services, but I gradually became a part of the community. By the time I had graduated college and moved into Chicago to pursue life as an actor, I was teaching fifth graders on Sunday mornings, tutoring Bar/Bat Mitzvah students on weekday afternoons, and occasionally teaching high school classes on weekday evenings. I was paid for all these things, and the income from Beth Emet helped to sustain me during several years of working as an actor and freelance drama teacher. In 2004-2006, I was employed as Beth Emet's Youth Director, an almost-full-time job that brought me closer to Beth Emet's families and its core professional staff. When I left Chicago in 2006, I remained in touch with some of these people – particularly Beth Emet's Associate Rabbi, Andrea London, who later became Beth Emet's Senior Rabbi and encouraged me to consider Evanston as a dissertation site.

During my initial years of commuting between Northwestern University and Beth Emet Synagogue, I needed to traverse downtown Evanston, where Second Baptist Church sits amid a breakfast restaurant, an athletic club, and a wine bar. I was intimately familiar with the breakfast restaurant, I once considered joining the athletic club, and I was aware of the wine bar, but I sped by the church on my bike (or, sometimes, in the passenger seat of other congregants' cars) without a second thought. I'm not sure that I

was even aware, in those days, that a black Baptist church was a half-block away from my favorite Evanston restaurant. I quickly and intuitively moved past that space on my way to spaces where I was either a consumer or an employee.

I do not mean to suggest that the institutional culture of Beth Emet revolves around getting paid. Most congregants, of course, do not get paid. Beth Emet, like Second Baptist, can only sustain itself thanks a very dedicated core group of congregants who both donate money to the institution and volunteer many hours of their time. But my personal history at Beth Emet does demonstrate the ways in which Beth Emet's institutional practices orient the community around its professionalized and paid labor, which differentiates it significantly from Second Baptist, which runs primarily on volunteer labor. It also demonstrates the way that parts of the Beth Emet community gather *outside* of worship hours, in a wide variety of classes, lessons, and meetings. These differences become important when considering why it is so hard for these two institutions to collaborate – a point which I return to in Chapter 1 and throughout the dissertation.

Play

Given the choreographies that keep Second Baptist and Beth Emet members physically separate and emotionally distant (choreographies built on the history I outlined above, and which I will analyze ethnographically in Chapter 1), this dissertation suggests that one way to invite a constructive engagement between their populations is by

convening spaces in which congregants engage one another playfully. Throughout this dissertation (particularly Chapters 2, 3, and 4), I will explore both the potential and the limitations of this playful engagement. In this brief introductory section, I will lay out the theoretical understandings of play that undergird my subsequent analyses of the playful interactions between congregants.

The understandings of play on which I draw come from theorists whose work spans from the mid-20th century to the contemporary moment. Prior to this time – particularly throughout the 19th century – play was commonly understood throughout Europe and the US as an activity only for children and "savages" (Krondorfer 6-11). Its value, according to the contemporary German-American scholar Bjorn Krondorfer, was to lift the agents of play "to a more mature and civilized level," after which they would take on more serious pursuits (11). However, Freud's pervasive work at the turn of the century began to shift this popular perception across disciplinary boundaries. Freud's interrogation of the human psyche relocated both the "child" and the "savage" deep within the persona of the European adult (11). As Krondorfer writes, "Play, fantasy, and rituals could no longer be portrayed as . . . . infantile and archaic behavior of others; rather, they had to be viewed as a 'civilized' person's obsession, substitution, regression, and delusion (11).

One of the results of Freud's legacy is thus the contemporary field of play studies, which play scholar Thomas Henricks has defined as an interdiscipline, noting psychology and education as its most represented fields, acknowledging sociology, anthropology, folklore, and zoology as valuable secondary contributors, and notably not including

scholars of theatre or performance studies. While this may be an oversight (as performance studies scholars definitely have contributed to, and borrowed from, the play literature), I believe it is a significant one. Our discipline, which studies *plays* and the art of *playing a role*, ironically exists only on the margins of this interdiscipline. In the specific field of applied theatre, I know of only two scholarly projects (Shulamith Lev-Aladgem's *Theatre for Co-Communities*, and [to a lesser extent] *Performance in Place of War*, by James Thompson, Jenny Hughes, and Michael Balfour) that have tried to theorize the dynamics and the social efficacy of intercultural, participatory theatre projects through the interdisciplinary insights of play studies. In this dissertation, I hope to build upon the pioneering work of these two projects to theorize applied theatre through a focus on play, but first, in this section, I will identify some of the post-Freudian threads of play scholarship that I weave together.

The Dutch Historian Johann Huizinga, whose 1938 book *Homo Ludens* is often considered the seminal work of play studies, never mentions Freud by name but seems to have been profoundly influenced by the connectedness of the European adult male with the child and the "savage." In this book, Huizinga argues that play is a crucial engine of any society's infrastructure, social life, and culture. He structures his book to lead up to two final chapters that scan all of western history, noting the "play-elements" that characterize and (in his view) have shaped each era. This argument is thick with assumptions of European cultural superiority, which by this point had evolved to view children and "savages" as related but certainly inferior to the European adult male. I find

this part of his book to be the least compelling, but I, like many play theorists before me, find the theorization of play which precedes it to be stimulating and helpful.

Huizinga characterizes play as a "stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (8). This insight of play as an alternative realm, detached (or, as I will argue, semi-detached) from the more prosaic or quotidian elements of life, infuses and propels my own theorization of play and my own analysis of how participatory theatre projects work within intercultural contexts. Huizinga nuances this insight by noting that people often become passionately absorbed in this "temporary sphere of activity," and that the sense of "only pretending" can be relegated to the background of one's consciousness; however, for Huizinga, the awareness of play as "not real" is ever-present during play (13, 21-22). This idea of toggling between alternative realms of life later gets further developed by a variety of play scholars (see below), and it sits at the heart of my own theorization of play.

Huizinga also argues that the effects of play linger. While he is very clear that play experiences are bounded by time, and that at any moment the rules and logics of the "real world" can reassert themselves, he also argues that play's significance outlasts this sometimes-abrupt truncation of play. "With the end of play its effect is not lost; rather it continues to shed its radiance on the ordinary world outside," he writes (14). Huizinga's insight might cause applied theatre practitioners to wonder about, and to study, the long-term effects of their work for the individuals and populations they engage. When I discuss the Bibliodramatic work that I conducted with Minister Smith in Evanston with friends and colleagues, they often ask me if the group continues to meet and to practice

Bibliodrama together. They usually ask this with a hopeful expectation that the answer will be "yes," and when I answer "no," they seem initially disappointed. I, too, usually feel disappointment as I give this answer, as though the value of the work is contingent upon its continuation. But Huizinga's insight causes me to interrogate whether, how, and to what extent the effects of this play might outlast the play experience itself, a task I will return to in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Huizinga also observes that play contains tension, and indeed, I will theorize this tension extensively throughout this dissertation (10-11). I will argue that aversion to conflict and tension limits Evanstonians (and other Americans) from effectively addressing the racial inequality and the race-based schisms that persist in the United States, and that in order to address them, people need to become more comfortable with tension. In the chapters that follow, I will investigate how different populations experience that aversion differently, and to what extent play might be an effective technology for inviting that tension into the life of a community.

Roger Caillois, writing twenty years after Huizinga, is the other scholar who stands at the forefront of play studies, and his work also influences my theorization of play in two important ways. First, Caillois develops Huizinga's notion that play exists "outside of real life," and that players experience an absorption in this "temporary sphere of activity," without ever fully losing sight of the fact that it is "not real." Caillois emphasizes the pleasure of lending oneself to an illusion, acting "as if" one were someone or something else (23, 8). However, Caillois also stresses that the pleasure is not in deceiving the spectators but experiencing oneself in alternative circumstances. As the

player "projects his presence beyond the limits of his body" (30), "the mask [of the character] disguises the conventional self and liberates the true personality" (21). In other words, in play, a player can discover and experience elements of himself (or herself, or themselves) that he (or she, or they) might suppress in "real life."

This idea, present in Huizinga's work but more fully fleshed out in Caillois's work, later gets further developed by contemporary scholars Richard Schechner, Shulamith Lev-Aladgem, and Bjorn Krondorfer in ways that have profoundly influenced my own thought. Schechner describes people in play as simultaneously being "me," "not-me," and "not-not-me," an insight that he does not attribute to Huizinga or Caillois but that I see as related. Schechner notes that when an actor plays Hamlet, he has multiple levels of self consciousness: he is conscious of himself as an individual and an actor ("me"), he is conscious of himself as the Prince of Denmark ("not-me"), and he is conscious of the ways that being the Prince of Denmark might be in concert with being himself, not in conflict ("not-not-me"). Shulamith Lev-Aladgem calls this the "Janus-faced" nature of play, and she argues that that this element of play makes players feel free to express ideas that are otherwise taboo (19, 30-31, 38). As she makes this argument, she seems to harness Caillois's insight that play can liberate the "true personality" of the player, drawing out its political potential. Bjorn Krondorfer, one of very few scholars who has written about Bibliodrama, makes a similar argument when he argues that play processes "mediate . . . between text and experience" (178). In other words, when enacting Biblical narratives, players are free to perform elements of their emotional lives that resonate with the intensity of the Biblical text, without feeling overexposed and

without fear of overdramatizing their personal narratives (176-178). Each in their own language, these three theorists all emphasize the ways that play assuages and emboldens players to confront and reveal the multiple selves (or, the multiple facets of the self) that they usually corral into a single, more coherent, and more acquiescent presentation of the self.

Caillois's second crucial contribution to my own theorization of play is his taxonomy of play. Unlike Huizinga, who emphasizes the competitive nature of play over all else, and who tries to assert that competition actually underlies all play (including art), Caillois differentiates between four major types of play activities. The first is competition (sports and games), the second is games of chance, the third is mimicry (or simulation), and the fourth is vertigo. Caillois does not assert that all play activities fall neatly into one of these categories, but rather, that various play activities can be characterized as having elements of these four qualities. For instance, he suggests that mimicry, in which a player becomes "an illusory character" within "an imaginary milieu" (the play quality of greatest relevance to my own work) is often combined with competition or with the pursuit of vertigo (19, 71-76). It is not the particularities of Caillois's taxonomy that interest me most (for instance, I am not convinced that there are only four essential types of play), but rather, the recognition that play can take many forms, and that many disparate types of play may nonetheless contain related elements and impulses. For instance, Caillois notes that the joy of being a spectator at a sporting event has less to do with the quality of competition (though that quality is certainly present in sporting

events) and more to do with mimicry, as the spectator enjoys the sensation of being a part of a team, imagining him- or her-self as having some agency within the competition.

This insight – that seemingly different types of play can contain similar elements and impulses – underpins my desire to theorize participatory theatre projects as play. If applied theatre scholars and practitioners can begin to understand our work within the broader strokes of play scholarship, we can learn and grow from a wider circle of scholars and practitioners. Moreover, as we explain our work within these broader strokes, I hope that our scholarship can resonate better beyond the boundaries of our discipline. I believe and hope that I may be able to communicate better with other scholars and practitioners of intercultural dialogue if I can do so in terms that characterize not only drama, but also sports, simulations, creative writing, and ritual. This is perhaps both a bold and a humble maneuver: bold in that it assumes my work can have salience for a wider circle of people, and humble in that it accepts that participatory theatre-making is only one of many productive ways that initiatives to foster intercultural dialogue will take up the technology of play. This desire to leverage applied theatre research towards a broader theorization of play and intercultural dialogue is most palpable in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, when I apply the understandings of play that I develop in Chapters 2 and 3 to an intercultural project that is outside the realm of applied theatre.

Yet while Caillois may have been the first play scholar to assert the interrelationships among different types of play, and while I find those interrelationships to be significant, I draw very little on his specific, four-part taxonomy. Brian Sutton-

Smith, the most prominent living scholar of play, wrote his 1997 book, *The Ambiguity of Play*, in order to present an even more differentiated taxonomy of play than the one Caillois developed – and I find Sutton-Smith's theorization to be more helpful for my own work than that of Caillois. Sutton-Smith does not differentiate among different kinds of play, as Caillois does, but among different *understandings* of play: he synthesizes centuries of play-rhetoric in order to map out how different people, with different interests and different cultural influences, talk and think about play. Biologists, for instance, see and value different attributes of play than mathematicians, who in turn see play differently than folklorists or anthropologists. Sutton-Smith develops seven rhetorics of play, tracing the histories of each as he analyzes the logics and assumptions of these rhetorics. While the vast majority of Sutton-Smith's scholarship is devoted to historicizing and analyzing these rhetorics, he also ultimately aspires to "[bridge] them within some unifying discourse" (9). This unifying discourse is the discourse of "variability:" not only do the rhetorics about play vary widely, but play itself, in its many forms, seems to emphasize variability. For instance, games and sports are unpredictable, child play is improvisational, and festivals are replete with "multiple forms of inversion" and intensifications of revelry (222). Sutton-Smith's work evidences a post-modern turn in play studies, as theorists begin to posit a radical open-endedness of reality with an emphasis on instability and variability (Krondorfer 14). As such, Sutton-Smith's taxonomy contains more divergent threads, mapping ideas that relate to each other more as loosely-related offshoots than as component parts of a whole. And yet, Sutton-Smith's

effort to bridge the varying discourses he studies with a single "unifying discourse" is, in some sense, a modernist project that relates his work to that of Caillois.

Sutton-Smith is motivated, in part, by a desire to line up his own scholarship on play with the scholarship on evolutionary science, and to suggest a biological understanding of play rooted in evolution (221-231). While I don't share this concern, the centrality of play's variability seems to resonate with the literature on play within our own field, particularly with Richard Schechner's 1988 article "Playing" (which I mentioned briefly above). Schechner describes play as a "creative destabilizing action," characterized by disequilibrium and looseness. He suggests that contradictory realities can co-exist, that the way we perceive the world is one of many possible realities, and that *play* is a way of exploring some of those alternative, provisional realities. Schechner doesn't use the word "variability," as Sutton-Smith does, but his emphasis on looseness, and on moving between multiple realities, seems to position him in intellectual proximity to Sutton-Smith.

It is thus with particularly strong influence from these two theorists (in addition to Huizinga, Caillois, and Lev-Aladgem) that I want to define play as the *performance of variability*. I use the word "performance," as many do in Performance Studies, with a deliberate embrace of its multiple meanings. Thus, to perform variability means, on the one hand, to display the variability of something or someone, as though for an audience. I can perform something's variability in much the same way that I could perform the beauty of a song by singing it publicly. But to perform is also to make something happen, to catalyze something. Thus, I might perform variability as I might perform a religious

ritual or a wedding. Ultimately, to talk about performing something's variability may mean to activate that thing's potential variations, or it might mean to show off the way that thing transforms – or both.

However, the theorists whose work has helped me to *define* play do not always pay much attention to the *politics* of play. My interest in the political ramifications of play turns me toward the African American, Christian theologian James Evans, whose book *Playing* emphasizes the potential political radicalism of play. Evans profiles Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Brer Rabbit, and (especially) Jesus of Nazareth as key political players who ought to shape a contemporary sense of the politics of play. These four players (in addition to many others whom Evans discusses) all lived in oppressive realities, yet they each had the courage to imagine a more just and free world, and they all lived in the interstices between these two sets of circumstances. Brer Rabbit, as a symbolic representation of the enslaved African, marshaled the courage to see beyond his physical limitations and to "[express] a creative claim to freedom and joy in the midst of nearly impossible circumstances" (22). He modeled playful subversion for generations of American slaves who created and adapted his tales. Malcolm X "asserted the existence of a realm of freedom and creativity in which African Americans could express themselves," playfully and defiantly conjuring up a political reality that did not yet exist (58). King enveloped millions of Americans in his magnetic, iconic dream, playing within the "overlapping spheres of American civil religion and African American spirituality" (61). Jesus "dared in the midst of Roman imperial power to propose and live according to another kingdom" – which he called the Kingdom of Heaven (58).

Performing the variability of power and oppression, these players both imagined and advanced a more just political reality.

And yet, it is necessary to question under what conditions play might catalyze a progressive political agenda. Theatre scholar Baz Kershaw, writing about radical and community theatre practices in the UK in the late 20th century, suggests that the playful excesses of carnival and the carnivalesque, in which participants play out the "symbolic overthrow of the hierarchic social-political order in a wild frenzy of excessive antistructural celebration," can ultimately be progressive or conservative, depending on context (68). Drawing on the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin, Kershaw suggests that the carnivalesque can offer a powerful critique of a status quo of rigid and oppressive cultural hierarchies: it "inverts the everyday, workaday world of rules, regulations and laws, challenging the hierarchies of normality in a counterhegemonic, satirical and sartorial parody of power" (73). On the other hand, drawing on Terry Eagleton and other critics of the carnivalesque, Kershaw presents the case that the carnivalesque can also function as a "safety valve for the ultimately regulated relief of oppositional pressure," after which "the prevailing order is strengthened" (73). Acknowledging both of these possibilities, Kershaw concludes that the carnivalesque may be most efficacious when it is "organizationally grounded in relation to wider cultural/philosophical movements" (75). For instance, in the Rio carnaval, the carnivalesque functions as a locus for progressive organizers to come together for a "full year of organizing, plotting, and planning behind the scenes," emerging as better organized and networked leaders (Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* 131, cited in Kershaw 74).

I want to suggest that what Kershaw argues about the carnivalesque is also true of play more generally. Play, the performance of variability, may at times be able to catalyze social change, as James Evans and Shulamith Lev-Aladgem suggest. It may empower people to imagine a more just and free world, and it may embolden participants to speak up where they often feel silenced. But whether they have the courage to continue speaking up, and to continue working towards the creation of the more just world that they imagine during play, depends on the complex and context-specific relationship between the reality that players perceive to be "really real" and the alternative reality that they conjure during play. As players toggle between the multiple identities that they experience during play – the Schechnerian "me" that lives on after play ends, the ephemeral "not-me" that dissipates, and the "not-not-me" that mediates between the two – they may or may not enhance their capacity and proclivity for progressive political struggle.

As I observe and analyze Evanstonians' play throughout this dissertation, I emphasize the alternative realities that they invoke and the multiple versions of themselves that they explore in the process. I pay particular attention to the kinds of intercultural relationships and choreographies that they explore in the process. I ask: to what extent does play enable them to imagine a different way of engaging with one another? To what extent does it empower them to recognize and name the divisive and oppressive elements of their social world(s)? To what extent might the alternative realities that they experience and explore during play outlast what Huizinga calls the "time-bound" experience of playing?

About Bibliodrama

At the heart of this dissertation is an interrogation of my own practice of Bibliodrama, which I undertook with my colleague Minister Brian Smith in 2012-2013. Bibliodrama is a form of participatory theatre-making in which people enact Biblical narratives, and while it is practiced in many places throughout the world (in both Jewish and Christian circles), there is little written about it, and it is almost entirely absent from the broader scholarly literature in applied theatre. In Chapter 1, I will explain at greater length how Smith and I came to work together, and in Chapters 2 and 3, I will analyze some of the sessions themselves in much greater detail. Here, a brief introduction to the form is in order. In the following paragraphs, I first describe Bibliodrama's conditions of emergence, and then I describe the particularities of the Bibliodrama process that Smith and I led, noting in both cases the confluence of divergent motivations that participants and facilitators may bring to the Bibliodrama process.

Whereas most forms of applied theatre trace their lineage either to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodologies or to student-centered pedagogies from 20th century innovations in British education (Nicholson 9), most practitioners of Bibliodrama understand their work as a derivation of psychodrama, sociodrama, or both (Pitzele, Hecht, Condon, Krondorfer).[v] Both psychodrama and sociodrama are attributed to Dr. Jacob L. Moreno, a contemporary of Freud who worked as a theatrical director, a therapist, and medical doctor, beginning in the early 1920s. Psychodrama, which is more

often cited as the inspiration for Bibliodrama, is a form of group therapy in which groups explore one client's life circumstances at a time, as the other group members assist the primary client (the "protagonist") to enact personal interactions that he (or she, or they) identifies as being challenging or problematic. By playing out these scenes, and providing the protagonist the opportunity to vary his (or her, or their) behavior or to switch roles, that individual can experience a form of catharsis – "a concussion and breaking-open of paralyzed feelings [and] hardened structures" (Leutz 142, qtd. in Feldhendler 98). Daniel Feldhendler suggests that psychodrama loosens peoples' emotional blocks, recovers their previously-obstructed capabilities, and induces new possibilities for action (99). People achieve these benefits primarily by exercising their capacity for spontaneity, which psychodramatists understand as a "subtle operation of the nervous system that is inhibited in states of anxiety" (Blatner, n. pag.).

Sociodrama is a related form in which "the true subject . . . is the group and not the different individuals" (Moreno 91, qtd. in Feldhendler 89). Jonathan Fox elaborates:

> Sociodrama is based upon the tacit assumption that the group formed by the audience is already organized by the social and cultural roles which in some degree all the carriers of the culture share . . . It is the group as a whole which has to be put on the stage to work out its problem, because the group in sociodrama corresponds to the individual in psychodrama. (Fox 1987:18, qtd. in Feldhendler 89).

Thus, in sociodrama, the narratives that participants enact and explore are not primarily drawn from participants' individual lives, but rather, from their shared social-political

world. Groups probe current events, historical memories, etc. (Feldhendler 100-101). When groups *do* draw material from their personal lives, they make a conscious effort to depersonalize that material. As Adam Blatner writes:

> in sociodrama, a group might explore the more general predicament of, for example, parents of a medically chronically sick child; or a couple dealing with the visits of either partner's parents . . . Other examples of issues addressed in sociodrama might include those arising out of the interactions of teenaged boys and girls, parents and children, police and minorities, professors and college students, etc. (Blatner, n. pag.)

Sociodrama and psychodrama are markedly different in their intent and in their source material, yet similar in their structure and in their techniques. Practitioners of both methods describe their work as having three major phases: warm-up, action, and sharing (or reflection) (Blatner, n. pag.). The warm-up is the stage in which a facilitator leads participants in introductory exercises in order to create a sense of comfort with one another and with the idea of stepping into role. When participants begin enacting the encounters from their lives (or, in sociodrama, from their socio-political world), and when the facilitator encourages them to vary their enactment with his or her array of specialized techniques, they have entered the second phase: enactment (or action). In this phase, a facilitator might *cut* the scene, encouraging the participants to break out of role and review what has happened before resuming the action. She might ask the participants on stage to swap roles (a technique called *role reversal*). She might ask actors to speak in *soliloquy*. She might ask the group to rewind and replay the scene, in order to clarify an

element or to encourage actors to take the scene in a different direction. She might ask members of the group who are watching to *double*, which means to speak the thoughts inside the characters' heads that the primary actors are not voicing out loud. The third and final phase of psychodrama and sociodrama follows all the variations on the enactment, when the facilitator is likely to ask group members to share the resonances between the action they witnessed and the events of their own lives (Blatner, n. pag.).

These structures reflect and perpetuate particular understandings about the potentiality of play. When groups engage in this play, they assume that the habits of their members' real lives are not the inevitable outcomes of their life circumstances; they reflect only one of multiple possible realities. By nurturing a "safe space" in which to explore these realities, the facilitators and participants affirm their own agency to vary their responses to the stimuli of their lives. They also assume that their own life experiences and imaginations equip them to offer relevant insights to one another about the circumstances of their own lives. As one participant performs his or her variability to assume the role of another participant's lover, parent, or boss, or as one participant attempts to "double" a role that another is already playing, they propose the ability of the human psyche to empathize with, and to overcome the distance between, the differences between their life circumstances. Participants assert that through play, they can overcome (or at least mitigate) the differences between self and other, and they can train themselves to overcome the obstacles of their "real lives."

Many practitioners of Bibliodrama employ similar structures and methods as practitioners of psychodrama and sociodrama. For instance, Peter Pitzele, the most

widely-read writer about Bibliodrama in the English language, describes the process as having three phases: the warm-up, the action, and reviewing (34-39). Like in psychodrama or sociodrama, the action phase – which takes up the bulk of the time – is typically an emotionally-charged interaction between two or more individuals, played out by a few participants in front of the others. Like a facilitator of psychodrama or sociodrama, Pitzele describes himself as frequently cutting the scene, in order to encourage various kinds of doubling from the audience. Linda Condon, another US-based Bibliodrama facilitator, describes asking participants to improvise soliloquys, and to rewind and replay the scenes with variations, including role reversal. She also writes about encouraging actors to play non-human roles, such as "truth" or "justice" – a technique that Moreno called "axiodrama." Both Condon and Pitzele write about staging scenes with empty chairs as stand-ins for characters, another technique frequently used in psychodrama and sociodrama (Condon, n. pag.; Pitzele 40-41).

According to Gerhard Marcel Martin, this practice of engaging with Biblical narratives through the structures of psychodrama and sociodrama originated in Europe in the 1970s. At that time, European churches were struggling with a church culture in which "subjective and devotional dimensions" of Bible and worship had been discouraged in favor of a "rational" and "expressionless" engagement with religious narrative. Bibliodrama began as a countermovement to claim a playful, intuitive relationship with the text (Martin 86-87). When people approach Biblical narratives with and through a dramatic approach, they are encouraged to engage with scripture not only intellectually but also emotionally and somatically, broadening the spectrum of meanings

that they might glean from it (Laeuchli 30-38). In harnessing the methodology of psychodrama and sociodrama, Bibliodrama thus performs the variability of the Biblical text, opening it up to multiple, often incongruous interpretations.

However, whereas the participants in psychodrama and sociodrama typically share an understanding that their play can equip them to rehearse and enact alternative outcomes to the narratives that shape their lives, Bibliodrama participants generally assume that the narratives they enact have fixed endings and outcomes. The variability of the Biblical text has limits. Adam and Eve will be kicked out of the garden. Abraham will banish Hagar. Jacob will outsmart his brother Esau. Peter will deny Jesus. Whether or not participants believe that these stories "actually happened," they respect their literary boundaries. The goal is not to explore alternative outcomes, but to expand and vary the ways in which they might interpret these stories, and to reimagine the potential relevance of the stories for their own lives.

As both Samuel Laeuchli and Evelyn Rothschild-Laeuchli note in their scholarship on Bibliodrama, Biblical narratives are myths in which people identify and onto which people project their own concerns (Laeuchli 48-49; Rothschild-Laeuchli 192-195). Moreover, as Bjorn Krondorfer argues, the characters and the specific action of the story exist at a safe enough "aesthetic distance" from the self to permit a creative, flexible, and critical engagement with the motifs, the psychological traumas, and the power relationships of our lives (Krondorfer 178). Thus, Bibliodrama offers individuals and communities a framework through which to engage with issues and concerns that they are not quite ready to overtly acknowledge. In this sense, Bibliodrama thrives and

finds relevance in the liminal space between our own world and the world contained in Biblical narratives.

This liminal space is familiar territory in both the Jewish and the black Baptist traditions. Jews have a practice, dating back to the Talmudic era, of creating original stories about the characters in the Bible, stories that fill in the gaps of the Biblical narratives and that reflect the concerns that the writers bring to the text from their own historical era. These stories, called *midrash,* almost never directly contradict the Biblical narrative, but they often create subplots and new characters that diverge substantially from the presumed intent of the Biblical author(s).[vi] For instance, there are many *midrashim* that imagine that Adam had a first wife, before Eve, named Lilith. Lilith first appeared in some ancient *midrashim*, in the Talmudic era, but she was then reclaimed as a feminist icon in the 20th century, and many Jewish feminists expressed their concerns about Jewish patriarchy in the form of stories about Adam's rejection of Lilith and her ultimate replacement by Eve. In his book, Peter Pitzele compares Bibliodrama to the ancient practice of writing *midrash*, noting the obvious similarities.

Black Baptists don't exactly have the tradition of writing original stories about Biblical characters, but they certainly do have the tradition of superimposing Biblical narratives onto contemporary struggles, noting the similarities, and drawing inspiration and direction from the Biblical narrative. The most obvious example is the Exodus narrative, which African Americans have used as a tool for making sense of their own enslavement and liberation. As 18th and 19th century slaves wrote spirituals that described their own plight by evoking Biblical imagery, characters, and narratives, they too created

a liminal space between their own reality and the reality described in the Bible. This practice continues into the modern era, and I have witnessed many sermons at Second Baptist Church that ask congregants to recast the struggles of their lives in the motifs and language of the Bible. For instance, in one particularly memorable sermon, Pastor Karen Mosby evoked a passage from the book of John wherein Jesus tells an ailing man to pick up his mat and walk to a fountain, where he will find waters that revive him. She urged her congregants to see themselves as that ailing man, and to reimagine Jesus's instruction as a call to take initiative that might resonate in their own lives.

Bibliodrama encourages a group to enter this liminal space together, and to experience the resonance of the Biblical narratives with the narratives of their own lives. However, the structures and the methods that participants use are tremendously versatile, as they have been developed in both psychodramatic and sociodramatic contexts. They can equip a group to conduct very different kinds of explorations. I have discovered throughout this process that a group in this liminal space can experience a diffusion of focus between the Biblical narrative itself, its psychological resonances, and its socio-political resonances. As participants form an ensemble, they may find that some are driven by the promise of psychological exploration, some by socio-political exploration, and some by exegetical exploration. Some ask, "What does this text mean to *each of us*?" Some ask, "What does this text mean to us *as a collective*?" And some ask, "What might this text have meant in the conditions of its own emergence?"

Alex Sinclair, a scholar of Jewish education, has noted this multiplicity in his own analysis of Bibliodrama. Sinclair, who teaches Jewish middle school students, adopted

and adapted Peter Pitzele's methodology with his students, hoping to provoke a productive tension between the worldview of the text and their own worldviews. By asking them to imagine themselves *within* the narrative, he hoped that they would submit – at least partially – to the logics of the author(s). He hoped that – in role – they would work with the existing narrative to make sense of it. And yet, by asking them to bring their own insights to the text, and by granting them the autonomy to construct *midrashim*, he also wanted to empower them to mark where the text felt lacking to them. He wanted them to ask all three of the questions that I posed at the end of the preceding paragraph. Initially, his reflections on the lesson led him to believe that they had done this. Upon further analysis, however, he found that that the form enabled students to focus the vast majority of their energy on the questions that most interested them. Since the bulk of his students were not very interested in what the text meant within the conditions of its own emergence, the form enabled them to largely avoid that question. They "repaint[ed] the story through the prism of [their own] worldview." Frustrated with the extent of the autonomy it granted to his students, Sinclair laments, "it is as if there is no original text at all" (71).

My own experience differs substantially from Sinclair's, but two of his assertions have proven to be true in my own experience. First, Bibliodrama empowers participants to focus the bulk of their energy on the questions that most interest them. Second, in the liminal space of play, it can initially be difficult to recognize which questions they are (and are not) asking. As I interrogate the particular practice of Bibliodrama that Minster Smith and I developed with the clarity and distance of hindsight, our choices seem to

evidence an ambiguity – or perhaps an ambivalence – about whether we were prioritizing an exegetical encounter with the text, a collective experience (an encounter among communities) or an individuated experience (an encounter among individuals). For instance, Smith and I decided that the theme of "partnership" would undergird the entire program, informing our selection of texts and our reflective discussions (a decision that I write more about in Chapter 1). We did this in order to sustain a collective focus on the relationship between the two institutions, interrogating that relationship through the lens of complex, nuanced narratives about partnerships in our ancient traditions. However, the narratives that we chose cast a spotlight on partnerships *among individuals*: Abraham and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, Isaac and Rebecca, Rebecca and Jacob, Jacob and Esau, Jesus and Peter, etc. Smith and I never talked about the difference between the institutional relationships we were hoping to interrogate and the individual relationships that our texts foregrounded, and I have become aware of this difference only in hindsight.

Similarly, the format of our Bibliodrama sessions seems to suggest a wavering between a text-centered exegetical approach, an individuated psychodramatic approach, and a collective sociodramatic approach. Over the first five sessions that we facilitated together, we experimented with a variety of exercises and formats, based in part on Pitzele's book and in part on our experience and intuition. We emerged from those sessions with a format that we then tweaked and repeated for most of the rest of our eight-month program. This format consisted of seven activities within each 75-90 minute session. First, at the very beginning of each session, we gathered all the participants in a circle, and we offered two quick introductory prayers – one in the Baptist tradition, one in

the Jewish tradition. Second, we would ask the group to subdivide into groups of 2-4 people, and to read the Biblical text that he and I had selected and prepared for that session (a short selection of text that fit on a single sheet of paper). As we broke into groups to read the text, we made sure that each group had representation from both congregations, and where possible, that each group also represented an intergenerational diversity. Through the duality of the opening prayers and the explicit instruction to subdivide based on institutional affiliation, our methodology and our instructions at the beginning of each session emphasized that ours was a process of two distinct communities coming together. However, by opening with prayers (explicitly directed toward God) and then immediately foregrounding the printed text, we also emphasized the exegetical nature of our project.

Once they were in small groups, Smith and I instructed participants to read the text out loud, and to discuss the elements that intrigued or confused them. This emphasis on intrigue and confusion shifts the focus away from an institutional or collective encounter; in these intercultural small groups, the activity asks participants to think about, and to share with one another, their personal understanding of the text (irrespective of affiliation). Then we moved into the third step of our process, in which we came back together as a large group, and Minister Smith and I asked the participants to respond to some questions *in role*, using the pronoun *I*. We would usually ask 4-5 questions of various characters, and participants understood that when they wanted to respond to each other, they could assume other roles within the story and do so in role. This part of our process was based on Pitzele's methodology, in which the facilitator encourages different

participants to relate to the text in a plurality of incongruous ways. By frequently interrupting the forward progress of a narrative to encourage doubling, and by reminding participants that these contributions need not be consistent with one another, it may have veered towards psychodrama.

Then there was another shift. In the fourth step of our process, we again split into small groups (sometimes the same small groups as in the second phase, sometimes different ones), and asked groups to prepare short performances, developing some of the ideas that had begun to germinate in the third phase. In almost all cases, we again instructed participants to form groups in which there was representation from both institutions. Groups typically worked for about 10-15 minutes, choosing a section of the story, defining an aesthetic, choosing roles, and rehearsing their performance. This step of our process marked a significant deviation from Pitzele's structure, and it required these small groups to negotiate among their divergent understandings of the text in order to develop a single performance. As such, it may have marked a pivot back towards an emphasis on a collective (sociodramatic) experience, though not necessarily towards an encounter among institutions. In our fifth step, we came back together to watch the performances, which typically lasted 3-4 min each, and were semi-improvised. Sixth, as a large group, we debriefed the performances, discussing the choices that were made and the questions and/or insights that we were leaving with. Sometimes, this included a discussion of "partnership," which we reminded participants was the structuring theme of all our sessions. In some cases, this reflection provided an opportunity to voice a multiplicity of divergent experiences, again reorienting the group towards a more

psychodramatic, individuated experience. In other cases, however, the reflection caused people to articulate racial or religious differences which undergirded divergent perspectives, reorienting the group towards a more sociodramatic experience. When we explicitly encouraged participants to comment on the theme of partnership, it sometimes elicited comments about not just the two cultural groups, but the two institutions represented. Finally, before departing, Minister Smith and I gathered the group in a circle and again offered two concluding prayers, one from the Baptist tradition and one from the Jewish tradition.

To reiterate: this process combined elements of a text-centered exegetical approach, an individuated psychodramatic approach, and a collective sociodramatic approach. At times, this sense of openness created a diffusion in which participants were not all entirely on the same page (even within the same cultural group). At other times, however, the openness provided a framework in which participants of different cultural backgrounds and different concerns found themselves in an intense joint exploration of a shared text. These moments happened most often during the fourth and fifth steps of the process I described above, when the challenge of creating and performing short scenes in small groups encouraged participants to collaborate most intently with one another. It is these moments, and these parts of the process, that I linger with most in Chapters 2 and 3, as I interrogate the dialogue that is possible through play. As I explain further in the next section, I linger with these exceptional moments not because I believe they are representative of most of the time the group spent together, but rather, because they most clearly illustrate the potentiality of play.

Methodology

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of intercultural dialogue in Evanston. I wanted to learn how Evanstonians engage in intercultural dialogue and how opportunities for intercultural play alter those norms. My ethnography, like most, is based on an extended period of fieldwork, during which I engaged locals as a participant-observer: I participated in the daily routines of the setting, developed relations with the people there, and observed what was going on (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1). I walked the streets, rode public transport, patronized local businesses, and participated in rituals, worship services, meetings, service projects, and other civic gatherings. I gravitated towards settings in which I thought I might witness – and engage in – encounters among people and groups who self-define as belonging to distinct cultural groups. These settings included (but were not limited to) the YWCA (which convened formal discussions about race), the Evanston City Council, the formal meetings of Evanston's two school districts, and Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue (who were – and still are – deliberately cultivating a relationship with one another). Those settings also included local coffee shops (where public events were occasionally held), other houses of worship (which hosted interfaith events), and the YMCA (which is known throughout Evanston for its intercultural reach). I took regular, systemic notes based on my observations, coded those notes according to the recurring motifs within them, and analyzed those notes in multiple drafts of dissertation chapters. As I did so, I sifted and triangulated several kinds of

ethnographic "data," including written fieldnotes, video footage, and audio recordings of interviews I conducted. As I analyzed that data, I also incorporated theoretical insights from the a range of academic fields, including applied theatre, performance studies, anthropology, sociology, conflict transformation, social psychology, African American studies, and Jewish studies.

I also helped to convene some of the gatherings that I studied. I was one of two facilitators of the Bibliodrama group that I write about in Chapters 2 and 3, and one of eight chaperone/educators in the "Sankofa" project that I write about in Chapter 4. My research methodology thus brushed up against, but did not fully move into the territory of, Practice-as-Research. Scholar/artists who fully embrace Practice-as-Research (PaR) engage in an artistic practice as a form of knowledge production: their pursuit of knowledge happens within and through the process of art-making. The output is not normally a written document, but an artistic product or an artistic process. I share much with these artist-scholars, as I did indeed pursue new knowledge through the artistic and educational processes that I facilitated. As I led these groups, I worked to understand how the processes of play that I helped catalyze were affecting the individuals and the group(s). I experimented with a variety of techniques as I tried to pursue a desired outcome. I learned how play worked by playing, and by engaging others in dramatic play. I learned how dialogue worked by engaging in dialogue, and by engaging others in dialogue. But I am not proposing that these processes in and of themselves constitute a research "output" on which I want to be evaluated. My training does not include mentorship in PaR, and I remain intrigued by, but still also a bit mystified by, what I have

read and learned about the practicalities and philosophies of PaR (Nelson 2013; Hughes 2011). Rather than fully embracing PaR, I have taken on the mantle of ethnographer, and I consider the processes I led and participated in as valuable observations on which I base a written ethnography. In order to carefully "observe" these settings in which my focus was channeled as a facilitator, I took and carefully reviewed video footage of the Bibliodrama sessions, and I asked participants to take and share video footage of the Sankofa process.

As an ethnographer, I spent much of my time working to identify and analyze the "choreographies" that were prominent in Evanston. As I have already mentioned, and as I further explain in Chapter 1, I use the term "choreography" after Cindy García and Susan Foster to denote a set of norms or conventions of movement, speech, and encounter that influence and limit people's behavior. As I began to identify the choreographic norms of intercultural encounter, I became increasingly interested in the exceptions to those norms. I was interested in figuring out to what extent, and with what limitations, the processes of participatory theatre-making and play might offer people an alternative to patterns of intercultural engagement that I found to be limited and limiting. As Foster writes, the choreographies that confine us are "deeply embedded" but not entirely fixed. They can be changed ("Choreographies of Gender" 29). My interest in these changes and exceptions to dominant choreographies drives the bulk of this dissertation (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) and influences what kind of ethnographic data I analyze most thoroughly. For instance, in the context of Bibliodrama (which I analyze in Chapters 2 and 3), I deliberately analyze the encounters that were exceptional, that indicate most clearly the possibilities for playful

intervention. I do so not to insinuate that such encounters (like the exceptionally intimate encounter between Charlotte and Perry that I recount in Chapter 2, or the exceptionally dynamic sparring between John, Linda, and Aliza that I recount in Chapter 3) were typical within the context of Bibliodrama, but rather, because they demonstrate most clearly what is possible within the realm of play.

A note about names: I am indebted to the individuals and groups with whom I have worked extensively as I developed this dissertation. Not only has it been very valuable to work with them and observe them, but they have also remained involved throughout the project, reading drafts of this dissertation and helping me to interpret (and reinterpret) the data I have gathered. My indebtedness extends in particular to the leadership of the two congregations and the participants of both the Sankofa program and the Bibliodrama program. While I want to acknowledge their contributions, I also want to respect their privacy. I decided, in consultation with them, to generally use the real names of those who were present in a leadership capacity (the clergy of both institutions, the eight chaperone/educators on the Sankofa trip, etc.), but to use pseudonyms for the congregants who participated in these activities. I also discussed this general rule with each adult about whom I wrote extensively, and offered to make an exception for anyone who requested: I would create pseudonyms for leaders if they desired, and would use the real names of any participants who requested. One individual took me up on this offer: a Beth Emet staff member, whom I write about as "Avi Stein," requested a pseudonym.[vii] However, no others made such a request. Thus, the reader should recognize that with the exception of Stein, all names of clergy, staff, and chaperone/educators are their given

names, and all others are referred to by pseudonyms. In Chapter One, when I write about City Council meetings, I use the actual names of both elected officials and of the community members who spoke from the podium, as they are already part of the public record.

Chapter Breakdown

I begin the dissertation with an ethnographic examination of the dominant choreographies of intercultural encounter in Evanston. In Chapter 1, I draw on my ethnographic observations throughout Evanston (particularly in City Council meetings, cultural events, and meetings among Beth Emet and Second Baptist stakeholders) to analyze how Evanstonians of different cultural groups interact (or avoid interacting) with one another. I argue that these interactions are rare, brief, polite, and superficial, and that they constitute choreographies of segregation and consonance. I am critical of these choreographies, arguing that they preserve the systemic inequality whose long history I have already recounted in this introduction. However, I also note that I frequently sustained the very choreographies that I critique. They were too pervasive, and too consuming, for me to consistently resist and challenge.

The rest of the dissertation examines the exceptions to these norms that occurred through participatory theatre and play. As I have already noted, Chapters 2 and 3 constitute an ethnographic examination of the Bibliodrama program that I co-facilitated with Minister Brian Smith of Second Baptist Church. In Chapter 2, I investigate the

extent to which Bibliodramatic play enabled participants to engage in *fellowship* with one another. I define fellowship based on a personal interview with a Second Baptist Minister, an engagement with the writings of Martin Buber, and the insights of youth workers at both Second Baptist and Beth Emet. I argue that fellowship necessitates both intimacy and dissonance, thus challenging the dominant choreographies. I note and analyze some exceptional moments in Bibliodrama, when playful interaction – the opportunity to perform one's variability, and to simultaneously approach one another as "me," "not-me," and "not-not-me" – provided an opportunity to engage in fellowship. However, I also note and analyze many times in which our Bibliodramatic play was constrained by the dominant choreographies of Evanston, limiting peoples' ability to fellowship with one another and sustaining the problematic patterns of engagement that I critique throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 3 investigates to what extent Bibliodramatic play emboldened participants to engage in critical dialogue. Drawing on literature in the fields of critical pedagogy and conflict transformation, I define critical dialogue as *an encounter among multiple parties in which they jointly probe their evolving society(ies), and their places within that(those) society(ies), from multiple positions*. Critical dialogue, I argue, differs from fellowship in that its probing of society is overtly political, and it anticipates a commitment to pursuing political, material, and institutional change. However, like fellowship, critical dialogue constitutes a deviation from the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance. As I recount several encounters from Bibliodrama sessions, I argue in Chapter 3 that play creates a protective frame for expressing the dissonance of

contrasting opinions, thus clearing a path towards critical dialogue. However, I also argue that groups who clear this path through play have trouble walking very far down that path. Under the cover of play, people introduce conflicting ideas in character, without fully owning up to those ideas. This makes a thorough interrogation of these ideas elusive, unless a group (or a facilitator) deliberately suspends play.

Chapter 4 examines a weeklong educational trip that eight chaperone/educators from the congregations took with thirty-eight teens. While this "Sankofa" trip did not include any participatory theatre projects, I argue that it did include opportunities for participants to engage playfully with one another, and that this play can nuance and inform the theorization of play within participatory theatre projects. I argue, as I do in Chapter 2, that play can catalyze fellowship, and I also argue, as in Chapter 3, that fellowship can support critical dialogue. However, I also contend that play can sometimes result in *communitas* – which is similar to yet different from fellowship, and which can stifle critical dialogue, at least in the short term. Based on my observations of the participants on this trip, I also reassert and further substantiate an argument that I make in Chapter 3: that while critical dialogue may benefit from play, initiating such dialogue often requires a "push," either from a facilitator or another external force.

I argue in the conclusion, as I do throughout the dissertation, that theorizing participatory theatre-making as a form of play can help scholars to better understand and assess its efficacy. A focus on play provides a fertile ground on which to theorize the complex relationship between "real life" (Huizinga's language) and a realm that we treat as not-quite-real, a Janus-faced realm that invites us to perform our own variability. This

theoretical terrain has been cultivated by scholars of Psychology, Education, Anthropology, Sociology, Folklore, and Zoology, and it can be used by scholars of applied theatre to understand and assess what new choreographies become possible, and what limitations remain, when facilitators invite groups to step into role.

Chapter One: Segregation and Consonance

Introduction

In March 2013, just as the chill of winter was beginning to recede, the Evanston elementary schools scheduled a routine early-dismissal day for a Teacher In-Service program. Lincolnwood Elementary School decided that this would be a good occasion for their fifth grade girls to take a field trip to the local high school; it would provide them with an opportunity to learn about girls' athletics before they begin their transition into middle school. The school advertised the optional trip with flyers, and they sent out permission forms to all the parents, but when the early dismissal bell rang, all the white girls left the school grounds. Only the black girls boarded the bus to the high school.

Lincolnwood Elementary serves two populations: It serves the almost entirely white neighborhood of North Evanston, where it is situated, and it serves some of the families from the Fifth Ward – the historic center of Evanston's African American community. In the early- to mid-20th century, each neighborhood in Evanston had its own school, and school districts were frequently redrawn to preserve segregation, based on slight shifts in neighborhood demographics. However, in the late 1960s, the city dismantled the Fifth Ward's school in an effort integrate the city (Robinson 29-31). The Fifth Ward children now get scattered among all the other schools, diversifying the student body of each; it is common for every house on a Fifth Ward block to be assigned to different schools, while all the other neighborhoods' communities remain intact. It

seems that the girls from North Evanston had jointly decided, with the help of their parents, that they would spend the afternoon at a café. Apparently, no one had thought to tell the girls from the Fifth Ward.

I learned about this trip from Brian Smith, my Bibliodrama co-facilitator, whose daughter Cassandra was among the black girls who boarded the bus that afternoon. Cassandra already leaves her neighborhood friends every morning to attend school far from her home, but she felt particularly isolated on this afternoon, when the black girls felt like the white girls were shunning them. Brian too, was upset. He didn't suspect that the black girls were excluded from this outing *because they were black*, but rather, because they were outsiders to the neighborhood. The white parents in North Evanston knew each other, and they helped their girls organize this alternative outing, without considering whom they might be leaving out. Through small actions like these, Evanston's citizenry rearticulates its legacies of racial exclusion, even if it happens unwittingly and unknowingly.

For Evanston's non-white residents, these acts of racial exclusion are painful reminders of the brutal history they have endured and the disparities that still separate them from their white counterparts. White Evanstonians often do not notice these acts of exclusion at all, but when they do, many find the intractability of this historical legacy to be troubling. They don't personally suffer from racism, at least not directly, but they think of Evanston as a progressive place, and they would like it to live up to that reputation. For instance, when I was nearing the end of my initial eight months of fieldwork, I sat down for an interview with Laurel, a middle-aged Beth Emet congregant,

about the growing relationship between Beth Emet and Second Baptist. Laurel lives in South Evanston, a neighborhood that is more racially heterogeneous than North Evanston, where Cassandra Smith's white classmates live, yet still predominantly white. We met at a Starbucks near her home, on a weekday morning, before she went into work; the café was busy, and the clientele reflected the racial mix of the neighborhood. We sat at a small table near a large window, and she spoke with me about the relationship between the two institutions, the Bibliodrama program in particular, and the racial dynamics of Evanston. When I asked her what being in Bibliodrama was like for her, she quickly connected her own participation to the social-political dynamics around her: "To me . . . the most important thing was getting to know some of the congregation at Second Baptist . . . Most of my – *all* of my close friends at work are African American, but we're mostly friends *at work* . . . Evanston is still somewhat – I don't know that I would say *segregated*, but I feel there still is – maybe a *divide.* I mean, I moved here from Park Ridge partly because I wanted a more diverse community, but . . . you can be in a room with people and still not be connected to them. And so I moved to Evanston, but – well – *now what?*"

Laurel may not feel the pain of this divide as Cassandra Smith does, but her *"Now what?"* expresses a frustration with the same political processes and social dynamics that Cassandra experiences so personally. Like many Evanstonians, Laurel looks out at the reality of a racially-divided Evanston and finds that it doesn't live up to the utopian image of the diverse, progressive community that she thought she had moved to from the more homogenous, more conservative suburb that she had previously called home. Even

in some of this country's most diverse and politically-progressive places, many US residents sustain a set of norms and conventions that sustain segregation, inequality, and ignorance along racial/cultural lines. This set of norms and conventions, which influences both peoples' speech and action, their silence and stillness, constitutes what dance scholars Susan Foster and Cindy García would call a *choreography*, which people *perform* consciously or subconsciously, with a degree of agency but with a tendency to conform to the accepted norms of engagement. In this chapter, I examine the choreographies of cross-cultural encounter in Evanston that sustain this cultural divide.

I argue that these norms and conventions can be best described by using not only the language of segregation, but also the metaphoric language of *harmony*, in which differences are sustained and contained within a framework in which some elements are dominant. To make this case, I share and analyze several ethnographic observations from my fieldwork, which I conducted in 2012-2013. I begin this investigation at the chambers of the Evanston City Council, a symbolic center of the community, where I examine two city council meetings to offer some thoughts about the choreographies of intercultural encounter in Evanston's public arena. I then narrow the scope (and move backwards in time) to examine the first major event that Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church co-hosted, theorizing that the rank-and-file membership of these two communities performs some of the same Evanstonian choreographies that their leaders are trying to push beyond. Finally, I close the chapter by narrowing the scope even further, examining some of the small meetings that I attended with key leaders and stakeholders within the two communities, suggesting that even they are performing some

of these choreographies, despite their efforts to lead their communities into new territory. I suggest, in this final section, that these choreographies are sapping the potential power of their partnership – that these choreographies obscure the communities' fundamental differences, and that their relationship becomes most robust at the rare moments when they resist these choreographies.

Later in the dissertation, I'll be zeroing in on some of the interventions that Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue are trying to make into this status quo, particularly those that encourage the congregants to engage playfully with one another. But applied theatre scholars James Thompson, Michael Balfour, and Jenny Hughes have proposed that such interventions must be understood as being *imbricated within* the complex dynamics of societies that they seek to change; an intervention never exists independently from the status quo that it challenges (12). The work of this first chapter is to interrogate this status quo.

The City Council Inauguration

It was May 13, 2013. About a month prior, Evanston had held its local elections, and now, in a building that stretches for a full city block along one of Evanston's major thoroughfares, a building named after Lorraine Morton (Evanston's first black mayor, and longest-serving mayor, who served from 1993-2009), Evanston was ready to inaugurate its 79th City Council. The chambers, which are typically less than half-full during City Council meetings, were stuffed with people on this evening, as friends and

family of the nine aldermen, and other civically engaged Evanstonians, gathered for the ritual.

The council always meets in a large room, with a giant, crescent-shaped desk in the front, behind which the city officials sit. As I entered the room, I was standing in a center aisle, with one section of seats to my left, and another to my right. Scanning the room, I searched for a seat where I might be able to observe both the city officials and the attending public, without calling much attention to myself. The room was filling up, and empty spaces were growing scarce, but I spotted such a seat near the far edge of one row in the section to my right. I made my way over to that seat, politely asking people to stand so that I could shuffle all the way down the row. I dropped my bag, draped my jacket over the seat back, and sat. I took out a folder, a few sheets of paper, and a pen, ready to take notes.

Moments later, a middle-aged white woman walked up behind me, claimed the seat beside me, and spoke to the two white men sitting in front of me. "I'm going to sit with people I recognize," she declared as she sat down. Her tone didn't seem to convey warmth for them or excitement to see them; rather, her remark seemed like a justification for sitting beside people that perhaps she barely knew, or perhaps she had a strained relationship with. The two men, both who appeared to be in their fifties, had been talking to one another softly, their bodies twisted toward each other. As the newcomer sat down, one of the men said, with an economy of movement and a deadpan humor, "No, you don't recognize us." As she took off her jacket, the woman responded, sarcastically, "Okay, I'm going to sit with people I *don't* recognize." There was little warmth between

them, but there was familiarity, and that familiarity was enough to draw her body towards theirs.

That's when I noticed that the section where I was sitting -- the larger of the two sections – was predominantly filled with white bodies, while the other side of the room was filled with black bodies, whereas Asian and Latino bodies were nearly absent. We were segregated. Perhaps it had happened through dozens of innocent connections like the one I had just noticed – connections between acquaintances who recognized each other from past encounters in their neighborhoods, their children's schools, their own schools, their houses of worship, or their workplaces. Perhaps these recognitions simply drew these people towards one another as they scanned the room for places to sit. Or maybe, in some cases, people entered the room with a more overt desire to sit with people who looked like them. Whatever the reason, the result was a stark division down the center aisle. As I noted this and jotted it down, I realized that I, too, had conformed to this choreography of segregation. Consciously, I had searched for a seat with a particular vantage point, but unconsciously, had I gravitated towards people of my own phenotype?

The proceedings began with three invocations from three clergy members, who were each introduced by Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl. A white, male Catholic priest was followed by a black, female protestant minister, who in turn was followed by an Ashkenazi Jewish male cantor. Together, the sequence of pale and dark, male and female bodies, speaking in different styles, seemed to embody the quintessential image of a liberal, multicultural ideal. If others in the audience had, like me, noticed the segregation in the room, this sequence of invocations may have temporarily assuaged their concerns

about the divisions within their society. The priest wore an iconic white collar, the rabbi wore a traditional Jewish head covering, and the pastor wore heels. The priest and the rabbi both read from a short script; the pastor spoke extemporaneously, using one hand to hold the microphone and the other to punctuate her words, and sometimes to stretch out towards an unseen deity. The priest spoke in long, multi-claused prosaic sentences; the pastor spoke in the rhythmic preaching style of a black church; and the rabbi inserted a prayer, which he chanted in Hebrew, according to the traditional style of Ashkenazi cantoral music. All of them showered blessings on the city of Evanston, and encouraged the city council to work towards a more equitable, more inclusive future. All of them noted that there was work to be done to reduce violence, promote equality, and ensure a decent quality of life for everyone, but all of them affirmed that Evanston's city council would be up to the task. Nobody offered any radical challenges to the existing social, political or economic order.

The evening continued with a ritual swearing in, wherein all of the elected officials affirmed their support of the national and state constitutions, and their intentions to "faithfully discharge the duties" of their offices. Meanwhile, the crowd that was gathered sustained an excited, attentive, and affirming energy. We smiled, applauded, eagerly took pictures, filled the room with excited chatter (when the officials were not speaking), and appropriately sat attentively (when the officials were speaking). We sat with people we recognized, respected, and liked, which enabled us to keep the room pleasantly abuzz as we borrowed each others' phones to take pictures, offered each other gum, and congratulated each other on their (or their children's', or their spouses') recent

accomplishments. This swearing-in lasted about fifteen minutes, and then the mayor, in her characteristically deadpan voice, said into the microphone, “Alright, I think we are now allowed to go party.”

The party took place in an adjoining room, a room separated from the council chambers by a glass wall that typically allows people (such as parents of small children, or people who need to discuss matters amongst each other) to follow the proceedings within the chambers without disturbing those proceedings. On this night, the room was arranged with a giant L-shaped table on which a buffet of snacks and drinks was laid out. People trickled slowly into this adjoining room, as their exit from the chambers was slowed by the desire to take photos, to offer words of congratulations to elected officials, and to exchange greetings to friends and colleagues who they saw amongst the attendees. I, like many in the crowd, made my way down the buffet line, but then I stood alone to watch. Most people stood in small groups of 2-5 people, chatting with one another as they picked at their food and sipped at their beverages. Others were moving along the buffet line, or crossing the room to find a friend. The energy in the room was lively but formal, as people dressed in ties, jackets, and dresses exchanged exclamations of enthusiastic greetings with associates that they had run into, and caught short glimpses of conversation with those individuals while enjoying the snacks that the city had provided. But I noticed, as I stood and watched, that the people in the room were almost all pale-skinned. We were throwing a *white* party.

The black people, who accounted for about a third of the individuals gathered, made their way out of the chambers more slowly. By the time that most of them made

their way into the room with the buffet, the white crowd was leaving the building. The space quickly shifted from a predominantly-white space to a predominantly-black space, almost as though something in the social fabric prevented these sub-communities from sharing the space with each other. The party continued, as the now-predominantly-black crowd filled the space, filled their plates, reached out to embrace one another, and caught snippets of conversation with friends and associates.

I stood in the corner, fascinated and appalled by this segregation. It was so pervasive, yet it seemed both unintentional and unnoticed by both crowds. If I had not attended the event as an ethnographer, I recognized that I might not have noticed it, either. I would have been drawn towards the few people I knew in the crowd, which would have embedded me in the first group – the white one. I would have filled my plate with food, chatted with the people that I knew while scarfing down fruit and cheese cubes, and then left the building, without realizing that the black people had not yet eaten. I might have even gone back for seconds or thirds before leaving the building, depleting the food before the black crowd ever made it to the buffet table. Why does this segregation happen in a progressive community like Evanston, a community that is (judging by the invocations) ostensibly aware of, and desiring to mitigate, the scourge of inequality?

Arun Saldanha, a geographer who writes primarily about communities of white travelers in India, uses the term "viscosity of race" to describe this tendency of people with similar phenotypes (especially but not exclusively "white" phenotypes) to stick together. In Saldanha's analysis, a "white" phenotype is an imperfect but somewhat

reliable index of life experience, and when white people gravitate towards others with whom they anticipate interacting comfortably, they rely in part on this visual cue (in addition to clothing, bodily carriage, hairstyle, body art, etc.). Saldanha might suggest that it is this viscosity, rather than any overt tension or ill-will, that shaped this separation; like the woman who sat down behind me at the beginning of the evening, people oriented themselves towards others whom they recognized, others with whom they might engage most comfortably. Due to the history of racial oppression in the United States, people of different races have had different life experiences, lived in different neighborhoods, learned in different classrooms, and share different cultural reference points – and thus, it is perhaps easier to sustain conversation in more-or-less monoracial spaces. The viscosity among white bodies is not hostile towards difference, but it is often indifferent towards the disparities of capital that shape it. In effect, it preserves cultural and economic capital within the viscous groups that already have it in abundance (5-6, 18, 68-70, 100-110, 129-132).

Beverly Tatum, psychologist and author of *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, offers a similar explanation, but emphasizes the role of African Americans in sustaining these divisions. Tatum argues that racism is a pervasive environmental stressor for African Americans, who are routinely shunned, judged, exploited and marginalized by members of the dominant white majority. African Americans thus seek out one another, and gravitate towards each other, for support and protection. Answering the titular question of her book, she concludes that the black "kids" sit together in the cafeteria because they understand one another's problems in

ways that even well-intentioned white peers cannot, and they offer one another solidarity and support in a racist world (52-62). While this section of Tatum's book is specifically focused on adolescents, her explanation also helps to elucidate the broader choreography of segregation in Evanston, and the particular instantiation of that choreography in places like the City Council chambers.

Thandeka, author of *Learning to be White*, would likely offer a different explanation. She would argue that white people, particularly (but not only) poor white people, have been taught from an early age not to get too close to black people. At times when they transgressed this unwritten and often unspoken rule as young children, they were shamed by their parents and communities for doing so. They have therefore learned to perform a choreography of segregation, and as adults, they now perform that choreography almost effortlessly, without even realizing they are doing so. This social segregation protects the economic interests of wealthy white people, who benefit from the racial antipathy that prevents poor people of different races from uniting.

Isabel Wilkerson, who tells the story of the Great Migration in her book *The Warmth of Other Suns,* might suggest yet another explanation. She would argue that black choreographies in areas like Chicagoland were shaped generations ago and hundreds of miles away, under Jim Crow, and that these choreographies continue to be passed down from generation to generation. African Americans learned, under the threat of lynching, to keep their distance from white people, and to accept unequal facilities and provisions. They learned that when driving, they should always yield the right-of-way to white motorists. When encountering a white person in public, they should only extend an

arm for a handshake if the white person does so first (part 2). These "ways of the South passed from one generation to the next in faraway cities by the Pacific Ocean and on the shores of the Great Lakes and along the Hudson and Potomac and Allegheny rivers" (part 2). Perhaps these behavioral patterns have persisted because, as the introduction to this dissertation details, African Americans experienced subtler versions of the same oppressions in the north as they did in the south.

Joy DeGruy would likely explain this segregation in similar terms to Wilkerson, but would emphasize an earlier origin to these divisions: not Jim Crow, but slavery. Her book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* links the contemporary behavioral patterns of African Americans to the trauma that their ancestors suffered as slaves, arguing that the defense mechanisms that slaves learned to embody were passed down from one generation to the next. This historical trauma has resulted in contemporary self-destructive patterns of behavior and thought, DeGruy argues, including "vacant self-esteem," "ever-present anger," and a "racist socialization" through which African Americans adopt the value system of their former masters that value whiteness over blackness (127-143). If African Americans willingly let white people eat first, and then trickle into the reception room only as the white people are leaving, DeGruy might argue that this deeply-embedded, racist socialization is at work, on conscious or subconscious levels.

I think that Evanston's current choreographies are shaped by all of these factors – white shame, black deference, historical trauma, and the viscosity of race all inform why Evanstonians (and other Americans) interact the way they do. Our country learned to

perform a choreography of racial segregation that was engineered to protect the economic interests of a minority, encoded in law, and reinforced through violence. We continue to perform a version of this choreography in part because it has become a part of our unconscious habits of body and mind. Even when it is performed without malice, this choreography preserves social and economic capital in a small group of mostly-white, middle- to upper-class elites.

However, there are times, in contemporary Evanston, when people of different races do come together in close proximity. At these times, I propose that the choreography of segregation gives way to another choreography: a choreography of consonance. In a choreography of consonance, we consciously or subconsciously work to minimize any potential tension between members of separate cultural groups. Like the notes in a consonant harmonic chord, which produces a sound that is pleasing and "stable" to the ear, the discrete entities within our society try to adjust their behavior to coexist in a "happy togetherness" of diverse elements. Father Bob Oldershaw, the former Pastor of Evanston's St Nicholas Church (who incidentally gave one of the three invocations at the City Council for this inauguration ceremony), has called attention to this problematic choreography, referring to it as "drive-by diversity." When Oldershaw chastised his parishioners for practicing "drive-by diversity," he was referring to a superficial mode of interaction, in which Evanstonians take delight in the cultural diversity of their community, but do so only through the comfort and safety of their car windows, thus reducing Evanston's diversity to a multicultural marvel. People who engage in this "drive-by diversity" (or, as I'm calling it, this choreography of

consonance) don't entirely isolate themselves from the cultural "others" who surround them, but they also don't fully engage; they pull back, protecting themselves from the discomfort that might come with intimacy. This is a phrase that many progressive Evanstonians continue to invoke in a spirit of self-critique, expressing a desire to build a more integrated city, to dilute the viscosity of race.

I am unsettled by, and critical of, this pervasive choreography of consonance, which I will continue to examine throughout this chapter and this dissertation. I am concerned that, like the choreography of segregation, it effectively sustains a hegemonic social order in which white elites hold an unjust preponderance of power. The "happy togetherness" of diverse elements yields a lack of urgency for change, a pleasant environment in which middle- and upper-class white people can comfortably enjoy a sense that the status quo is sustainable and just. Sometimes, this sense of consonance is sustained on the backs of marginalized populations, who feel pressure to swallow their pride and endure subtle inequities in order to preserve this sense of stability. At other times, this consonance also feels pleasing and stable for marginalized people who work to minimize the tension of intercultural encounters, and when it does, it may provide a respite from the pain and urgency that comes with facing their own marginalization, but may also strengthen the status quo of inequality.

For instance, when the three clergypeople offered their invocations at the beginning of the evening, I believe that they sustained a choreography of consonance. They each spoke and dressed in a unique style, representing the diversity of their cultural and religious traditions. Yet they echoed each others' concerns, and reinforced each

others messages, creating a sense that all Evanstonians have the same political interests. Patricia Efiom, the black, Protestant pastor who offered the second invocation, even prayed "that they [the City Council members] won't see black or white, Muslim or Jew." Presumably, Efiom's intention may have been to decry legislated racism: if the city doesn't see these differences, then it cannot engage in discriminatory profiling, and it cannot extend preferential treatment to the same white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant people whose parents and grandparents benefitted from such treatment. In this sense, blindness to race is in the interests of the black, Methodist community that Efiom represents. However, by asserting the virtue of blindness to race, Efiom also directed attention away from the explicitly-racist policies of the recent past that have prevented her community from amassing wealth and acquiring a high-quality education. Such a prayer reinforces the idea, often perpetuated by white people, that we live in a post-racial society, that economic inequality along racial lines will rectify itself, and that Americans no longer need to worry about the explicit, legally-codified racism of previous generations. It makes many white people feel at ease. It also may appeal to many black people, in the sense that the dominant society publicly accepts and values the words and prayers of their pastor. But the prayer for racial blindness makes other black people, and other marginalized people, cringe with the indignity of not being seen for who they are, not having their pain and their indignity recognized and systemically confronted. When we, sitting in the audience, affirmed this prayer (and the other prayers), clapping and nodding and assenting "amen," we also joined the clergy in this choreography of consonance.

Different people may have different motivations for participating in this choreography of consonance, just as different people have different motivations for participating in the even-more-pervasive choreography of segregation. As Thandeka points out, rich white people benefit most from the status quo, and thus, they have the most at stake in sustaining a choreography of consonance. Poor and other marginalized white people do *not* benefit from the status quo; in fact, Thandeka argues that they are among the biggest losers of the racialized system of the United States. Yet they sustain the status quo, and they sustain the choreography of consonance, out of a mistaken sense that they too can access the wealth and material comfort of the white upperclasses. Ashkenazi Jews, who make up the vast majority of the Evanston's (and the US's) Jewish community, have effectively become accepted as white (or "whited," a term I introduced in the introduction) over the past half century, and have amassed considerable wealth. Yet unlike other middle- and upper-class white people, Jews have also historically been involved with Civil Rights struggles and with the US communist movement in disproportionate numbers. Their stake in this choreography of consonance may come from a sense that the privileges they have acquired in the past fifty years can also become available to all through an incremental process of hard work and liberal-but-not-radical reform (Goldstein 215). White people (including Jewish people) may also participate in this choreography out of non-material interests; Rev. Velda Love, one of the ministers at Second Baptist Church, has suggested to me that the stereotype of black people as easily angered may motivate this polite, friendly, but emotionally-distant approach to intercultural encounter. Some African Americans, and some other non-white Americans,

may participate in this choreography because they believe in the US as a meritocracy; some have entered the middle- and upper-classes, some have benefitted from Affirmative Action programs, and they have a stake in the current system. Others participate in this choreography because they feel they do not have the power to challenge it.

The word "consonance" is of course related to a more complex musical phenomenon: harmony. Harmony consists of a sequential progression of consonant and dissonant musical chords, each of which contains multiple notes that sound simultaneously. While the consonant chords are pleasing and "stable" to the ear, the dissonant chords produce "an impression of incompleteness, so that the mind urgently feels the need of something else to follow" (Prout 5). Both consonant and dissonant chords contain differences; as ethnomusicologist Jacques Attali writes, "Harmony lives by differences alone . . . Difference is the principle of order" (62). But while listeners can attend to the differences between the discrete notes within these chords, they experience this difference as a relation. The relations of the dissonant chords contain difference in a way that feels unresolved, that calls out for something to change, whereas the relations of consonant chords contain difference in a way that causes listeners to feel relaxed, content, comfortable. I want to suggest that if Evanstonians (and other Americans) can establish a choreography of harmony, rather than one of simply consonance – a way of interacting that values social dissonance along with social consonance – then more substantial change may be possible.

That said, I want to carefully clarify the value that I place on social dissonance, in light of Jacques Attali's scholarship on harmony. Attali writes about harmonic music as

inherently problematic. Focusing on the orchestral music of the 18th and 19th centuries, he argues that these harmonic melodies created a sense that the world was perfect as it was; the aesthetics of harmony were (and are) inherently conservative. Music, he argues, has a special hold over peoples' minds, and harmony is particularly pernicious because its structure mandates that differences can and should be contained according to very particular rules. These rules dictate that "dissonances (conflicts and struggles) are forbidden, unless they are merely marginal and highlight the quality of the channelizing order" (61). In other words, the dissonances within harmonic music merely carry the listener along, until the final, consonant chord – and this structure leaves listeners with the impression that social dissonance cannot really disrupt the current status quo.

Attali's scholarship clarifies that it would be easy and comfortable (for many) to make space for minor social dissonances in a way that doesn't fundamentally call out for social change. But in order for social dissonance to be meaningful, it must be welcomed as potentially instructive and transformative. It must be sustained and engaged with in ways that do not permit people to immediately retreat into social consonance. However, most of the social dissonance in Evanston is quickly and urgently resolved with a polite, emotionally-distant consonance. The following interaction, which I observed at another City Council meeting, the week following the inauguration ritual, demonstrates this trend.

Ester's Dissonance

On the evening of May 20, 2013, just like all the other evenings that I attended City Council meetings, I entered the council chambers prepared for a long, slow night of procedural bureaucracy. The meetings were governed by the formalities of Robert's Rules of Order, and the discussions were laced with jargon. The opportunities for citizens to speak were few, and highly structured: citizens would sign up to speak in advance, and when they were called up to speak, they would approach a podium, state their name and address, and then speak for a maximum of three minutes, usually reading from a prepared statement. The aldermen and mayor would sit behind their giant, curved desk, masking their bodies from the chest down, and would sometimes sustain eye contact with the speakers, but they would also often avert their eyes, looking instead at the paperwork on their desk. They rarely replied with more than two words: "thank you."

While these formalities are not unusual in these sorts of government spaces, it is worth noting the ways in which the parameters of the discussions sustain a choreography of segregation. They sacrifice inclusive, intercultural engagement for the sake of efficiency and consistency. Citizens who feel inclined to participate are usually those who are educated to expect and decipher jargon, whose work schedules and family networks leave them free in the evenings, and who have been trained to speak formally, from a podium, with a time limit, in public settings. They are most often, though not always, white and middle-to-upper class. The City Council often tries to diversify the demographics by honoring a diverse array of people at their meetings, but the honorees usually depart shortly after they are recognized, before the City Council attends to the bulk of its business.

That said, non-white and working-class people do make their way to the podium. On this particular evening, one such person, Betty Ester, had signed up to speak to the council. Ester is a relatively prominent activist in Evanston: she is particularly engaged with issues of affordable housing and civil liberties. Ester had attended a ward meeting several nights prior in Evanston's Fifth Ward, where she lives. The Fifth Ward, the epicenter of Evanston's black community, had experienced a wave of gun violence, and this particular ward meeting was a well-attended opportunity for residents to discuss the matter among themselves, and to hear from city officials (including the mayor, the Fifth Ward alderman, and the Evanston chief of police). Wearing a sun hat and a black suit over a white blouse, Ester approached the podium at the City Council chambers to express concerns about what she had heard at this ward meeting:

> Chief Eddington [Evanston's Police Chief] made a statement, and his statement was that his department is going to stop-and-frisk all mens [sic] of color . . . To me, that statement right then and there raised the issue of it being racial profiling. Because you're going to have to stop them, and it is going to be on what I would see, and the people that I have talked to sees, as flimsy probable cause . . . I know we have problems in this city with the shootings and everything, and the killings, yes, that is something that we need to deal with. But we do not deal with it, and I don't think we *should* deal with it, by violating somebody else's right for just walking. (City of Evanston, n. pag.)

Immediately after Ester concluded, Alderman Ann Rainey signaled that she would like to speak. A white woman in her late 60s, Rainey is the city's longest-serving alderman. She asked the mayor for a "clarification of the accusation made" (City of Evanston). The mayor invited Delores Holmes, the Fifth Ward Alderman, to respond to Alderman Rainey's request. Holmes is an African American woman in her sixties who has represented the Fifth Ward since 2005; she is one of only two black aldermen on the City Council. Holmes denied Ester's accusation, saying,

> I believe that the chief said that, "Did every African American man need to be stopped? Of course not." That's what he said, I believe. There was no such statement made that he was going to stop every African American man. That was not made. That statement was not made. (City of Evanston, n. pag.)

Mayor Tisdahl, who had attended the Fifth Ward meeting, confirmed Alderman Holmes' position, after which Alderman Rainey continued:

> Well the charge is outrageous and I think Ms. Ester owes this community an apology . . . Statements like that create an unrest in a community . . . And I am shocked that somebody who is a responsible member of our community would say something so outrageous. (City of Evanston, n. pag.)

Alderman Rainey then asked the Chief of Police, who was in attendance, to confirm Alderman Holmes' account. He approached the podium where Ester had stood a moment prior, and he confirmed the account, after which Alderman Tendam, who was

also at the meeting, also confirmed the account that had already been confirmed by the mayor and the Chief of Police. Alderman Rainey then continued, "I had complete confidence that it couldn't possibly have been said, but I think it can't be said too many times that the statement was false and misleading and wrong." (City of Evanston)

As I watched these proceedings from a seat towards the back of the room, I was shocked by the council's harsh treatment of Ester and their blanket rejection of her concerns. I, too, had attended the Fifth Ward meeting several days prior, and while I agreed with the elected officials that Ester's account was mistaken, I strongly disagreed with the insinuation that the Police Chief had clearly communicated that stop-and-frisk would be used in a unthreatening, limited way. My own field notes suggest that Chief Eddington's statement had been, "We've been avoiding widespread use of 'stop-and-frisk' – but we can't do it no more. Now, do I think we need to arrest every African American man between 15-24? No." My notes also state that Eddington went on to acknowledge that police are not perfect, and that when he was a street cop, he too made mistakes. "We have systems to deal with these problems, too. Use the systems."

While my notes corroborate the details of Alderman Holmes' and Chief Eddington's accounts of Eddington's words, they also suggest that the he communicated that the use of stop-and-frisk would become widespread, that it would be specifically targeted at some, if not all, African American men, and that mistakes would indeed be made, as they targeted more African American men than necessary.

Part of me wanted to approach the podium, and to communicate that I shared Ester's concern about stop-and-frisk, and that I was disappointed by the city council's

inclination to shame, ridicule, and discredit the speaker, rather than to engage with the substance of the fear of police that she was articulating. They did not consider her comment as a reflection that they had failed to win the trust of the Fifth Ward community, or even of a part of that community. Speaking about her in the third person (never to her, only about her), they trampled her. For a moment, I thought that perhaps I, as a highly-educated whited male, might be able to lend Ester some credibility, but I did not approach the podium. Partially, I didn't do so because I did not know the protocol for approaching the podium without signing up in advance, and I didn't know if I (as a resident of Chicago, not of Evanston) had the right to do so. Partially, I didn't do so because I felt that I needed to think through the implications of intervening so prominently in a site where I was conducting ethnographic research. But I also didn't do so because I feared the sting and the shame that they had just unleashed on Ester. In other words, their desire to shut down substantive dialogue on this issue not only silenced Ester; it also silenced me.

Ester had spoken within the part of each meeting known as "Citizen Comment," a time supposedly set aside to "foster dialogue in a respectful and civil manner." Yet neither the council, nor the police chief, nor anybody else in the room (including myself) responded in a civil or respectful manner. Ester had apparently attempted to introduce too much dissonance into the City Council meeting. By accusing the city of racial profiling, she defied the choreography of equanimous intercultural consonance that is so pervasive in Evanston, and preserved by so many stakeholders. Alderman Rainey, and her colleagues who work for the city, immediately and instinctively jumped to silence these

discordant, cacophonous notes, fearing the "unrest" that might ensue if they rang out too loudly. Notably, Delores Holmes, the Fifth Ward Alderman and the longest-serving African American on the council, joined her colleagues in this act of reestablishing consonance.

The leadership of Second Baptist and Beth Emet assert that they want to carve out a space for a fuller choreography of harmony – a choreography that can include dissonance, and through which they can achieve greater honesty, greater intimacy, and ultimately, greater social-political change in pursuit of social justice. And yet, as the following observations make clear, the choreographies of consonant intercultural encounters are so ingrained that their congregants sometimes continue to perform these choreographies, even when challenged to do otherwise.

Martin Luther King Weekend, January 2012

This section of the chapter examines the first major event that Beth Emet and Second Baptist co-hosted under the leadership of Mark Dennis and Andrea London. These two leaders had already been meeting regularly for over a year, dreaming together about what a deepened relationship between the two communities might look like, but this was their first major attempt to invite face-to-face interaction between their congregants. They had decided to hold the event on Friday evening, January 13 – the fifty-fourth anniversary of a guest lecture that King gave at Beth Emet in 1958. The event included a worship service at Beth Emet, a presentation of the digitally-remastered audio

tape of King's talk from fifty-four years prior, a shared meal, an opportunity for small-group dialogue, and a brainstorm session to imagine future collaborative initiatives. I had not yet begun my fieldwork at the time, so I learned about the event from 400 miles away, in Minneapolis, MN, where I was conducting coursework. With a hunch that this might be a potential dissertation site, I gathered whatever archival materials I could find from this event – a partial audio recording, a collection of handouts, and a number of oral interviews that I was able to conduct over the phone – and it is based on this archive, partial as it may be, that I offer these understandings of this event.

When Mark Dennis and Andrea London spoke about the event on WBEZ, Chicago's public radio station, Dennis implied that the partnership had big goals: "We can take the lead – a synagogue and an African American church can take the lead for the school system, for the government, for the businesses, to say we can walk together, we can make a difference and we can change things" ("Local Congregations" n. pag.). While the emphasis that "we can change things" is a bit ambiguous (it is not clear what "things" Rev Dennis proposes to change), the comment seems to imply that the synagogue and the church, working in partnership, can construct a different choreography of intercultural encounter. Based on interviews that I conducted with both of them, and observations that I made over the course of eight months, I believe that they would like to build a space for greater integration, for more intimate experiences of consonance and – at least in theory – more opportunity to experience the tension of dissonance.

The first main event of the evening – a Jewish worship service, adapted for the interfaith crowd – attempted to bring the communities together and to nurture a

consonant experience. Beth Emet clergy (Cantor Arik Luck and Rabbi Andrea London) adjusted the service to maximize the comfort of the Second Baptist members who might find it strange or inaccessible. Peppering the service with explanations of ritual and Hebrew-to-English translation of the liturgy, they created a framework in which the Baptists might encounter the strange as resonant with, even if distinct from, the familiar. For instance, when Rabbi London first welcomed everyone, she wished them a "Sabbath of peace" as opposed to the more traditional "Shabbat shalom." The phrase "Sabbath of peace" is unfamiliar to Baptist ears, yet it offers the possibility that the Baptists might understand, and find resonances with, the Jewish tradition. Similarly, before *lecha dodi* (a Friday night prayer which invokes the image of a bride to describe the Sabbath, and in which the entire congregation rises, faces the back of the room, and bows toward the imagined entering bride), Rabbi London interrupted the flow of the service to explain the metaphor of the bride and the rationale for bowing towards the back of the room. When Cantor Luck began singing a mostly-English song ("Peace on Earth") that incorporated one prominent Hebrew word, he found a place to vamp with his guitar while he explained and translated the word "yerushalayim" (which was coming up later in the song). Rabbi London and Cantor Luck incorporate some translation and explanation into their service on a semi-regular basis (as not all their congregants speak Hebrew, and not all of them know the rationale for why they do certain rituals), but they did more of it on this particular night. They were helping the Second Baptist members understand, access, and find points of resonance with the Jewish tradition. Like the experience of listening to a consonant chord, the experience of these cultural translations is one in which cultural

difference is apparent, but perceived as a relation and experienced as pleasing (Beth Emet Synagogue, "Shabbat Service . . . on January 13, 2012" n. pag.).

Just as sustaining harmonic consonance always involves silence – it requires musicians not to play certain notes – this harmonic consonance required that both communities self-sensor parts of their own tradition in order to sustain the sense of inclusion and accessibility. The Jewish clergy did so toward the end of the service, when Jews typically say the prayer *aleinu* – a Hebrew prayer that describes the Jewish relationship to God as being exclusive and superior to that of other people. Beth Emet usually says this prayer in Hebrew, and the literal English translation is printed directly under that Hebrew text in the prayer book. But on this night, the clergy directed everyone's attention to the facing page, where their prayer book prints an English alternative reading – a re-rendering of the prayer – that is much more universal in its tone; it evokes an individual and collective quest to "gain wisdom in our lives" and "to conquer fear and doubt and despair" (Beth Emet Synagogue, "Shabbat Service . . . on Jan 13, 2012" n. pag.).

When Reverend Dennis spoke, he performed a similar maneuver of containing difference within harmonic consonance, and he, too, used silence to buttress that consonance. He spoke for about 12 minutes, and notably did not mention Jesus a single time – not even when he invoked the lineage of influential leaders of both congregations. He came closest when he said:

> We celebrate the historical and valiant leadership of people who have led our people, all the way back from Moses, Abraham, Miriam, Deborah,

> Isaac, David, and up to the time of Martin Luther King, to the time of your founder Rabbi Polish, Rabbi Knobel and now Rabbi London, and the leadership of Second Baptist Church for more than 130 years, up to my predecessor . . . the Reverend Dr. Hycel B Taylor. (Beth Emet Synagogue, "Shabbat Service . . . on Jan 13, 2012, n. pag.)

Reverend Dennis, like Cantor Luck and Rabbi London, was sounding a chord that the Jews would find it easy to harmonize with. He was playing a chord that included the specificities of both religions (the contemporary leaders of both congregations), as well as Old Testament leaders, but didn't play the culturally-specific note of his church that he thought might be harder for the Jews to harmonize with.

However, after the consonance that the clergy created in this first main event, event organizers tried to nurture an opportunity for dissonance – for productive tension and challenge – in the second main event of the evening, which consisted of small group dialogue over a shared meal. Congregants filed out of the sanctuary, and into the big, adjoining multipurpose room, where they were assigned to tables with a mix of congregants from the two institutions. Volunteers brought platters of food from the kitchen to the tables, where participants served themselves, family-style, and where predetermined facilitators convened "courageous conversations." David Futransky and Sharon Weeks, two volunteer organizers with experience facilitating intercultural dialogues, had met with table facilitators earlier that day, and had distributed a memo that prepared them for considerable tension within these dialogues. Part of the memo stated:

> Talking about race is hard. Nobody has found an easy way to conduct interracial dialogue. There will be moments when you and the people at your table are not comfortable. That is OK.
>
> Stick with it – help the people at the table stay focused on the discussion at the table. Talk about tonight and the comments and feelings that are being made [felt] tonight.
>
> We will not reach conclusions tonight. We are starting a process of interracial conversation. Tonight will be frustrating because time will go by quickly and we will all want more. We are raising more questions and ideas than solving problems. (Weeks and Futransky 1)

The intention was to move from consonance within the sanctuary to dissonance over dinner, and then to revive a sense of consonance in the final moments of the event, when organizers asked all participants to ask the congregants to envision an ideal relationship and brainstorm future initiatives that the congregations might undertake together.

But Beth Emet and Second Baptist are imbricated within a society in which people engage only cautiously with social dissonance. Conversation topics meandered significantly throughout this meal. Most tables began by talking about their admiration for King, and about the speech that King gave at Beth Emet in 1958, when he outlined four eras of black history in the US (slavery, segregation, desegregation, and [still to come] integration). But each table seems to have skimmed the surface of many different topics – family histories, stories of the civil rights era, concerns about the public high school and the public elementary schools, concerns about "drive-by diversity" in

Evanston, the desire to do more joint projects, etc. (Jessica, n. pag.; Terri and Daniel, n. pag.; Love, "Phone Interview about 2012 Event" n. pag.). I believe that this skimming of topics stems from a deeply-ingrained, thoroughly-choreographed aversion to dissonance. To dwell with a particular topic would entail taking the risk that people might share dissonant views, and that they might end up alienating each other. On this particular night, people were reluctant to take that risk, despite the encouragement from Futransky and Weeks. Once people experienced a sense of consonance in the sanctuary, they were more nimble at switching topics than at switching the evening's emotional register.

One of the table-facilitators from Beth Emet, Jessica, suggested to me that embracing dissonance takes more time, and perhaps more trust, than the event could provide. Speaking first of the pre-worship facilitator meeting, and second of the small-group conversations, she said,

> David Futransky and Sharon Weeks were talking about difficult conversations, and what you do in the case of a difficult conversation – and the whole time, as they were explaining this, I was thinking: "This is one evening, this is an hour and a half; how is this conversation gonna get difficult? . . . You need to spend more time in order for things to get difficult. And significant . . . At the table, [people were] cheery and careful. We're meeting, we're putting our best social foot forward, we're trying to be socially appropriate. You know, we're meeting new people at a table, so we're going to be appropriate. (Jessica, n. pag.)

Jessica's description of the conversations as "cheery and careful" seems to comport well with the descriptions of the other table conversations that I've heard throughout this process of conducting interviews. Daniel, another Beth Emet table facilitator, described these dialogues as "happy," "copacetic," and devoid of challenge (Terri and Daniel, n. pag.). Velda Love, one of the minsters at Second Baptist, described these conversations as "not as honest as they could be;" she said that they "never got deep" (Love, "Phone Interview about 2012 Event" n. pag.).

Jessica's statement hints at, but does not explicitly name, the fact that the context of sharing a meal may contribute to this consonant dynamic. This structural frame for the discussion cast the Beth Emet participants in the role of (generous) hosts and the Second Baptist congregants in the role of (gracious) guests. The Beth Emet participants knew the space, felt (relatively) comfortable within it, and may have consciously or unconsciously worked to make the SBC congregants feel welcome and at ease. The Second Baptist congregants, finding themselves in a (relatively) unfamiliar environment, may have consciously or unconsciously worked to convey a sense of gratitude to the Beth Emet congregants. This framework is likely present to some extent whenever an event of any kind occurs in one facility or the other, but it is heightened when the context of a meal evokes the particular expectations that we associate with hosting, or attending, a meal in someone's home. As SBC Associate Pastor Karen Mosby said to me in an interview, about a year and a half later, "In communities of faith, . . . people are very hospitable, and they tend to want to show *tolerance*. So they may not express *anything*. And that's probably more dangerous than being overly expressive" (Mosby, n. pag.)

The challenge of embracing dissonance was further compounded by the direction to conduct an *interracial* dialogue following an *interfaith*-adaptation of a religious service. The liturgy of the service had foregrounded the attendees' shared identities as people of faith: it encouraged people to think of themselves in relationship to God. While King's talk did focus on interracial relationships, outlining four eras of "Negro history" in the United States, his challenge to the congregation in 1958 was to advance the fourth era (the era of integration) by engaging across racial lines with a consciousness that all people are loved by God (Beth Emet Synagogue, "Shabbat Service . . . on Jan 13, 2012" n. pag.). So he, too, foregrounded the attendees' identities as religious people. There may have been a fruitful conversation to have about theology, religious text, and ritual that evening – particularly because African American theology tends to emphasize Jesus's identity as a Jew under the weight of Roman oppression (Cone; Thurman; Boesak and de Young). But Futransky and Weeks had set up a different conversation. The tables were asked to have an "interracial" dialogue, which implicitly encouraged people to identify within a black-white binary, heightening the dissonance. For many, I suspect, this felt not-quite-right. As I outlined in the introduction, Jews have a complex relationship to whiteness; while they hold white privilege in the contemporary era, and while Beth Emet's congregants typically accept the racial classification of whiteness, Jews think of themselves as having a distinct ancestry and are very aware that they have often been the victims of racial classification and discrimination. This ambiguity about Jewish whiteness has been a source of conflict in relations between Jewish and African Americans, as black nationalists of the late 20th century categorized Jews as white in a totalizing way

that Jews often resented. Today's African American Evanstonians may not all know the details of this history, but I have observed that they are often reluctant to classify Jews as white unless and until the Jews do so first. On this night, following a service in which they had all been encouraged to jointly identify as people of faith, the Second Baptist congregants may have resisted classifying the Beth Emet congregants in ways that might be uncomfortable. The Beth Emet congregants, happy to avoid the dissonance of implicating themselves as members of an oppressor group in the presence of historically-oppressed people, may have implicitly accepted their partners' tacit offer not to identify racially.

There was some dissonance, but it was slight and subtle. These experiences of tension were triggered by offhand remarks and awkward silences, and groups seem to have tacitly and collectively chosen to bracket these tensions and move on. Jessica recounted one such moment to me in our interview:

> There was this older woman [at my table], who, she's probably – she wasn't professional, she's probably more working class . . . Maybe I shouldn't have said this, but I was in this mood of being honest and open, I was talking about my first - Growing up in Buffalo, my first contact with African Americans was basically the maid we had in our house. I was talking about that and then [I realized:] "Why am I talking about [this?] – I'm feeling uncomfortable facing this woman who is my age or older and I don't know who her family is and what they've done." So I, you know . . .

> it was nice that this woman didn't pick up on that and hammer me on it. ("Phone Interview" n. pag.)

Jessica articulated her own considerable privilege as a woman who had grown up in a middle-class (or perhaps upper-class) home with a black maid. Having implicated herself in sustained and sustaining labor practices that replicate structures of menial, low-paying jobs for African Americans, Jessica felt embarrassed, and braced herself for an uncomfortable experience of dissonance. She anticipated a potentially humbling experience of being publicly shamed – presumably for her privilege, or potentially for her participation in American socio-racial hierarchies. For a brief moment, she (and probably others at the table) experienced a sense of tension, an awareness of the chasm that exists between these two congregations, one of relative privilege and the other that is still struggling with a legacy of American inequality that spans the entirety of our history.

But nobody "hammered" Jessica. After an awkward silence, the conversation moved on; people continued skimming the surface of a range of topics. The silences that sustained the "cheery and careful" tone, despite statements that underscored the profound differences between these communities, suggests that participants grew wary at the first signs of dissonance, and acted quickly to mitigate that dissonance so that a return to consonance was always possible. This cautious and restrained encounter may have allowed for what philosopher Martin Buber calls conversation or friendly chatter, but it seems not to have fostered what Buber calls "genuine dialogue." In conversation and friendly chatter, people enjoy their proximity to one another, the opportunity to make an impression, and the pleasure of being legitimated by the listener, but the encounter

remains superficial (22). To enter into a "genuine dialogue" requires *being turned to one another*, and drawing near to the "otherness of the other" (8, 26). It is characterized by "unreserve," which people cannot achieve when they are preoccupied by being, in Jessica's language, "appropriate" (Buber 5; Jessica, n. pag.). In genuine dialogue, partners embrace dissonance as part of the experience.

When Rev. Velda Love says that the conversations were "not as honest as they could be," and that they "never got deep," she is expressing a frustration with intercultural events that permit so little tension, and that facilitate such a quick return to a content consonance (Love, "Phone Interview about 2012 Event" n. pag.). For Love, whom I have subsequently come to know quite well, intercultural dialogue that fails to acknowledge and wrestle with unequal power relationships just reinforces the status quo of those relationships. Love would argue, as I will argue in this dissertation, that such a slight dissonance, and such a quick return to consonance, does little to challenge or change the power imbalances that Evanstonians (and other Americans) experience regularly in their daily lives. If "harmony" is simply the capacity for uncomfortable intercultural tensions to be contained within assertions of similitude, then that "harmony" is very easily achieved, not particularly progressive, and not worth pursuing.

Throughout the time that I spent in fieldwork, Love became more and more involved in building the partnership between these organizations. She – along with several other important, politically-aware leaders – worked to ensure that the organizations were working in pursuit of a different kind of harmony, in which they might welcome the threat of dissonance as revelatory and instructive. And yet, even

within these small meetings of like-minded, dissonance-welcoming stakeholders, a choreography of consonant intercultural encounter often persisted. It is toward these small meetings that I now turn.

The Meetings, Part I (The Consonant Preparations for Bibliodrama)

The first meeting that I attended with key stakeholders of these two communities actually took place about eight months before my fieldwork began. It was March 2012, and I was still in my final semester of coursework at the University of Minnesota. I was making an exploratory visit to Evanston to explore the potential of conducting a dissertation project there, and Rabbi Andrea London convened a meeting at her dining room table. She invited Senior Pastor Mark Dennis and Associate Pastor Karen Mosby, who in turn invited Minister Brian Smith. Rabbi London's husband was also present. The purpose was for me and Minister Smith to meet, and for us all to explore the potential contours of a joint project that might involve a theatrical component. I was not yet taking field notes, so my memories of this afternoon are hazy, but I distinctly remember experiencing a desperate, anxious feeling as I watched and listened to Pastor Dennis imagining a program that I worried was impossibly broad in its scope. I had envisioned a small, intergenerational gathering of congregants meeting regularly over a period of six or twelve months, but he seemed to imagine a giant, daily afterschool program for all Evanston youth, which would combine drama and tutoring and potentially athletic

activities. This was my first introduction to the big, bold, inspiring visions that Pastor Dennis often evokes as he leads his community.

In hindsight, what is interesting to me about this divergence – particularly within a chapter about the choreographies of segregation and consonance – is not that we had disparate visions, but that I did not feel comfortable articulating this difference or voicing what I understood as the practical limitations of such a project. I was conforming to a choreography of consonance, within in which I only knew how to voice agreement across the racial divide that Evanstonians so rarely cross. But perhaps Dennis, too, was conforming to a choreography of consonance, zealously pursuing and developing the seed of the idea that London had proposed.

Ultimately, London stepped in, directly addressed the disparity, and scaled down the vision. When she did, the matter was quickly resolved. Perhaps the fact that the meeting happened within her home gave her the power and authority to speak up where I did not feel I knew how. Or, perhaps it was her status as a clergy member, combined with the white privilege she holds, that emboldened her to push against the broad sweep of Dennis's vision. However, it may also have been her relationship with him; unlike the vast majority of Evanstonians within and beyond these congregations, London and Dennis had been meeting regularly for quite some time, and had developed a personal comfort with one another that enabled them to transgress the dominant choreography without worrying that their relationship was at stake.

At the end of the meeting, the senior clergy (Rabbi London, Pastor Dennis, and Pastor Mosby) left it up to me and Smith to iron out the details of a potential program.

Minister Smith volunteered to write the first draft of a working document that would articulate a vision for our work together. This draft included the following language:

> The goal of the workshop is to encourage artistic expressions and align people along the basis of mutual concern and community wellbeing. Given the fact that our wider communities are often divided along areas of class, age, race and religion we seek to find a way to bring light to these issues through theater. Our hope is that we can effectively convey both concerns and perhaps even solutions to divisive behavior within our communities. . . . . Both Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet have a common heritage in the Exodus story as it pertains to themes of Exaltation and the Liberation of Gods people. A central thread of activity will be based upon these shared values. (Smith, "Evanston Community Theater Dialogue" 1).

When I received this draft via email, I was concerned that it did not sufficiently embrace the potential tension of intercultural encounter. I appreciated the fact that Smith acknowledged the divisions within the "wider communities" in which Beth Emet and Second Baptist are situated, but I was skeptical about the idea that Bibliodrama might convey "solutions to divisive behavior." I wanted to be sure that Smith and I would be willing to push beyond the assertion of "shared values" to potentially explore the imbalances of power and wealth among Evanston's racialized communities – a concern that this dissertation returns to in Chapter 3, within a broader discussion of critical dialogue. I proposed some changes to Smith's working document, trying to shape a text

that would emphasize the value of probing differences alongside the value of discovering commonality. Some of the text that emerged read as follows:

> We intend to use theatre to explore both our similarities and our differences. Our members have much in common, and may discover many more commonalities through the artistic process, but we will also look to explore our differences as a fertile source of dialogue. Divisions of class, age, race, and religion criss-cross our communities, and this theatre project will attempt to engage with difference with sensitivity, trust, curiosity, and humility. We know that there will be moments of discomfort, but we hope that the artistic process can empower this group to remain devoted and beholden to each other through both moments of catharsis and less comfortable, but no less important, moments of tension on which we can reflect together. (Smith and Leffler 1)

I was nervous about proposing these changes. I had retained some of his words, but I had changed a lot of them. I had also changed the tone of the document. I was conscientiously trying to hold open a space for explorations that I thought were important, but in the meantime, I was transgressing the choreography of consonance in ways that made me uncomfortable. Thus, the email to which I attached the document was emphatically consonant. I wrote:

> Hello again Brian!

> Sorry it took me a few days to get back to you. You made a fantastic first go at this document, and I wanted to do justice to your work by waiting a few days until I could really sit down with it thoughtfully.
>
> I like what you've done a lot. I also tried to tweak the wording here and there. And there are some places where I've posed questions to you in the margins, because I want to better understand what you're getting at.
>
> I'll be really interested to see what you think of these changes. PLEASE interpret ething I've changed as a gentle, curious suggestion. I'm happy for you to not-like any of the changes I'm proposing. We can kick this document back and forth for a while, and talk on the phone, before we really get on the same page. That's totally fine with me. (Leffler, "Personal Email to Brian Smith" n. pag.)

When Smith wrote back, his tone was also highly agreeable:

> I have no problems with any of the changes that you have made. I would like to bring special emphasis to common heritage but that is merely a format issue. It really doesn't matter to me in terms of how it is written as long as we acknowledge its importance. (Smith, "Personal Email to Elliot Leffler," n. pag.)

I presume that Smith rearticulated his "special emphasis [on] common heritage" because he felt that I was deemphasizing something he valued, even though I had retained several

references to “common heritage” in the version of the document that I had revised. Yet by describing our differences as “merely a format issue,” he also worked to preserve a “cheery and careful” exchange. Smith also went on to reassure me that I didn’t need to worry about inadvertently stepping on his toes:

> Elliot you will notice quickly that I am easy to work with. If I see something that I don't like I will say something. Notwithstanding, I am pleased with this initial draft. (Smith, “Personal Email to Elliot Leffler” n. pag.)

I wrote and sent Smith one additional draft, in which I emphasized the communities’ “common heritage” (in the form of Biblical narratives) at the very top of the document, in the second sentence (Smith and Leffler, “Evanston Community Theater Dialogue: Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue” 1). Smith said he was content with this version; if he had any further reservations, he did not voice them (Smith, “Personal Email to Elliot Leffler on 4/9/2012” n. pag). This therefore became the final draft of our document. Of course, it is conceivable that he was entirely comfortable with my changes. It’s even possible that he was relieved to see me, his white, Jewish partner-to-be, acknowledging that there are important differences between the communities. But it is also possible that he was disturbed by some of the changes. For instance, in my effort to pry open a space for difference, I steamrolled over his value of “mutual concern.” Might this have suggested to him that I was accepting a choreography of segregation (which might have been even more problematic for him than a choreography of consonance)? Moreover, I notice, in retrospect, that my version

decenters God and erases the reference to exaltation (Smith and Leffler, "Evanston Community Theater Dialogue: Second Baptist Church and Beth Emet Synagogue"). For Smith, as a church minister and a divinity student, this may have seemed like a confusing or worrisome abandonment of religious values. I have learned over time that Smith's priorities consistently combine the divine with the communal, in accordance with the values of his community. My own inclination, in contrast, has been to prioritize the framework of intercultural dialogue over the framework of spiritual discovery, which may not reflect the values of all Beth Emet members, nor the emphatic resurgence of spirituality within the Reform movement over the past 30 years, but it certainly reflects the values of the Reform movement over the past century, which has prioritized ethical and political action over spiritual direction. By inadvertently deleting his references to God and exaltation as I recrafted a document that would welcome a frank acknowledgement of difference, I may have supplanted his religious values with my own.

However, if Smith was constrained in this incident by the choreography of consonance, he was not the only one. While I had thought that I was resisting the choreography, hindsight now affords me the clarity to see the ways in which I did *not* resist. I may have rewritten the document with three references to the "differences" that marked our communities (in addition to one reference to "divisions" and another reference to "tensions"), but I was not bold enough to name the extent to which these differences existed *between*, rather than amid or within, these communities. "Divisions of class, age, race, and religion criss-cross our communities," I ambiguously wrote, based in part on my reincorporation of Smith's language from the previous draft. The word "criss-

cross" is not inaccurate: it clarifies that differences occur both within and between the communities, and that the overall picture is complicated. For instance, each community has divisions of age within it. Meanwhile, the religious division exists firmly *between* the communities. However, the class difference exists both within and between the communities, an important factor which our document does not acknowledge. The racial differences do exist, to a very small extent, within each congregation, but this division primarily exists between the congregations. My failure to name these divisions is significant: it marks the limits to which I felt able to defy the dominant choreography.

By exchanging occasional emails, making occasional phone calls, and getting together for one in-person meeting, Smith and I stayed in contact with one another over the seven months that passed between the drafting of that document and my arrival in Evanston for fieldwork. When I arrived, in November 2012, we began meeting more regularly, and we began our work together, yet we were still constrained by Evanston's dominant choreographies. One of our early meetings exemplifies this constraint. It took place in mid-November 2012, several days before the first Bibliodrama session that we had calendared. I had taken the train up to Evanston, from my home in Rogers Park, to meet Minister Brian Smith at Evanston's Potbelly's; I was eager, and a little nervous, to plan this first Bibliodrama session. He and I had met several times, but hadn't discussed the details of the sessions we'd be leading. Now, I knew, with only a few days before the first session with participants, and with no more meetings planned before that upcoming date, we'd get down to business.

He had arrived before me, and when I entered and called out his name, he turned around, smiled, and grasped my hand in a formal but warm handshake. We stood in line together, making small talk, chatting about the pergola he was building in the backyard of the home that he had just moved into. When we got to the front of a line, he ordered a sandwich, and then I ordered. Together, we scooted along the counter, watching as the Potbelly's staff prepared our sandwiches, inching closer to the cash register. "Aren't you going to get a drink?" he asked. I realized, at that point, that this was not just a question asked out of curiosity: it was an invitation to get a drink, and he was going to pay for me. I slowly made my way to the cooler and picked up a drink, not quite sure how to respond to this relatively-clear, yet still unstated, offer to buy my lunch. I didn't want to thank him, on the off-chance that he *wasn't* planning to buy my lunch. But I also didn't want to take his generosity for granted – to accept *without* thanking him. Nor did I want to reject his offer, as I felt like that would be cold. And I didn't want to offer to buy *his* lunch, as he might interpret such a gesture as a white man's assumption of a black man's poverty. So I continued to tell the staff what condiments I wanted, and as we approached the cash register, I decided to pretend that I was oblivious to his act of generosity. I pulled out my wallet. When he presented his credit card to the cashier, and said, "these are together," I feigned surprise, asked if he was sure, and gratefully accepted.

When our tray was handed to us, with two sandwiches and two drinks, and we started walking toward a table, he remembered that he needed to get change to feed the parking meter. I happened to have a few quarters in my pocket, which I gave him, and he ran out to pay the meter while I found us a table. In the minutes that he was gone, I sat

awkwardly with the sandwiches. I didn't want to eat without him; that would be rude. But I also didn't want to be the stiff, formal white man who *doesn't* eat until Miss Manners sanctions doing so. So I nursed my drink until he came back, pretending that I was very thirsty.

When he came back, we started talking – but not planning. For two hours, our conversation meandered from home repairs to the authorship of the gospels to the pagan god Marduk to the differences between Protestant denominations. I enjoyed all the conversations, but as time ticked by, I began to grow anxious about when, if at all, we were going to plan the upcoming Bibliodrama session. I was taking my cues from him, not wanting to stuff our pleasant encounter into a straightjacket. Perhaps, I thought, he was planning to spend all afternoon with me, and we'd have plenty of time for planning. We hadn't set an ending time for the meeting. But at 3:30, after two hours together, he leaned back and said, "Well, I hope this meeting has been what you expected."

Internally, I responded, "WHAT? We're done? NO! We still need to plan Tuesday night!"

Externally, I responded, "Yeah! But, uh . . . I was *also* hoping we would talk through the plan for Tuesday night."

It became clear, at that point, that he and I had come to this meeting with very different expectations – not only for the meeting itself, but also for what we would do on Tuesday night. He had expected that Tuesday would essentially be a meet-and-greet, an opportunity for us to discuss Bibliodrama with prospective participants. I had anticipated that we would jump into the work itself. At this point, Smith said, amicably, "Well, I was

really thinking we needed to lay more groundwork, but you know, I'm a guy who likes to jump into things," implying that he was happy to go ahead with my expectations. But as we talked through this together, I realized that we needed to split the difference, because he had been recruiting participants from the church by conveying one sense of what we'd be doing, and I had been recruiting participants from the synagogue with another sense. We both needed to give our respective congregants some of what they were expecting, and we both wanted to show deference and respect for each others' position. So we decided to spend an hour on introductions, and an hour dipping into the work.

This early meeting between me and Minister Smith reveals how much I, too, was caught up in this performance of consonance that I critique, even at the very moment that I felt ready to step into a leadership position. Just like the participants who attended the dinner-and-dialogue event on Martin Luther King weekend, I was "cheery and careful." I was caught up in constricting paradoxes: as a whited man in a country with a history of white people who have demanded compliance with their own agendas, I effortfully worked to perform gratitude without entitlement. As a whited man in a country with a history of rich, white people who have used "manners" to separate themselves from poor and non-white people, I effortfully worked to perform respect without stiffness or formality. As a whited man in a country with a history of white people who demean non-white people with patronizing behavior, I effortfully worked to perform generous flexibility without being patronizing. And while doing all this, I never articulated any concerns about my own whiteness, because (as Efiom suggested in her invocation to the

City Council) part of performing consonance is to see and decry racism without seeing race.

Minister Smith, too, was performing consonance. He cordially offered to pay for my meal, he sustained pleasant and uncontroversial conversation for two hours, and most significantly, he expressed a willingness to adapt his expectations for our first session to meet my own. However, as one Bibliodrama participant remarked after reading an early draft of this dissertation, I may have performed this choreography of consonance to a greater extent than he did, particularly at the beginning. "I didn't see Brian [Smith] acting quite as polite and careful as you were," she said to me, meeting over coffee at a Starbucks near her work. Indeed, well-intentioned, progressive white people may often bear primary responsibility for performing the choreography of consonance, as we self-consciously work to distinguish ourselves from other white people who are overtly racist or unaware of their own privilege and power. In our effort to perform a different kind of whiteness, and to mark ourselves as sensitive allies of the African American community, we watch ourselves so closely that we overcompensate, and we may often initiate this consonant choreography.

As the months went by, and Smith and I grew more comfortable with one another, the choreography of consonance bound us less and less. Eventually, we would candidly talk with one another about how heads turned as we walked into these establishments together, and we would acknowledge that race is always present, within each interracial encounter. But not then.

During my eight months in fieldwork, I attended many meetings. Smith and I met at least every-other week to plan our Bibliodrama sessions. But I also attended larger meetings. For the first few months that I was in town, there were several meetings in which the major stakeholders of the BE-SBC relationship (clergy, professional staff, and lay leaders) sat around a conference table together, planning an array of joint activities. These meetings gave way to others, in which a team of eight adults – four from each congregation – planned the details of the "Sankofa" trip that we would take in late March, a trip in which 38 teens would travel to civil rights sites across three southern states and discuss the ongoing work of racial justice. In so many of these meetings, we performed a choreography of consonance that these congregational leaders (or at least some among them) wouldn't *consciously* endorse. But we performed it nonetheless, and doing so obscured some of the fundamental differences between the two communities.

The Meetings, Part II (The Consonant Preparations for Sankofa)

The first such meeting was held on Nov 26, 2012, in the library at Beth Emet, a small, rectangular room with wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves that also doubles as a conference room. Rabbi London called this meeting, she had told me a few days prior, because she understood that others at Beth Emet were having trouble coordinating plans with Second Baptist stakeholders. She was confident that if she called a meeting, and personally asked the leaders of Second Baptist to come, that people would gather for

a productive meeting. She invited the team that had planned the MLK event ten months prior, with a few additions.

But she was not entirely correct. Neither of the two pastors came. Nor did Sharon Weeks, who had co-facilitated the dialogue session at the MLK event. Karen Davis, the church secretary, did come, and Rev. Velda Love came, but those two individuals were overwhelmingly outnumbered by the white, Jewish stakeholders from Beth Emet who filled the table: Rabbi London had invited David Futransky (who had worked with Sharon Weeks on the MLK event), two volunteers who had already agreed to help with fundraising for the Sankofa trip, Avi Stein (a Beth Emet staff member who ran many of the synagogue's youth programs), Margaux (who worked full-time as the synagogue's "Membership Coordinator"), Perry (a congregant in his sixties, who had been active in many interfaith partnerships over a long time, and who later became active in Bibliodrama), and me.

Neither Rabbi London, nor anyone else, dwelled on the imbalance in the room. I suspect that she didn't want to embarrass Love or Davis, and that she wanted to project her confidence in the relationship between the two congregations by capitalizing on the representation that *was* present rather than dwelling on the representation that was *not* present. But I also wonder whether it might have been productive for her, or for all of us, to acknowledge and interrogate this imbalance. Rev. Love, after reading an early draft of this chapter and reflecting on this meeting, felt emphatically that this should have happened. In retrospect, Love said, it would have been considerate to ask if this was perhaps not the right time, and if we should reschedule. If we were not imbricated in a

society that calls on us to perform a choreography of consonance – to project a "cheery and careful" attitude – what might we have learned about one another for engaging with this dissonance?

Perhaps, if we had been able to sustain a more frank, difficult conversation on that November evening, we who affiliate with the synagogue might have learned something that I only figured out many months later, following a lot of frustration and miscommunication: using email to coordinate meetings and plans effectively leaves many church-members out of the conversation. Most synagogue members have white-collar jobs that position them near desktop computers for a large part of most weekdays. This is particularly true for the staff of the synagogue, who are paid, in part, to read and respond to synagogue-related email. This staff includes six "professional" staff-people and four full-time administrative assistants, in addition to several part-time employees. At the church, only the two pastors and the secretary work full-time; much more of the labor is done by a big volunteer team that includes 12 ministers, who lead programming and assist with pastoral work, and an even larger team of deacons (lay-leaders). Many of these very devoted people have to cram in their email time between various other commitments, and to do so on small devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.) that encumber thorough responses.

Many synagogue members initiate email communication because it seems to be inclusive: everyone can check it at whatever time is most convenient for them, and a thread can include an unlimited number of people in a discussion. For middle-class whited people who have habitually been using email as a primary form of communication

for fifteen years, it is intuitive to reach out with this technology. Beth Emet, like many liberal synagogues, operates as a geographically-dispersed community, tied together through the web. Emails are sent out regularly, both by individual staff members and by the institution, to schedule meetings, and announce and remind each other of important meetings and events. Most members thus gather on weekday evenings or Sunday afternoons, for specially-scheduled events, more often than they congregate for regular worship (which the vast majority of members do not attend). At Second Baptist, worship draws several hundred members every Sunday. The pews are full. If there's a desire to gather a smaller group for a meeting or event during the week, it is most likely to be discussed in person, in the church pews or the church lobby, before or after church. If there's a special event to publicize, they'll do it from the pulpit, and/or in a handout that congregants will receive from an usher. As Love told me, "We are an oral and a tactile people: we *talk* and we *touch*." Outside of church, they're more likely get one another's attention by phone than by email. When I finally asked church members whether Beth Emet's style of email communication served their needs, many confirmed that it did not. For instance, toward the end of my time in fieldwork, I interviewed Jerane Ransom, who runs Second Baptist's programming for teens. Sitting together at a table in the local Panera down the street from the church, I asked her about email communication, and she responded:

> That email stuff drives me crazy . . . I prefer talking to people. I get to know so much about people – and the kids – that way . . . Sometimes I have to say to you guys: "I'm sorry, I'm not answering these [emails] right

away, because I don't look at 'em every day." . . . . I have my iPad but – if I do read it, it's late at night, when you're probably in bed. I'm reading it, [but] I'm reading it to see if it's something urgent. *If* I see it, *if* I happen to be doing it. But I may not answer it because I don't have the time right now to answer it or to think about it in that way . . . [When we started working together, Beth Emet staff member] Avi [Stein] kept sending me emails all the time, and I wouldn't get back to him right away because I'm not at my computer like he is all day. That's not my job . . . So one day, he asked me, he said, "Jerane, do you get paid for your position that you hold at Second Baptist?" I said "No, It's volunteer. It's my passion; it's what I love to do and I just do it." He said, "Ohhhhhh." And he said, "You don't be at your computer all day?" I said, "No. You have to pick up your phone for me if you really want me to get to you." And so that's when I realized, "Oh my goodness, they just send floods of emails out," and sometimes I'm like – "I don't know what this email means. What am I supposed to do with it?" And then I pick up the phone and I call him. Well, he's not necessarily waiting for me to call; he's waiting for me to send another email back. So it's really weird. Sometimes, when I call him back, I think I'm taking him off by surprise, because that's not the vehicle for which he's expecting the response to be. So what I did was – when it was Avi, I knew that I would send an email to him and I would tell him [in

> the email], "Can you call me?" And he learned. He understood, "Well with Jerane, I gotta call her." ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Jerane's response not only confirmed the difference in communication style; it also underscored that the relationship can develop at the rare moments when we engage with dissonance. The turning point in Jerane's story occurred when Beth Emet staff member Avi Stein asked a potentially uncomfortable and impolite question about the disparity between what they are each being paid. This dissonance, which he may have been avoiding for some time, allowed them to understand each other's contexts better, to begin adapting to one another's needs, to function as partners in a more productive way.

Had we been able to sustain this dissonance within our larger group meeting on that Monday evening in November, we might also have acknowledged that the finances of the two communities reflect (at least to some degree) the larger economic imbalance between Jewish Americans (who have acquired the material benefits of whiteness in the last half century) and black Americans (who have not). I'm not suggesting that we *should* have done so, as the feelings of guilt, shame, pity, anger, resentment, frustration, envy, and resignation that such conversations engender are not necessarily productive, but I am suggesting that doing so would have enabled key stakeholders to clarify what they can reasonably expect from each other. Instead, we delayed that conversation with specious assertions of financial similarity. When we began discussing the potential of arranging a joint visit to see a play about race in nearby Skokie, one Beth Emet member championed the idea by saying that he thought "we could get 100 Beth Emet congregants to see this," and that he didn't think the $32 price per ticket was an impediment for either Beth Emet

or Second Baptist congregants. “We have congregants in both of these communities who would spend that much to see a play,” he said. While it is true that both congregations have members who pay $32 (or more) to see theatre, such statements create and sustain a culture in which we selectively draw on some information to assert socio-economic similitude and defer the more difficult, stark conversations about our differences.

However, while we seemed unable to acknowledge this disparity in our large group meetings, I later learned that Ransom and Stein were not the first to do so. Rabbi London and Reverend Love had already discussed it privately. In a much smaller meeting several months prior, when London and Love sketched out the framework for the Sankofa trip, London broached the disparity of their working conditions, and the fact that two full-time staff people from Beth Emet would be planning and leading this trip as part of their paid jobs while the staff from Second Baptist would likely be entirely or mostly volunteer. She wanted to reassure Love that she was aware of this imbalance, and that Beth Emet could compensate for the imbalance, in part, by taking on the brunt of the logistical work. For a moment, early in the process, London had resisted the choreography of consonance. Love recalled this conversation to me with appreciation and affection, noting that her full-time job at North Park University didn’t enable her to devote sufficient time to the legwork for the trip:

> So I was glad that you were there to do that. That Avi [Stein] was there to pull the kids together. Rabbi London was there to ask the congregation to participate . . . I just didn’t have the time. And I trusted [Rabbi] Andrea

> [London], because she said, "Elliot can do this, and Avi can do this, and I can do this." And that's what the partnership is about.

Yet this dissonant conversation was the exception, not the rule, and it happened only privately. In our larger meetings, the stakeholders of the two institutions consistently avoided such conversations through my entire time in fieldwork – even when we collectively planned and implemented the Sankofa trip, with its budget of approximately $30,000. I never saw stakeholders grapple frankly and openly with the fact that the two institutions – and the communities that finance them – have a very different relationship to money. Only toward the very end of my time in fieldwork did I work up the courage to broach this topic with the stakeholders at Second Baptist. At an interview over lunch near her workplace, I asked Velda Love to respond to an assertion that I had heard from both BE and SBC stakeholders – the assertion that both Second Baptist and Beth Emet were middle class institutions. Love answered frankly:

> It is not true. I don't think that Second Baptist is a middle-class institution. I think that Second Baptist is a predominantly African American congregation, with a long historical record of very different kinds of families . . . that have come to the church in very different financial or class situations. . . . . Yes, it has been there since the 1800s, but it doesn't have the same capital that Beth Emet has. We can *raise* money – [but] we don't always have liquid cash the way Beth Emet has because of the class difference . . . . We didn't have anyone dedicated to planning Sankofa the way that Beth Emet was [doing]. Because financially, we could not afford

> a youth pastor . . . And so the financial piece was different for us, the *time* was different for us . . . When the economy hurts the country, it kills the black community. There's a saying that "when the country catches a cold, black people get the flu." Because we don't have the same amount of wealth and resources that white [Christian] congregations have, or a Jewish congregation has, to survive the long haul of economic depression. So a lot of us are already economically depressed. We're two paychecks away from poverty – or more, or less . . . So no, it's not equal in terms of the ways in which time and money can be spent planning things and building things and moving forward, because we don't have the same capacity.

Love and London had been able to discuss this imbalance privately, and eventually, Ransom and Stein were also able to do so. These moments seem to me to be breakthroughs – moments that were initiated with anxiety but received with appreciation and allowed partners to work together better. Yet the fact that such conversations took place in private, isolated encounters may have also sustained a choreography of consonance that continued to constrain us in our larger group meetings. Every few weeks throughout the winter and early Spring, we gathered together for these meetings in the Beth Emet library, meetings which testified to the determination of both parties to sustain a viable partnership and simultaneously also testified to the difficulties of doing so. Martin Buber might classify the encounters at these meetings as "technical dialogue," in

which the parties are primarily concerned with the information exchanged, rather than with each other (22).

I initially understood this adherence to technical dialogue to be driven by a sense of polite professionalism that was shared by the stakeholders of the two institutions, but some of the church's stakeholders have said in retrospect that they have a different interpretation. "We don't hold back," Love told me, referring to the SBC stakeholders, after reading an early draft of this chapter. "We just don't have the power that you have" (Love, "Phone Interview About Sankofa Prep Meetings"). In other words, the technical dialogue, and the choreography of consonance that gives rise to it, may be sustained by different partners for different reasons. For Beth Emet stakeholders, it may have resulted from a sense of polite professionalism, and a sense of their responsibility as the hosts of most meetings to be courteous, polite, and productive. Second Baptist stakeholders, on the other hand, may have felt powerless and trapped within the choreography that Beth Emet stakeholders enacted. The location of these meetings (most of which were held in Beth Emet's facility) may have contributed to this power imbalance. But Love suggests that the critical factor, at least in the early meetings, was the imbalance of clergy in attendance. Rabbi London is the figurehead of the synagogue; the power of her presence could only be balanced by the presence of Rev. Dennis. But Dennis had less flexibility to attend the meetings than London did; this is in part because of the relatively small size of SBC's full-time staff, and in part because the class differences between the congregations result in more crises among SBC members that Dennis must personally attend to. This imbalance is not easily remedied, but perhaps it must be acknowledged, and collectively

addressed, in order to move beyond the technical dialogue and the choreography of consonance.

As we sustained the consonance of this technical dialogue, we often sustained mistrust and misunderstanding. Beth Emet stakeholders grew frustrated at the pace that Second Baptist registered teens for the Sankofa trip, because they only gradually came to understand that Second Baptist's youth programs are run not by church staff but by lay volunteers like Ransom who conduct this recruiting face-to-face and over the phone. Beth Emet, in contrast, centralizes this process in the hands of full-time employees who are fully accountable to the institution, and it leverages the power of its infrastructure to distribute materials – both via email and postal mail – to families. As a result, Beth Emet had teens committing to the trip in October 2012, five months before the anticipated journey, which is when the two institutions had originally decided that the teens should begin regular meetings with one another. The absence of frank, dissonant conversation between the institutions led Beth Emet stakeholders to grow concerned about the slow registration at Second Baptist, to wonder amongst each other whether the pace reflected a lack of investment in the project, an ineptitude on the part of the church, or a lack of financial wherewithal among families. Each month, Second Baptist leaders would inform Beth Emet leaders that they were not yet ready to begin the teen meetings, because the church had not yet registered a critical mass of teens. Beth Emet staff reluctantly passed this information on to Beth Emet families, who grew impatient.

Avi Stein grew distraught and frustrated, worrying that his community's investment in the partnership might falter. Privately, he shared with me his escalating

confusion and exasperation, yet he consistently remained "cheery and careful" at these meetings, sustaining the consonance of the choreography. The meeting on December 13 began with Stein discussing the budget for the trip, the per-person cost, and the numbers that we were hoping for – and then asked if someone could talk about "what the buzz is on the Second Baptist side." His informal language and casual tone concealed considerable anxiety and frustration, which he did not feel was professional or appropriate to share.

This anxiety and frustration grew exponentially for Stein throughout the planning of this trip, and his performance of consonance became more effortful. His feelings of confusion and exasperation with the pace of Second Baptist's registration were compounded by a feeling that his partners at Second Baptist were not taking him seriously, not listening and responding to the concerns he expressed, whether logistical or substantive. Stein, who is gay, began to wonder why the SBC representatives seemed to avoid a direct engagement with him and with the issues that he raised. Was this an effort to shift power away from white men? Was he being overlooked on account of his relative youth (at age 22)? Or, was this avoidance a manifestation of homophobia? He told me, privately, that he was willing to check his white, male privilege at the door, but was unwilling to participate in his own marginalization as a gay man (Stein, "Phone Interview" n. pag.). He asked me, "Is this [being left out of decision-making] something that I should accept as being 'brought low,' like de Young [an author and speaker about racial reconciliation] spoke about? Or is this something that I should expect to be included in, as a partner?" (Stein, "Personal Inverview" n. pag.).

Yet Stein didn't want to make waves. He *did* begin to occasionally speak about his sexuality at these meetings, claiming homosexuality as an important part of his identity, and introducing homophobia as important oppressive force in our society (alongside sexism and racism, which we discussed more often) – but he did not voice his concern that others in the group might be consciously or unconsciously marginalizing him on account of his sexuality. He performed a choreography of consonance, both by concealing his anxiety and frustration about their working relationship, and by consciously monitoring his "playful" and "campy" mannerisms (Stein, "Phone Interview" n. pag.). Aware that gay culture, and that campiness in particular, is associated with frivolity and superficiality, he tried to sustain his inclusion within the community of decision-makers by reducing his apparent difference, policing his own gestural vocabulary.

Throughout this sequence of meetings, leading up to the Sankofa trip in late March, frustration traveled in both directions, as did the tendency to conceal that frustration with a choreography of intercultural consonance. While the Beth Emet chaperones misunderstood and grew frustrated with the recruitment efforts at Second Baptist, and while Stein grew frustrated with his perceived marginalization, the Second Baptist chaperones grew frustrated with Beth Emet's perceived desire to plan and control many elements of the trip, including the food. As I described earlier, Beth Emet had taken on the planning of meals as part of its institutional commitment to shoulder the brunt of the logistical burden. However, as the trip took place over the Jewish holiday of Passover (when many Beth Emet congregants had significant eating restrictions), and as many

Beth Emet teens also had food allergies which we attempted to accommodate, the Second Baptist chaperones began to worry that they neither knew, nor had any control over, what their congregants would be eating during this six-day trip. In what I interpret as a reaction, Jerane Ransom began organizing snacks for the Second Baptist teens. Rather than confront us, which would have caused dissonance, she exercised what power she felt she had to protect the interests of SBC teenagers, as she understood them. Perhaps she did not feel that she had the power to question the meal planning that we had been conducting, or perhaps she did not feel that the dissonance it would cause would be worthwhile. But then Emily Nidenberg, one of the Beth Emet chaperones, realized that Ransom was organizing separate snacks for the SBC teenagers, which Nidenberg thought was disappointing and unnecessarily divisive. She attempted to intervene in Ransom's snack organization, suggesting to her that we might have one set of snacks for everyone, and that the snacks Ransom desired could be adapted to comply with the food restrictions of Beth Emet teenagers. But Ransom resisted: She suggested that Beth Emet should provide their own teens with their own snacks. Wanting to restore consonance, Nidenberg deferred to Ransom. But when she organized Beth Emet's snacks, she packed enough of them so that they could be handed out to Second Baptist teenagers alongside Beth Emet's teenagers, avoiding a potentially-dissonant division.

A similar incident of tension and hastily-restored consonance occurred about a week before our departure, when the chaperones convened a meeting for all trip participants and their parents in a big, multipurpose room at Second Baptist Church. When we collectively planned the agenda for this meeting, Rabbi London suggested that

I present a short packing demonstration. I had conducted similar presentations when I had worked for Beth Emet many years prior: in order to encourage participants to pack light, I would pack all the items on the packing list in a small suitcase in advance. Then, in order to demonstrate that it could be done, I would unpack my suitcase in front of everyone. It would always elicit laughter, and London remembered it as an effective way to discourage overpacking. But the SBC chaperones were never fully convinced that this was important, and in the moments before I was about to begin, Love approached me, and politely whispered that she thought I should skip it. I politely whispered back that it was important and that I could do it quickly. So I did. But as I revealed the small bag of toiletries that I had packed, one of the young women shouted out, playfully, "That is a *boy's* bag! Girls can't pack like that!" Worried that I needed to discourage overpacking, I stopped for a second, smiled, and asked the large group, "Any women in the group find that comment troubling?" A chorus of women's voices cheered me on, and with that wind at my back, I continued the demonstration.

But after the event, when several of the chaperones were standing in a small cluster, chatting, I asked Love, "Was it okay, what I did?" And Love said, cautiously, that she was concerned that the demonstration was not appropriate for women. I playfully but defensively insisted that women could pack as light as men, and Love chose not to press the point, preserving consonance. But Nidenberg called me aside, quietly pointing out to me that I had overlooked the particular concerns of *black* women with regard to hair products. Suddenly, my reaction changed drastically; I realized that my behavior was problematic. My own insistence that women can pack as light as men, and my

encouragement that women in the room join me in making that assertion, may have been appropriate for the Jewish women in the room, but it marginalized the black women. Love addressed my oversight as a gender issue, not as a racial issue. Perhaps to address my carelessness as racial would have created too much dissonance. Or, maybe, after first insisting that I should do the demonstration despite her concerns, and then insisting that I hadn't done anything wrong, I inadvertently shut her down, preserving a degree of consonance with my own arrogance.

If we had been able to sustain a more intimate, more honest relationship with one another, a relationship in which it felt safe to express dissonance, and to accept wrongdoing, then Love and I might have been able to debrief incidents like this more effectively. Similarly, Nidenberg and Ransom might have been able to better negotiate their concerns over snacks, and Stein might have been better able to discuss his sense of marginalization. Instead, too often, we sustained a choreography of consonance throughout this process. Perhaps we did so for distinct reasons: the Beth Emet chaperones may have done so out of polite professionalism, and, as Love has suggested to me, the Second Baptist chaperones may have often complied out of a sense of relative powerlessness. We didn't intend to do so, but we sustained this choreography together, as we were imbricated in a larger choreography of consonance that is pervasive throughout Evanston and beyond.

Conclusion

As Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church work together to nurture a relationship characterized by greater honesty, greater intimacy, and ultimately, greater social-political change in pursuit of social justice, they face an uphill battle. A choreography of segregation, often performed unconsciously, limits interracial encounters throughout Evanston (and, of course, beyond). When Evanstonians resist that choreography of segregation, they often engage in a choreography of intercultural consonance that renders their encounters polite, brief, and superficial – a choreography that has sometimes been dubbed "drive-by diversity." These choreographies have emerged through an oppressive history that required black deference to white Americans, and shamed white Americans (particularly poor white Americans) out of identifying too closely with black Americans. They have now become unconscious or semi-conscious parts of Americans' mental and physical habits, and we often sustain them without fully realizing that we are doing so. For four hundred years, these choreographies have served the interests of the elite members of our society, who have benefitted from the animosity that has led the members of lower socio-economic classes to perceive their interests as being at odds with one another.

As I explained at greater length in the introduction, the relationship between Jews and African Americans has been a complex one, and at some times in US history, these two groups have defied the dominant choreographies that structure racial relations. This is in part because Jews have held an uncertain and unstable place within America's racial taxonomy. But in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as Jews have become increasingly accepted as white, and happy to accept the prosperity that has come alongside whiteness,

they have found themselves enacting the choreographies that keep them physically and emotionally distant from black America.

Beth Emet and Second Baptist are now trying to nurture a more intimate and authentic choreography for their congregants, but are finding themselves imbricated in patterns of behavior that don't yield easily. The stories that I have included in this chapter – the City Council meetings, the 2012 MLK Weekend event co-hosted by BE and SBC, and the meetings of key stakeholders throughout the 2012-2013 academic year (including those that I held with Minister Smith), are illustrative of choreographies of segregation and consonance that are larger than either institution, and larger than Evanston. But Evanston is a good example of the ways that these choreographies exist, and effectively separate racialized communities, even in some of the US's most progressive cities. And Beth Emet and Second Baptist are good examples of how people and institutions are imbricated in these choreographies, even when their leadership desires to think and act outside the polite-but-distant intercultural relationships that these choreographies engender. In the chapters that follow, I will focus my attention on the ways that *playful* interactions can sometimes – though not always – transcend these limitations.

I do not mean to project cynicism about the religious and civic institutions that I have profiled in this chapter, and certainly do not mean to project cynicism about the leadership of Beth Emet or Second Baptist. It is rather out of great respect for these two institutions, and for the mission that they have embarked on together, that I desire to illustrate the ways in which they are caught up in problematic structures, and the extreme difficulty of overcoming these limitations.

Chapter Two: Playfully Inducing Fellowship

(Re)Introducing Play

The previous chapter explained, depicted, and analyzed the choreographies of segregation and consonance that I have argued are pervasive throughout Evanston. I suggested that these choreographies render intercultural encounters rare, brief, polite, and superficial. I have also suggested that these choreographies sustain a status quo of inequality, by facilitating the circulation of capital (cultural and economic) within the (mostly-white) communities that already possess it. Even when institutional leaders want to work together across intercultural lines to nurture relationships of greater honesty and intimacy, these choreographies continue to limit their potential (and that of their followers) to nurture personal relationships, to collectively and honestly assess the power imbalances of their society, and to form robust, lasting political alliances.

The rest of this dissertation interrogates in what way(s), to what extent, and toward what ends disparate cultural groups might suspend the choreographies of segregation and consonance through *play*. Recall from the introduction that play theorists Johann Huizinga and Roger Caillois have characterized play as an alternative realm, detached (or perhaps semi-detached) from the more prosaic elements of our lives. Players can experience a profound sense of absorption in this alternative reality, discovering elements of themselves that they suppress in "real life" (Caillois 21). Perhaps, then, play can offer Evanstonians (and others) a rare opportunity to safely explore choreographies of

greater intimacy and greater tension. According to Shulamith Lev-Aladgem, the social rules and taboos that players break within the play-world may remain transgressable back in the "real" world, and players may find themselves able to *actually* pursue the *possible* lines of action that they explore within play (30-31). I have defined play, for my purposes, as the performance of variability – and I propose that as participants perform their own variability, as individuals and as a play-community, they may also find themselves able to introduce a bit more variability into the choreographies that structure their day-to-day lives.

But perhaps only a bit. I am not quite as optimistic about the transformative power of play Lev-Aladgem might be. As I wrote in the introduction of this dissertation, I am also sobered by the cautionary wisdom of Baz Kershaw, who has argued that the playful, theatrical suspension of social rules can often function as a "release valve for dissatisfaction" with the status quo, ultimately strengthening the prevailing order (Kershaw 74). Nonetheless, I think the possibilities inherent in play, as advanced through participatory theatre-making and articulated by Lev-Aladgem, are worth serious consideration. In the next two chapters, I explore and illuminate the possibilities and limitations of play within intercultural dialogue through the Bibliodrama program that I co-facilitated in Evanston. In this chapter, I interrogate to what extent Bibliodramatic play, as we practiced it, advances *fellowship* – a term that I define based on two theologians (one from the Jewish tradition, and one from the black Baptist tradition), in addition to several members of the Evanston community. In doing so, I illuminate to what extent play empowers groups to suspend the choreographies of segregation and

consonance, and to what extent these choreographies limit the potentiality of play. Then, in Chapter 3, I interrogate to what extent play can engender a *critical dialogue* – an approach to intercultural encounters informed not primarily by theologians, but by activists and scholars.

(Re)Introducing Bibliodrama as a Form of Play

As the introduction to this dissertation explained at greater length, Bibliodrama is a form of participatory theatre-making in which people study Biblical narratives by enacting them. With the guidance of a facilitator (or in our case, a pair of facilitators), Bibliodramatists employ a range of techniques to assume the key roles of the story and to collectively imagine and embody the details that aren't recorded in the sparse Biblical text. It is highly related to psychodrama and sociodrama, which preceded Bibliodrama by about half a century.

For a fuller analysis of Bibliodrama's emergence in relationship to psychodrama and sociodrama, and for an explication of our unique adaptation of Bibliodrama, I refer the reader back to the introduction. Here, at the outset of these two chapters that take Bibliodrama in Evanston as their topic of study, I want to briefly emphasize and articulate how I will be interrogating Bibliodrama primarily as a form of play.

Peter Pitzele, whose book *Scripture Windows: Toward a Practice of Bibliodrama* is the most widely-read book about Bibliodrama in the US, describes Bibliodrama as a technology for inducing dramatic, interpretive, reflective play. Writing this practical

manual for potential facilitators of Bibliodrama, Pitzele evokes the initial transition into play that they their participants might experience:

> I, as a reader, step into the story; I *become* the biblical character, speaking as that character, not *about* him or her. I imagine and tell his or her story as if it were my own. In Bibliodrama, passive readers becomes [sic] active players; we assume roles.

With simple, non-threatening, colloquial language like this, Pitzele captures a style of encouraging participants – most of whom do *not* self-identify as performers – to take on roles and to begin playing. One of the things that initially attracted me to this practitioner's manual, when I first discovered it in my early twenties, was the ease and gentle simplicity with which it suggested Bibliodrama facilitators could apparently engage non-performers in dramatic play. Whereas non-performers, particularly adults, often think of theatre as something that professionals, experienced amateurs, or children should engage in (i.e., someone other than them), this initially struck me as a form that could successfully engage broad numbers of people in religious communities in playful engagement. Indeed, this open-armed invitation into a realm of play allowed Minster Smith and me to interest many non-self-identified-performers from both Second Baptist and Beth Emet into a sphere of playful engagement with one another.

Bibliodramatic play is – according to Caillois's taxonomy of play – mimetic play: it offers players the opportunity to become "an illusory character" within "an imaginary milieu" (19, 71-76). However, as Caillois himself points out, this "illusory character" may not be as illusory as it seems: it may, in fact, be a mask that liberates "the true

personality" of the player (21). This liberated personality, in the guise of a Biblical character, may experience less reservation than the individual often experiences in his or her "real life;" the me/not-me/not-not-me of the player may be able to break the unwritten rules that govern our society, including the choreographies of segregation and consonance. In this semi-detached realm, in which Biblical and suburban landscapes merge, participants may be able to imagine a different way of interacting; they may be able to choreograph new modes of interaction. It is towards these new modes of interaction that I now turn – specifically to a mode of interaction that I will call *fellowship*, a term embedded in the discourse of the church. However, as I do so, it is important to remember that fellowship is not the inevitable result of play. As I will show throughout the chapter, players may often find that play is not quite detached *enough* from "real life" to afford them a release from its dominant patterns of thought and interaction. They may replicate these patterns in the play-world almost as much as they do in the "real world" they have left behind.

Introducing Fellowship

In June 2013, towards the end of our Bibliodrama program, Minister Smith and I chose to devote one of our 90-minute sessions to a collective reflection of the process. This would be instructive for both Minister Smith and for me (as he was a seminary student, and we were both trying to write about the process in our own respective academic environments), but it would also be useful for the group to have an opportunity

to reflect together on the process they had collectively undertaken. One of the participants present for that discussion was Charlotte, a church member and a regular attendee of our Bibliodrama program. Charlotte, an African American woman in her early fifties, lived in the eighth ward (close to, but not right in the heart of, the historic heart of black Evanston) and was a regular participant in a wide variety of church activities: in addition to attending Bibliodrama, she sang in one of the church choirs, she frequently attended Wednesday-night Bible study, and she was regularly in the pews on Sunday mornings (that is, when she wasn't in the choir loft). She also held two jobs: she worked in sales at a publishing company, and she served as the house manager of a mental health agency. In the midst of that June conversation, when Minister Smith asked people how they had been impacted by Bibliodrama, Charlotte answered, "I like getting the different perspectives, with the different thought processes. I like that people of two different faiths can come together and study the same scripture, and still glean from each other." She spoke from a seated position, her legs crossed at the knees, her eyes flitting around the circle, making contact not just with me and Minister Smith, but also the other participants. She spoke softly, persistently gesturing with her carefully-manicured hands and her bright red fingernails as she talked through her ideas. "It's just been great fellowshipping, and Bibliodrama-ing, with each other." As she said the word "Bibliodrama-ing," she paused slightly at the hyphen, almost tasting the gerund form of the word for the first time as it escaped her lips. She laughed just after she said it, as her hands fell into the lap of her light peach summer dress. Laurel, a participant from the

synagogue, laughed with Charlotte as she spoke the new word, relishing the joy of the new construction.

Bibliodrama-ing was a new word. But *fellowshipping* was not a new word – not for Charlotte. This is a word that I had heard around the church quite a bit, and it always intrigued me. Minister Smith also spoke a lot about fellowship, and had directed me to a black Christian theologian who wrote about it. By this point in my fieldwork experience, I was starting to get used to hearing the word. But I still found it instructive to ask people what it meant. So I asked Charlotte, later in the discussion, "When you say the word fellowship, can I ask what it is you mean when you say that? Cause that's not a word we use a lot at the synagogue." With subtlety and curiosity, I was trying to mark and probe some of the differences that I was observing between the two institutions.

"Really?" Charlotte said, smiling at me. "Fellowship is, like, getting to know people – and even though it's Bibliodrama, I feel like I'm getting to know some parts of you." She shifted her gaze as she leaned forward, making eye contact with several people around the circle. "And you. And you, and you. And hopefully I'm sharing some of me, who *I* am." She turned to Laurel, sitting beside her. "I *hear* your *passion*," Charlotte said to her, gesturing with an open palm. "I even know what you do for a living!" she joked, referring to a conversation earlier in the evening, in which Laurel had briefly mentioned her work as an art therapist. "I think this is a form of fellowship," she said, with her bracelets clanking against each other as her hands fell upon her red leather handbag, which was now positioned in her lap. "I don't think fellowship has to be 'no agenda.' Clearly we *do* have an agenda here, but we're still getting to know each other."

Two things intrigue me about Charlotte's comments. First, fellowship, at least for Charlotte, denotes a *process*, not an endstate. Fellowship is a way of approaching and engaging in relationship, not a type of relationship, or even a quality of relationships. Second, I am intrigued to know that Charlotte, who places a great value on fellowship, considered Bibliodrama to be a form of fellowship, a mode of engagement that helped people get to know each other in a genuine and meaningful way – even though they *didn't* know very basic information about each other, like their professions. When Charlotte joked, "I even know what you do for a living!," she implicitly acknowledged that until earlier that evening, she *didn't* know what Laurel did for a living. One's profession is often part of a formal introduction, as people work to identify commonalities of experience on which they might base a relationship. This is particularly true in middle- and upper-class settings, where peoples' education and social capital affords them the opportunity to pursue careers that reflect their interests and priorities. While Second Baptist includes many congregants who do not identify as middle class, it also includes many who do, including Charlotte, who is used to introducing herself with her profession. But Bibliodrama reversed the process. Charlotte had felt Laurel's passion long before she learned some basic pieces of information.

I sought a more detailed explanation of fellowship from Second Baptist Minister Ric Hudgens, who was aware of my work, who saw me around the church frequently, and who indicated a willingness to speak with me further. Hudgens, who is white, had been drawn to Second Baptist church several years prior, when he left a predominantly-white church community that he had been leading. Frustrated that his former community

was insufficiently engaged with issues of race and class, and with the broader needs of Evanston's communities, Hudgens was warmly invited to join the broad (12-person) volunteer ministerial staff at Second Baptist by Senior Pastor Mark Dennis. When I asked Hudgens to define fellowship, he provided a definition that was similar to Charlotte's, but he contextualized it with his clerical knowledge of scripture, history, and theology. Sitting with me on the porch of his Evanston home, he said,

> It [the term 'fellowship'] is an English translation of the Greek term *koinoneia*, which they used in first century churches. There were different things that were involved with [koinoneia]. The most basic part was that they shared a meal together . . . Other things could be included with that: there could be economic sharing, there could be times of worship . . . [But] You couldn't have fellowship without having a meal together . . . In the first century Middle Eastern culture, that was one of the most intimate settings you could have with a nonfamily member – around the table, sharing a meal. We've tried to integrate that same sense into the 21st Century, although people tend to – especially now when people don't eat meals as much – it [the primary setting of the table] doesn't have the same significance maybe as it did back then . . . [But] it's about intimacy, it's about getting beyond just the cocktail party chit-chat. Really sitting down with somebody and looking them in the eye, and really forming some kind of personal relationship with them. Beyond exchanging business cards or something like that . . . There's some kind of

> philosophical anthropology at the basis of [fellowship,] where you're recognizing the other as a person that is to be communed with, the *I-Thou* thing that Buber talked about. (Hudgens, n. pag.)

For Minister Hudgens, this notion of "getting to know people" (Charlotte's words) took on particular spatial, material, and bodily properties. The quintessential act of fellowship, sharing a meal, was an act which inherently brought people into close proximity, which required a sustained period of contact (at least long enough to complete the meal), and which necessitated the sharing of some resources (food). He also indicated that it could involve sharing *more* resources ("economic sharing"), or it could involve corporate prayer. But he simultaneously suggested that fellowship was a flexible notion, and that it didn't necessarily need to take the same forms today that it once did. Fellowship was generated through the materiality of sharing a meal, but at its core, he said, it was about intimacy, about "recognizing the other as a person to be communed with."

To explain what he meant by this, Hudgens referenced the philosophy and theology of Martin Buber, one of the most famous Jewish intellectuals of the 20th century. As I mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Buber wrote about three types of dialogue. One is technical dialogue, which consisted of a pragmatic exchange of information. The second is monologue as dialogue, which, Buber argued, had many forms:

> A *debate* in which the thoughts are not expressed in the way in which they existed in the mind but in the speaking are so pointed that they may strike home in the sharpest way, and moreover without the men that are spoken

> to being regarded in any way present as persons; a *conversation* characterized by the need neither to communicate something, nor to learn something, nor to influence someone, nor to come into connexion with someone, but solely by the desire to have one's own self-reliance confirmed by marking the impression that is made, or if it has become unsteady, to have it strengthened; a *friendly chat* in which each regards himself as absolute and legitimate and the other as relativized and questionable; a *lovers' talk* in which both partners alike enjoy their own glorious soul and their precious experience. (22)

The third type of dialogue, according to Buber, is *genuine dialogue*, in which "each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them" (21). In this third type of dialogue, the partners are able to draw near each other, touching the "otherness of the other" without grasping that otherness or collapsing it into sameness (25-27). Buber described the first two types of dialogue with the term "I-It," implying that the interaction was one in which the self objectified the other, reducing the other to an element within his or her own experience. But to describe the third type of dialogue, Buber used the term "I-Thou," which Minister Hudgens quoted to me, illustrating an element of the Christian idea of fellowship, as he understood it.

These intimate relationships have ethical and political consequences. Buber argues, "I live ethically when I confirm and further my Thou in the right of his existence

and the goal of his becoming, in all his otherness" (*Philosophical Interrogations* 27). Maurice Friedman, a contemporary Buber scholar, elaborates on this statement, explaining that the I-Thou relationship compels each partner to hear "the unreduced claim of each hour in its crudeness and disharmony" and to answer that claim "out of the depths of one's being" (123). This compels people to develop a sensitivity to, and to act in accordance with, the uniqueness of each situation, never predetermining an ethical response to one's partner but always welcoming ones' responsibility as it emerges. Neve Gordon, another Buber scholar, expounds on the broader social-political implications of this idea: "For Buber a just and free society is dependent on the ability to say Thou. Where Thou is said, just institutions will exist" (110-112). In other words, justice is contingent upon genuine dialogue, upon fellowship.

Yet while fellowship has political consequences, it is not overtly framed as political. For some within these congregations, it is perhaps not political *enough*. Some believe that intercultural relationship-building ought to be premised on a shared desire for progressive (or even radical) political change. For some, fellowship without an explicit, shared political agenda is only a distraction from the important work that needs to be done. This is an important distinction, and Chapter 3 is devoted to a further exploration of this second perspective. But for advocates of fellowship, of I-Thou relationships, the outcome can never be foreseen, only accepted as it emerges. This is the attitude that Second Baptist Deacon Jerane Ransom expressed when I asked her, over coffee at Panera in mid-June, if the relationship between Beth Emet and Second Baptist should focus on creating "powerful social-political change in Evanston." She said that such change would

only be a "by-product," not an "end-product," of the relationship. The end-product, she said, consisted of building "personal relationships and fellowship with each other in a pure way," and of becoming "each others' sisters and brothers." Political mobilization would only be a "by-product of relationships between congregations that actually care about what happen to each other" (Ransom, "Personal Interview" n. pag.). Beth Emet staff member Avi Stein expressed a similar sentiment when he said that the partnership between these two communities should be about nurturing authentic relationships between congregants, and that social/political activism would "happen organically when it's ready" (Stein, "Personal Interview" n. pag.).

This idea that "organic relationships" among "congregations [and congregants] that actually care about what happen to each other" might actually drive social/political activism seems to capture the Buberian idea that a just and free society is dependent on the ability to say Thou (Gordon 110-112). It also seems to comport with Hudgens's understanding of fellowship as a sustained, intimate, embodied encounter between an *I* and a *Thou* (or multiple *Thou*s) – and thus, when I refer to fellowship throughout the rest of this dissertation, I do so with reference to this understanding. It is an understanding of fellowship that was voiced to me by a white man engaged in a black church, informed by both Martin Buber and first-century Christians, and embellished by youth workers from both a Reform synagogue and a black Baptist church.

However, the black, Christian theologian Howard Thurman, whose book *Jesus and the Disinherited* Minister Smith recommended I read, suggests that genuine fellowship is usually elusive between people whom society has divided into different

classes. To reach out to an other with a spirit of "I-Thou" is thus not just a matter of will; it is also conditioned by status and power. Without social-political equality, there is little basis for fellowship, and the patronizing contact that sometimes looks and feels like fellowship is merely "an abundance of sentimentality masquerading under the cloak of fellowship" (75). Given the substantial inequality in Evanston that I historicized in the introduction, and the choreographies that continue to sustain this inequality (which took the spotlight in Chapter 1), is it really possible that substantial fellowship could have taken place in the midst of our Bibliodrama sessions? Perhaps, one might argue, when Charlotte said that we had been engaging in fellowship, she was merely expressing the "abundance of sentimentality masquerading under the cloak of fellowship" that Howard Thurman warns about. Or, perhaps she felt pressure to attest to fellowship even if it did not often take place, given the value that the church community places on fellowship. These doubts have been expressed by readers of early drafts of this dissertation, and I take them seriously. I do think it is *possible* that Charlotte attested to fellowship because she felt pressure to do so, or because she had experienced a cathartic release of emotion that she wanted to validate by calling it "fellowship." But I also want to take Charlotte seriously, and to consider the possibility that fellowship *did* occur within the Bibliodrama group, even against the odds.

Though Thurman warns that fellowship can be elusive without social-political equality, he also argues that there are some circumstances "that [make] all class and race distinctions impertinent" (105), allowing for people of vastly different life circumstances to reach out to one another in fellowship. These are rare: he cites the 1948 flood in

Vanport, Oregon as such a circumstance, noting that it made people of vastly different statuses feel as though "they were men, women and children in the presence of the operation of impersonal Nature. Under the pressure they were the human family, and each stood in immediate candidacy for the profoundest fellowship, understanding, and love" (104). Similarly, he argues, US soldiers in WWII experienced a "staggering" number of such circumstances. But since these occurrences are not a part of everyday life, Thurman asks:

> Can this attitude, developed in the white heat of personal encounter, become characteristic of one's behavior even when the drama of immediacy is lacking? I think so. It has to be rooted in concrete experience. No amount of good feeling for people in general, no amount of simple desiring, is an adequate substitute. It is the act of inner authority, well within the reach of everyone. Obviously, then, merely preaching love of one's enemies or exhortations – however high and holy – cannot, in the last analysis, accomplish this result. At the center of the attitude is a core of painstaking discipline, made possible only by personal triumph. (105-106)

I will argue in the remainder of this chapter that Bibliodramatic play may have enabled people of different life circumstances to develop a practice of engaging one another in fellowship. And yet, I'm not convinced that it enabled participants to develop this Thurmanian "inner authority" to continue engaging in fellowship, in an open-ended way, in the face of Evanston's choreographies of segregation and consonance. As Buber

emphasizes, I-Thou moments are typically fleeting. Thus, as Thurman argues, it takes a "painstaking discipline" – and, I would add, considerable initiative – to leverage those cumulative moments into a sustained and sustaining practice of engaging in interfaith, interracial fellowship (Thurman 106). Fellowship was *attainable* through Bibliodramatic play, while it was elusive in many other frameworks that I witnessed; however, it was not *sustainable*. I illuminate how it was attainable, what value I think it has, and why I think it ultimately was not sustainable. To do so, I integrate ethnographic data from five Bibliodrama sessions and a number of interviews, which I conducted at various points throughout (and subsequent to) my fieldwork. However, I begin and dwell most extensively with two interactions that occurred at a single night of Bibliodrama, about 2/3 of the way through our process. One of these interactions helps to vivify (and thus, to explore) a Bibliodramatic encounter that I believe demonstrates the potential power of play to suspend the dominant choreographies and forge new kinds of relationships; the other interaction (during the same night) helps to vivify the ways in which the dominant choreographies still permeate the group that engages in Bibliodrama together, even after eight sessions together. The interviews, and the other four sessions, which I refer to more briefly, enable me to elucidate patterns and exceptions, and to give the reader a sense of the group's progression through a process.

Rebecca's Prophecy: A Case in Point

The date was April 9, 2013, and participants were beginning to arrive at Second Baptist Church for the eighth session of the Bibliodrama program. There were a few early arrivals who were already seated in a semicircle of chairs, chatting among themselves: Roni, a synagogue teenager, Aniyah, a church teenager, Linda, an adult from the synagogue, and Perry, another adult from the synagogue. Roni and Aniyah, having recently returned from the Sankofa trip that I wrote about in the previous chapter (and that receives fuller treatment in Chapter 4), were entertaining Linda and Perry with stories from their trip. Roni, sporting a t-shirt and jeans, fumbled with a hot paper cup of tea while speaking, sometimes gazing down into the cup when searching for the right words to one of the adults' questions. Aniyah, wearing a thin grey hoodie and blue jeans, sat right beside Roni, with barely any space separating their bodies.

Perry got the conversation started by asking Aniyah and Roni to talk about what elements of the trip most surprised them, and then he stretched out his legs, leaned back on his chair, and listened. In his early sixties, with silver hair and a high-pitched voice with a slight rasp, Perry was very excited about the Sankofa trip, and thrilled to sit and listen to their answers. As a retired attorney in the Cook County Public Defender's office, he considers himself to have "some background" in the profound issues of racial inequity that plague the country, and seemed very satisfied as he watched the young people in his midst identify and grapple with these important and intractable problems. Linda, too, was eager to hear what the teens had to say. Also in her sixties, Linda had spent her career teaching middle school history classes until her recent retirement, and was passionate about youth involvement in civic affairs. She sat now with a huge smile, legs crossed,

nodding at them with encouragement and occasionally offering some of her own stories in response. The conversation ranged from the songs they sang to the sites they visited to the history they learned to the relationships they formed to the privilege they learned to identify.

This conversation formed the background of all the other interactions and conversations that happened informally as others came in. Some others joined the conversation enthusiastically, and became absorbed in this pocket of activity that was already percolating before they sat down. For instance, Rinat, another Beth Emet teenager who had been on the trip, was thrilled to see Aniyah and Roni, and immediately joined them. I, too, joined this conversation, and was eager to reflect on the recent trip, having attended it as a chaperone. Others, like John (from the church) and Laurel (from the synagogue) positioned themselves on the periphery of the conversation, listening at times, but also sustaining their own dialogue. It is the encounter between Laurel and John, that takes place on the margins of this discussion about Sankofa, that interests me most, and that helps to illustrate the potency of the choreography of consonance, even within our Bibliodrama program.

Laurel and John both looked slightly tired when they came in. John often looked tired; as a professional builder, he came to Bibliodrama after long, physically-taxing days, and he carried himself with an economy of movement. With a big sigh, John stripped off his big black puffy coat, and he pulled up a cushioned armchair into the semicircle for himself – extending the semicircle into something closer to a full circle. There were several open chairs already in the semicircle, but he would have had to cross

through the circle to get to them, and he may not have wanted to physically cut across a conversation already in progress. Besides, the chair that John got his hands on was more comfortable than the available chairs in the circle. Laurel came in directly afterwards, and lingered for a moment along the perimeter of the room before joining the circle. Laurel was a synagogue member and a professional art therapist, and as a self-described "solitary person," she often lingered alone on the perimeter of the space before moving into the circle of chairs. On this particular night, she dropped her bag on an old church pew that sat against the wall, and then removed her coat, glasses, hat, and scarf, placing them beside her bag on the pew. As she pulled off her hat and exhaled, she looked chilled and worn out from the cold weather. She rummaged briefly in a coat pocket, and then stood alone for a moment with her hands in her jeans pockets, before finding a chair to place next to Aniyah. Notably, she didn't introduce herself to Aniyah, who sat beside her, and who had never come to Bibliodrama before. As she explained to me after reading an early draft of this chapter, she felt inept at remembering names, and wasn't always completely sure whom she had met before or whose name she should know. She directed her gaze across the circle, to Perry and Linda, who both waved to her briefly before directing their attention back to the conversation with the teens. Laurel's focus was then captured by John's t-shirt, which read, in loud, bold capital letters, "Rosa Parks Sat So Martin Luther King Could Walk So Barack Obama Could Run."

Leaning forward in her chair, mouth agape, she said to him, "That's an awesome t-shirt." They had both added chairs into the seating arrangement for themselves, one on

each end of the preexisting semicircle, so they were relatively close to one another, and on the periphery of the Sankofa conversation.

"Yeah," he answered, in a deep voice, looking down at it with admiration. He then leaned forward and scooped himself off the chair, so that she could get a better look. She too stood up, taking a half-step toward him. He narrated the text aloud as she read along, and then, smiling and nodding, he lowered himself back into the chair, with one arm gripping the armrest, and the other carefully holding a paper cup of coffee. Simultaneously, Laurel too sat back down, squealing "Awesome!" and pulling her coat around her body more tightly. "My daughter's name is Rosa," Laurel said, "so she feels a kinship anyway, you know but . . . um . . . yeah . . ." As Laurel's voice trailed off, her gaze shifted away from John, but not towards anyone in particular. And then it shifted back to John, and away again. John, too, shifted his gaze toward and away from Laurel, in a moment of awkwardness, as they had seemingly run out of things to say, and began awkwardly looking for another conversation to join.

This was not Laurel's and John's first encounter. John had attended four prior sessions, Laurel had attended three, and this was the third session that they attended together. But they didn't greet each other by name, nor did they ask one another to remind them of one another's names. Instead, Laurel chose to connect with him by affirming and appreciating his shirt while aligning herself with his perceived values. With his body language and his smile, he seemed to accept this gesture of her affinity.

The t-shirt offers an historical narrative that can be read – and critiqued – in many ways. One could argue that this narrative presents a version of US history that

overemphasizes the roles of great individuals, thus deemphasizing the roles of movements and masses. One could also argue that this historiography implicitly suggests that the goals of the iconic Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s have now been fully achieved. Or, one could argue that the narrative suggests that we, in the second decade of the 21st century, still have the *opportunity* to align our selves with, and to realize the iconic dreams of, previous generations. My point here is not to suggest what the t-shirt means, but rather, to suggest that Laurel connected with John by assuming that she understood what he meant, and testifying to their shared values. And with his physical reaction, he seemed to accept her gesture of support.

But then they didn't know what else to say. Laurel extended the conversation by disclosing her daughter's affinity for Rosa Parks, perhaps further establishing her own investment in an ongoing struggle for full racial equality. But then the conversation came to an abrupt and awkward end. Unlike Roni and Aniyah, who had just returned from Sankofa, several months of shared investment in the Bibliodrama project had not prepared these two regular participants to sustain a substantive conversation about the history of the Civil Rights movement, the significance of having a black president, or the power of antiracist activism. Perhaps the program had not prepared these two participants to sustain *any* conversation. So they fell back on the choreography of consonance, the dominant choreography of interracial engagement in Evanston. They affirmed their togetherness. Across the racial divide, they overemphasized their compatibility.

I begin with the story of this brief encounter because it serves as a sobering reminder of just how pervasive the choreography of consonance is. Even when we work

to suspend it, and even when we create an environment in which more genuine fellowship sometimes becomes possible, we cannot entirely escape the dominant patterns of interacting. Indeed, I too played a role in this consonant encounter. As they read the t-shirt aloud, squealed with approval, and smiled at one another, I stood nearby, silently admiring John's t-shirt, nodding and smiling. I didn't participate verbally in the encounter at all, but I too engaged with consonance, physically marking my enthusiasm for the shirt, and casually wandering away as soon as the encounter became stiff and awkward.

As I wandered away, I scooped up the stack of texts that I had typed up, printed out and brought with me. That night's text was Genesis Chapter 25, in which Jacob (child of Isaac and Rebecca) provides Esau (his slightly-older twin brother) a pot of lentil stew in exchange for Esau's "birthright" – his right, as the firstborn child, to a double-portion of their inheritance. It's a brief section of a longer narrative that we began when we were last together, on March 19, and that we'll continue following through early May. The key characters include not only Jacob and Esau, but also their parents, Isaac and Rebecca. In the text that we interrogated in the previous session, on March 19, the twins were still in utero, and God spoke to Rebecca, telling her that two warring nations were in her womb, and that (contrary to tradition) the elder would serve the younger. Now, in this week's text, we would be interrogating the inciting action that begins to validate this prophecy.

Minister Smith and I had chosen this text together, in accordance with the theme of partnership, which ran through all the texts we chose. We were intrigued with the many intersecting partnerships: there are moments of partnership between Rebecca and Isaac, Rebecca and Jacob, Esau and Isaac, and even between Jacob and Esau, who

function predominantly as rivals. Minister Smith and I had studied this text together and prepared for the session together, but I was actually leading this session alone. He had informed me several days prior that he had another commitment that would have to take precedence – so this particular session marked my first (and only) time facilitating without him.

I called the group together, explaining Minister Smith's absence and formally opening the evening. John and I each led a prayer from our respective religious traditions, in accordance with the format that Minster Smith and I had developed (explained in greater detail in the introduction). By this time, there were nine participants in the room: two from the church (John and Aniyah), and seven from the synagogue (Roni, Rinat, Perry, Linda, and Laurel, plus Terri and Daniel, a couple in their fifties who had just arrived during the prayers). I passed out the texts and I encouraged the group to read the narrative in groups of three, but because there was such an imbalance in the room on this particular evening, I didn't specify, as Minister Smith and I usually did, that each group should have representation from both communities. I also didn't instruct the three teens to break up, which we typically did. Since Rinat hadn't come in a long time, and Aniyah had never come before, I wanted to do all that I could to make them feel happy and welcome. I was hoping they would all come back.

The three teens – Aniyah, Roni, and Rinat – immediately turned toward each other and became a group. Laurel, who had already made a connection with John, stood, shrugged and made eye contact with him again – an implicit suggestion that they might work together. Terri, standing nearby, joined them, and the three of them sat down

together. Meanwhile, Daniel moved toward Linda and Perry, and the three of them become a group.

Moments later, Charlotte walked into the room. As noted already, Charlotte is an active member of the church and was a Bibliodrama regular. She moved quickly into the space, hesitating only to wave and smile enthusiastically at Laurel and Terri, who sat next to each other, and with whom Charlotte had engaged extensively over the past two sessions. I ushered her into the chair beside Perry where I had been sitting, suggesting that she form a group of four with Linda, Perry, and Daniel. I hovered by her chair for a moment, showing her the paper and saying a few words about the text. As soon as I got up to leave, Perry turned to her with a friendly smile. "Hi! Wanna join us? Good to see you! I'm Perry." He offered her his hand with this formal introduction, though they had met at two previous Bibliodrama sessions. Charlotte shook Perry's hand, and then greeted Daniel and Linda with smiles, head-nods, and verbal introductions, as they were sitting too far away for handshakes. Daniel and Charlotte had not encountered one another before, so they were introducing themselves for the first time. Charlotte and Linda exchanged names *as though* they had not met before, though much like Charlotte and Perry, they had actually encountered each other at two previous sessions.

These *reintroductions* are significant. For me and Minister Smith, Bibliodrama no longer felt new. We had been facilitating for five months. But nobody (except me) had perfect attendance, and many had not gotten involved at all until the third or fourth session. Moreover, two weeks typically passed between each session. This meant that even some of the regular attendees were still getting to know one another, still not

confident that they knew each others' names. This was particularly true for participants who had not yet engaged with one another in the small-group play that takes place toward the end of each session. For instance, John and Laurel, whose interaction I have already described with some detail, had attended several sessions together, but had never engaged with one another in the more intimate, small-group play. Charlotte, who was now introducing herself to Linda and Perry, actually had sat right in between them for a full half hour of the most recent session. Then, as now, they had angled their bodies toward one another, reading through the text, discussing the intricacies of the Biblical language, making jokes together, and puzzling through the meaning of the narrative. They had then sat together throughout the next part of the evening, too, when Minister Smith and I had asked the whole group to imagine themselves, and speak in role as, the various members of the same family that we were still following in tonight's text. But then Linda had left that session early, and Charlotte had been drawn away from Perry by another group who needed her as an additional actor for their scene. So, during the most intimate, small-group play at the end of that session, Charlotte had not worked with either Perry or Linda. When Minister Smith and I drew that session to a close, Charlotte left abruptly, without reconnecting with Perry (perhaps because she had to hustle off to choir practice, as she often did on these Tuesday nights). When they all reconnected at this subsequent session, my suspicion is that they had not totally forgotten each other. Rather, they tactfully and politely reintroduced themselves, allowing one another to save face in case they had forgotten each others' names. By acting as though they had not met, they saved each other the embarrassment that one of them may have remembered better than the others,

that one party may feel more invested in the relationship. Much like John and Laurel's encounter over the t-shirt, this reintroduction reveals the choreography of consonance that I detailed in Chapter One as it manifests itself within Bibliodrama.

But at tonight's session, Charlotte and Perry were about to induce an experience of fellowship through play that would fundamentally alter their relationship. They would never again awkwardly reintroduce themselves to one another, performing that choreography of consonance with a pretense of never having met. After I interviewed the group in role, challenging them to speak and explain themselves as Rebecca, as Isaac, as Esau, and as Jacob, I invited them to form small groups and prepare short performances. Linda and Daniel split into one small group, and Perry and Charlotte formed another. Charlotte, sitting in a chair with no arms, rotated on the seat, pointing her body at Perry's, and Perry scooted into the corner of his armchair, looking back at Charlotte. They talked about, planned, and rehearsed their scene for the next ten minutes, during which time they occasionally referenced the text, but spent much more time looking into one another's faces than into the black ink on the white page.

Perry looked nervous for the first few minutes of this time. His feet were crossed at the ankles, fidgeting within his bright white New Balance sneakers. His hands gripped his curled-up paper in his lap. I knew, from a few one-on-one conversations with Perry, that he was never fully comfortable with performance. He came to these sessions out of a love of text study, an enthusiasm for interfaith work, and an excitement over the novelty of the creative form, not for the performance element, which made him anxious. Charlotte, who regularly sings publicly with the Second Baptist choir, had a stiller,

calmer presence, engaging Perry in role, drawing him into an improvisation. She gently leaned forward, looking into his eyes, as she spoke to him in character. He seemed to relax, loosening his grip on his paper. Their bodies and voices became animated, as they riffed off one another, though I couldn't make out what they were saying to one another, amid the noise of three other groups.

I later realized that they had slipped into role as Isaac and Rebecca, imagining themselves as a married couple with a profound dilemma about how to raise their children. They were improvising a scene that contained both emotional intimacy between lovers and an interpretive innovation: They imagined that Rebecca, having already heard the prophecy that their older son would serve the younger, might at some point suggest to her husband that they raise the younger son as if he were the eldest. This possibility is not suggested in the text that Minster Smith and I had prepared for this evening; in fact, Rebecca's name is not even mentioned in this text. When I called out a two-minute warning, they were so engrossed in play that they didn't even seem to hear me.

When it came time to perform this scene, Charlotte sat on a church pew, directly facing the audience members, who were assembled in a semi-circle. Her pink sweater and purple scarf, together with her white fitted hat and bright white nails, projected a quintessential image of femininity, which she was about to subvert, by presenting herself as Isaac. Perry stood off to one side, just out of view of the group. He started the scene by knocking his hand against a coat rack. "Who's there?" Charlotte asked.

"Isaac, my husband," Perry said, hovering in the imaginary doorway, "Do you have a few moments? I need to talk to you."

"Yes, dear wife, sit next to me." Charlotte patted the church pew as she spoke, motioning for Perry to sit. Smiles spread across the faces of the audience as we realized that they were performing a gender-bending performance. We began to laugh. At this point in the Bibliodrama process, we had seen group members play against gender-types, but only when the participants' genders within the group didn't match up with the characters' genders that they needed to portray. Here, for the first time, we saw a group that had decided to subvert (and thus, to draw attention to) gendered expectations. The admiration that we (in the "audience") felt for this unconstrained choice found expression in the bubbles of laughter that we released as we continued watching.

Perry entered slowly as Rebecca, with his hands stuck to his thighs as he tottered towards Charlotte. When he was close enough, he plunked himself down on the pew beside her. "Hi, good to see you, it's been a while," Perry said, and the whole room burst out laughing. I'm not sure if the line "It's been a while" was a mistake, or if Perry was intentionally marking the emotional distance that he imagined might have existed between the two. Either way, it elicited fits of laughter from the onlookers.

"It's good to see you too," Charlotte replied, as she leaned in to give Perry's stomach a gentle rub. "How're the babies doin'?"

"That's what I want to talk to you about. I'm not complaining. Not complaining – but –" and now Perry wrapped his arms around his stomach as he continued, "it's – its' just – this pregnancy is absolutely the worst."

Charlotte scooted closer to him on the pew, with the line, "Oooooh, my dear Rebecca!" and the audience again roared with laughter. We were still enjoying the gender dynamics of this scene.

There was now no space between their bodies. One of her hands rested on his arm, which was clutching his stomach. The other was behind his back, resting either on his upper back or on one of his shoulders. She held him, and she looked directly into his face as they continued.

"I'm wrestling myself, too," Perry continued. "The children are wrestling inside, and it's taken me a couple weeks to decide to tell you what's going on."

"Tell me."

At that moment, almost as if on cue, someone started playing piano at the choir rehearsal in the next room. It was a sweet, slow song in a minor key, providing a perfect underscore for a tonal shift in this scene that was turning from its comic start to a much more tender development.

"I was in such pain a couple weeks ago, I cried out to God, and said 'Stop it, What's going on? Why are you doing this to me?' And . . . He gave me an answer."

"What did He say?"

"Are you sure you want to hear this?"

"Yes," Charlotte said, emphatically, nodding her head decisively, looking at him straight in the eye.

"He said we have – I have – we have – two nations warring inside my womb. And the elder will serve the younger." As he spoke, he directed his gaze away from Charlotte,

almost as though Rebecca couldn't look her husband in the face when speaking the prophecy.

Charlotte pushed away from him abruptly. Then she leaned forward, placing a hand on his forehead. "Are you sick in your mind?"

"You heard me right," he replied, now looking her right in the eye.

"No," Charlotte said, "You know that's totally against the way our traditions work."

"I know. That's why I'm turning to you."

"Are you sure this was God?"

Perry shook his head continually as he responded. "I'm absolutely sure. I prayed on this, I went back, the dream came again – I heard it – and I didn't want to tell you until I was absolutely sure, and between what's happening to me, it all makes sense."

"Rebecca, you know God doesn't make mistakes," Charlotte reprimanded. Now we, the audience, were quiet. Gone was the laughter from a minute prior. And we remained silent for most of the rest of the scene. There was genuine dramatic tension that was growing between these performers, and this disagreement between Isaac and Rebecca was a new idea.

"I didn't say it was a mistake, I just said –"

"But that's not how our traditions work!" Charlotte's tone was gentle, but decisive.

"Look what happened between *your* mother and father," Perry said, referencing a story between Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, that we had already spent several weeks exploring.

"I know! And I've been traumatized ever since!" Charlotte now scooted back, slightly off balance, no longer so self-assured. Her voice became breathy, urgent, agitated. The exchange continued for a while, as Perry (Rebecca) insisted that they needed to anticipate that their younger child would eclipse the eldest. Charlotte continually refused, referencing the story of Isaac's own parents as evidence that it would be a bad idea for human beings to deviate from the structures of their tradition or to try to actively do "God's work." She ended the scene by once again laying her hands on Perry's arm, and looking directly into his eyes. "Rebecca, I want no part in trying to do God's work. Let *God* do God's work. We'll just raise our sons. And we'll raise them in the traditions of our people. The first born will have the birthright. And that's it, that's final."

Perry shrugged, looking away. "We'll think about it. We have a few months yet."

"Think about it? I'm telling you, my decision is final."

Charlotte scooted backwards slightly and they both looked up at the audience, indicating that the scene was over. People clapped and cheered, and then Charlotte and Perry sat down in the semi-circle of chairs facing the stage. They were the third of four groups that were to perform that night, so we moved on to watch the final group, and then we ended with a large-group discussion.

As they constructed and then performed this scene, Perry and Charlotte began to *play* with one another – and with the text. They imagined themselves in both a high-

stakes relationship and a high-stakes disagreement, inviting the dissonant tension inherent in their imagined circumstance. Yet they had not imagined themselves in a zero-sum game or a contest among adversaries: Charlotte and Perry lent themselves to the illusion that they were a loving, committed and communicative couple. It didn't seem to be an entirely equal relationship, as Charlotte's Isaac had the audacity to insist that his decision was final, but he was concerned about his wife's emotional and physical well-being, and they shared a sense of responsibility to one another and to their children. Given that the Second Baptist and Beth Emet communities typically interact through a choreography of consonance, in which their interactions are polite but emotionally-distant, this provisional reality seems particularly striking. If we take Caillois's theorization of play seriously, and imagine that these players may not have been conjuring a "sham reality," but rather, liberating their "true" personalities and rediscovering themselves in alternative life circumstances, then these dramatizations have even greater significance. Beyond the limits of their conventional realities, Perry and Charlotte (and others) could discover themselves to be interdependent, vulnerable, collectively responsible to the same authority, and mutually invested in the same young people. They could do so while still acknowledging that the terms of the relationship were not entirely equal; that certain socially-constructed characteristics (in this case, gender) privileged some over others.

In addition to imagining themselves in a functional, long-term, committed relationship, these players also used play to express their own uncertainty about, and deep investment in, the question of what it means to do God's work. Charlotte and Perry seemed to express confusion about a complex theological question that they care a lot

about. They imagined themselves in a world in which the dominant cultural behavior patterns (under which elder sons are always raised to be dominant) seemed to be at odds with the callings of a higher moral authority (who foretells that their younger son will be dominant). Steeping themselves in the dark ambiguity of how one might act justly in an unjust world, Perry's Rebecca and Charlotte's Isaac expressed varying degrees of confidence that bucking one's cultural norms and traditions might be a good idea. Perry's Rebecca proposed that they should buck these norms, Charlotte's Isaac thought they shouldn't, and both were questioning *when* and *how* people might be able to break from tradition with conviction. For Reform Jews like Perry, who believe that traditional Jewish law has "a vote but not a veto" over their behaviors, this question is always palpable. For Charlotte, whose Christian religion was founded by breaking with the orthodoxies of Jewish tradition, but who was now struggling to learn about, and appreciate, people who subscribe (at least partially) to those very traditions, the question was also highly relevant. In an alternative reality far removed from the choreography of consonance that often constricts these intercultural relationships, Charlotte and Perry shared the vulnerability of exploring their restless, uncertain, emergent ideas about this profound question. In role as Isaac and Rebecca, they liberated themselves to express points of view that they wanted to consider. They allowed this dimension of their "otherness" to fluctuate and to make itself manifest to one another.

The theological points of view that they each expressed in this role-play were also deeply steeped in their respective religious traditions. When Perry (in role as Rebecca) argued that human beings need to take action in order to bring the world in line with

God's divine plan, it seems to me that he was drawing (perhaps consciously, perhaps subconsciously) on generations of Jewish thought that have deemphasized the supernatural power of God and advocated for Jews to engage in ethical action in accordance with reason and religious values (Borowitz 29-52). When Charlotte (in role as Isaac) argued that humans should stand aside and allow God to "do God's work," it seems to me that she was drawing on generations of black Christian theology which triumphantly depicts God as an active agent in the world, intervening in human affairs to liberate the oppressed (Lincoln 182-183). After reading an early draft of this chapter, Perry and Charlotte both agreed with that assessment (Perry, "Personal Interview About Chapters 2-3" n. pag.; Charlotte, "Personal Interview About Chapters 2-3" n. pag.). Fascinatingly, these philosophical differences brought the two characters to an impasse. Through play, Perry and Charlotte were able to voice these divergent perspectives, and to allow them to clash, without feeling any pressure to resolve their dissonance.

As they cultivated their imagined relationship as a committed yet dissonant couple, they also coordinated their bodies. Of course, to some extent, Bibliodrama participants always had to coordinate their bodies, integrating them into one coherent stage picture. This was true even when the bodies remained physically separate, but was even more palpable, and even more significant, when the players experienced extended physical contact, as Perry and Charlotte did on this particular evening. Often, when Evanstonians engage in civic dialogue, their choreography is structured by objects that buffer their interactions. At YWCA-sponsored dialogues about racial justice, participants usually sit at a table; they see each other only from the chest-up, and the table shields the

most vulnerable parts of their bodies. When the Sankofa leadership team met to plan our journey, we too, sat around a similar conference table. When Evanstonians gather for city council meetings, school board meetings, ward meetings, and events in houses of worship, they often sit in rows, and people usually avoid the first row. In this configuration, they also hide their bodies from each others' gazes, shielding their bodies with the backs of the chairs in front of them. The featured speakers, in such configurations, sit behind tables so high that the others often only see them from the shoulders up. When citizens rise to speak at these meetings, they stand behind a podium set up for them. Even at receptions, attendees often circulate through the room holding a plate of food or a glass of wine in front of their torsos, buffering their interactions with an extended limb. In all these ways, Evanstonians hide their bodies and they obstruct their potential interaction. How different it is for Charlotte to reach out to Perry, to place a hand behind his back and another on his belly, while sitting so close that their outer thighs touch.

Cultural theorist Erin Manning proposes that through touch, people experience themselves and others as *incorporeal* – always emergent, unstable, not omniscient, continually adjusting to the phenomena and the others that exist beyond their own skin. "Touch produces an event," she says (12).

> Touch implies a transitive verb, it implies that I *can*, that I *will* reach toward you and allow the texture of your body to make an imprint on mine. . . . To touch is to feel the perceived limits of my contours, my surfaces, my body in relation to yours. (12-13)

Touch, then, can evoke a curious humility, enabling us to rethink who we are, collectively and individually. The task of positioning ourselves relationally – and the possibility that we might touch – foregrounds our bodies (and thus, our selves) as emergent, relational, and processual. Touching one another – hand to forehead, hand to belly, thigh to thigh – Perry and Charlotte were reminded that they were both vulnerable and impenetrable; they experienced, at the tactile and visceral level, their connections, their differences, and their transitoriness. They experienced themselves in relation to one another, not only intellectually and spiritually, but also materially.

It is perhaps the materiality of this touch that demonstrates most clearly what Shulamith Lev-Aladgem calls the "Janus-faced nature of play." When engaged in mimetic play, players always interact simultaneously as themselves and as an imagined other. Isaac and Rebecca touch, but of course, so do Perry and Charlotte; Isaac and Rebecca cannot make contact unless Perry and Charlotte also are willing to touch. Perry and Charlotte would likely not make extended physical contact in most other fora for intercultural encounter in Evanston: not in the YWCA discussions on racial justice, not at a City Council meeting, and not at a dinner at Beth Emet or Second Baptist. But this playful context invites them to imagine themselves as Rebecca and Isaac, and this playful alternative reality has material consequences for Perry and Charlotte. They touch. They *are* touched. And, as Erin Manning clarifies, they cannot touch without "being responsible for doing the touching;" they cannot touch "without being responsive" (9).

Those of us who witnessed Charlotte's and Perry's interaction that night – the tender vulnerability of the contact, the playful subversion of gender roles, the provocative

theological questioning, and the emotional honesty of the fictional, marital relationship – could feel something significant happening. In many ways, they were subverting the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance. By imagining themselves within a high-stakes relationship and a personal crisis, by welcoming the dissonant tension of the characters' dilemma and of their own personal theological questioning, and by opening themselves up to touch and be touched, they experienced a profound reorientation towards one another – a "genuine dialogue," in Buberian terms (22, 25).

That said, Perry and Charlotte never shared a meal together – which, according to Minister Ric Hudgens, is the quintessential act of fellowship. By the standards of the New Testament, perhaps they did not engage in fellowship. But Hudgens also told me, when we spoke on his front porch, that the concept of fellowship is emerging and mutating, based on our evolving culture. "Especially now when people don't eat meals as much – it [the primary setting of the table] doesn't have the same significance maybe as it did [in the first century]," he said (Hudgens, n. pag.). Perhaps today, in a context in which intercultural physical touch (beyond the formalities of a handshake) is so rare, the opportunity to orient our bodies to one another, and to allow ourselves to make physical contact, is more precious than the act of consuming the same food. In this era when dinner can be purchased pre-prepared and hastily laid out on a table, perhaps there is greater investment and intimacy in imagining ourselves into high-stakes relationships through which we can discover the tension that exists between us.

At the end of the evening, after John and I led the group in closing prayers, Charlotte and Perry embraced and congratulated one another. Moreover, when Perry

showed up at the next session he greeted her not with a formal handshake but a playful bow. At the end of that subsequent session, even though they didn't engage in small-group play together, they lingered after the end of the session, puzzling together over a Biblical paradox with an open Bible. I know from subsequent interviews that they never became close friends, but in the midst of their play, they experienced a profound and relationship-shifting openness toward one another (Perry, "Personal Interview About Chapters 2-3" n. pag.; Charlotte, "Personal Interview About Chapters 2-3" n. pag.).

Intercultural Deliberation

The nuance and complexity with which these individuals presented themselves to one another through play is even more striking when interrogated with respect to the duration of the entire Bibliodrama program. Though the group was relatively small, many of its members were actively involved throughout much of the entire eight-month process. Thus, for the better part of a year, these individuals engaged in a regular practice of imagining themselves in high-stakes relationships: they became each others' parents, children, step-parents, step-children, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, half-siblings, lovers, rivals, oppressors, and victims. They even sometimes approached one another as God, and as alternative manifestations of the same individual. When they did so with openness, humility, and responsiveness (as in example above), each interaction enabled them to perform the variability of their relationships: to reorient towards one another,

opening themselves to the otherness of the other, discovering whom they might be to each other.

Over time, then, those who played regularly and generously had the opportunity to thoroughly and actively explore how they might engage across the "color line," beyond the choreographies of segregation and consonance that limit so many interracial relationships in Evanston. They did so through a process that the educator John Dewey, and others after him, called *deliberation*. According to Dewey, people make important decisions, including ethical or moral decisions, by vividly imagining the various possibilities open to them. In their minds, they play out each possible course of action. This "dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing lines of action" is, in Deweyian terminology, *deliberation* (*Human Nature and Conduct* 190, qtd. in Caspary 177). Evanstonians (and other Americans) whose intercultural interactions are limited by the choreographies of segregation and consonance, and who want to consider what possibilities exist outside these choreographies, must actively and vividly imagine alternatives. They do not, according to Dewey, rationally consider all the possible outcomes of their interactions. They *feel* out the possibilities.

According to Education scholar Timothy Lensmire, this doesn't *just* happen in peoples' imaginations. There are many strategies that individuals and groups employ to prod their imaginations into action. For instance, Lensmire emphasizes the potential value of creative writing workshops for stimulating the deliberating imaginations of young people. Through the freedom to write with and for their peers, he argues, students can imagine alternative possibilities for the world they live in. Some of these possibilities

will inevitably "reassert dominant meanings and values" and will thus "undermine our arguments and hopes for more democracy" (114). Students will have a chance to deliberate, to explore the ends of, these possibilities. But they will also present possibilities that "strengthen our hopes for democracy" and that "disrupt our complacency, our easy common sense of what is normal, right" (114-115). Crafting stories together allows us to play, to perform the variability of our lives and our world. It allows us to attend to what might be, and to deliberate together on the value of the alternative realities that we conjure.

When Bibliodrama participants imagined themselves in a variety of high-stakes relationships, exploring what it feels like to be, at turns, nurturing, antagonistic, vulnerable, conspiratorial and collaborative with and towards each other, they too engaged in this kind of Deweyian deliberation. Suspending the choreographies of segregation and consonance, they embraced the tension of fellowship and explored what kinds of relationships they might sustain with one another. They implicitly asked: who might this person be to me, and what kind of relationship might my faith community sustain with this one? Might this person become an intimate friend? A religious study partner? A lover? A mentor? An ally in pursuit of legal/social reform? An important intellectual challenger? Might this community worship with mine? Study scripture with mine? Engage in social action with mine? Productively challenge my very sense of who "my" community *is*? They felt out varying possibilities.

This process of feeling out possibilities sometimes generated complex, even conflicting, feelings about the relationship between the congregations (and their

members). For instance, one of the regular attendees from the synagogue, whose name was Terri, emailed me after one Bibliodrama session (on March 11) to describe the process as "magical" (Terri, "Personal Email to Elliot Leffler" n. pag.). I describe this evening of Bibliodrama with greater detail in Chapter 3; for now, suffice it to say that groups imagined and dramatized the brief reunion of Isaac and Ishmael, after many years apart. Terri was in a small group with John, Charlotte, and Roni, and on this particular night, she experienced a profound sense of connectedness with them, with the larger group that came together that evening, and with the church. She conveyed a sense that the personal and institutional intimacy they were building mattered, that it was leading somewhere important (though she couldn't quite articulate where).

And yet, other nights left her feeling profoundly disconnected, with a sense that the relationship may be inherently problematic. I invited her to conduct a formal interview with me after one night of Bibliodrama that was particularly unsatisfying for her. That night, the text we read focused on the fraught reunion of Jacob and Esau after many years apart. In her small group that night were two church members: one very quiet teenager named David, who never showed up to another session, and John, about whom I have already written. In our interview, Terri told me that when they gathered as a group to prepare their scene, she had suggested that they focus on the story of Esau, whom Terri felt got short shrift in traditional Biblical commentary. But John, she felt, responded dismissively. Feeling shot down, Terri then simply went along with whatever the others wanted, but without much creative or emotional investment. She sustained a consonant interaction. The scene that this group produced struck me as mechanical, rigid – and Terri

described it to me as such, too. John played Jacob, and Terri played Leah (Jacob's wife), but unlike other husband-wife scenes, such as the one that I described between Charlotte and Perry above, in which participants emerged with a sense of connectedness to one another, Terri walked away craving distance and independence from John. "I felt as if a door had been shut," she said ("Personal Interview About Bibliodrama" n. pag.).

Perhaps these group members were actually *not* playing, as I have defined play. Perhaps they were not performing their variability and projecting themselves into role, but rather, simply miming the actions that the text suggested. Bibliodrama scholar Bjorn Krondorfer refers to this type of enactment as "overdistant," and suggests that it indicates resistance or anxiety on the part of the players ("Jacob, Esau, and the Crisis . . ." 176-178). In this case, John may have felt unsettled by, or skeptical of, Terri's initial suggestion, and Terri may have felt shamed by John's response, leading both to engage with restraint and emotional distance. But Terri felt as if she had tried to engage playfully, at least for a moment, and in that moment of making a playful offer, she felt that she discovered an important disconnect between herself and John. She expressed a sense that he read text very differently than she did, and that to an extent, she thought the *communities* read text differently. She defined Beth Emet's approach as more "elastic," and Second Baptist's approach as more "doctrinaire." And yet, she was also careful to qualify that statement, second guessing her own judgment and noting that there were other Second Baptist members whose approach felt less "doctrinaire" ("Personal Interview About Bibliodrama" n. pag.). So she emerged from this interaction with conflicted thoughts and feelings, and the process of deliberation caused her to question

(albeit not to reject) how much she wanted to engage. She did not articulate that question verbally to the group or to her partners, as deliberation happens on an intuitive level, but it did affect subsequent interactions with that partner and with the group, which became more restrained and self-protective.

I suspect that Terri's inconsistent feelings of connectedness are not hers alone. I suspect that others, within both communities, shared her sense that some sessions were more rewarding and others more troubling, some leading to euphoric connectedness and some leading to concerns about the relationship. But Terri may have been the most comfortable communicating with me about this ambivalence with openness, because I've known her longer and more intimately than any other member of the Bibliodrama group (except perhaps for Minister Smith, with whom I became quite close during fieldwork). My relationship with Terri goes back to 2000, when she and I were both on the Religious School faculty at Beth Emet, and used to share lesson plans and occasionally bring our classes together. Hence, when others have questions about the value of the Bibliodrama program or the BE-SBC partnership, they may choose not to share those questions with me. Terri's willingness to do so may indicate more about her comfort with me and with my questions than it does about the particularity of her relationships across the cultural divide.

If Terri's complex feelings of inconsistency and ambivalence were indeed shared by others, then one of the things we might learn from this is that the process of relationship deliberation does not proceed in a unidirectional flow from detachment to unity. Rather, as members feel out the potentiality of their relationships (and indeed, of

their institutional relationship), they haphazardly experience varying degrees of intimacy and alienation. A study of the group's physical interactions over time supports this notion, too**.** I would have expected that as time went on, I would witness more warm hugs, and fewer stiff handshakes, between the Bibliodrama regulars. I would have thought that this would indicate a growing comfort with one another. But having reviewed the video footage from these sessions, no such pattern emerges. This is in part because the subtleties and variations of human interaction do not comply with the two-dimensional continuum between "stiff handshakes" and "warm hugs:" people also greet one another with head nods, smiles, waves, playful bows, and gentle touches. As people became more used to one another, they seemed to feel more comfortable with this variety of engagement. More importantly, however, this variety of engagement offered a range of emotional expression, which did not conform to a unidirectional movement from hesitation to warm embrace. Rather, it moved in and out of tension, as people discovered both connectedness and difference.

Some might view this ambivalence as discouraging, from a community-building or relationship-building perspective. However, I actually find it to be a potential indicator of deliberation and fellowship, even if it didn't always *feel good*. Recall that fellowship is not exclusively about feeling love and enthusiasm for one another, but rather, about drawing near each other, touching the "otherness of the other" without grasping that otherness or collapsing it into sameness (Buber, *Between Man and Man* 25-27). It may not always feel euphoric in order to be valuable.

Moreover, once the Bibliodrama process ended, several members from both communities expressed an expansive, open sense of where these relationships might lead. When I interviewed John at the local Panera six months after the conclusion of the Bibliodrama program, he had just (days earlier) run into one of the Beth Emet participants, and used that chance encounter as evidence that these relationships are still full of potential:

> The relationships that was formed through Bibliodrama – I wouldn't say that they're grandiose relationships, but they leave an opening for *future* relationships. For instance, [when I ran into Aliza], you know, we stopped, we talked. For a couple of minutes. You know? Maybe I might see her again one day; we might sit down and have a cup of coffee. I'm open to any of those relationships. With [Perry]. Or [Laurel] . . . Without question. Those relationships that we started *will* open doors for maybe future relationships. Who knows? This is a real close-knit town, where you run into people all the time. Who knows if I'll run into any of them at any given time? ("Personal Interview in January 2014" n. pag.)

Perry expressed similar sentiments, when I interviewed him at a local restaurant six months after the end of the program. He talked about how the act of playing together generated a unique level of camaraderie and trust, which was still present when Bibliodrama participants encountered each other. Having shared the experience of working together, of being vulnerable together, and of imagining themselves in a variety of relationships, these people continued to gravitate towards each other and to resonate

with one another when they encountered each other around Evanston. “If you trust yourself to act out and play these different parts, I guess you trust each other to be yourselves as well as to be these characters,” he said, echoing Huizinga’s assertion that play-communities tend to outlast the experience of playing together (“Personal Interview in January 2014” n. pag.). For Perry, the process of deliberation created a sense that the relationships themselves were satisfying, and that these people could continue to enrich one another’s lives.

Linda had moved in a different direction than Perry and John; by the time I came back to Evanston, six months after I had left, she had joined a committee that included a few members from each institution who would continue to plan joint events for adults in the congregations. The committee was led jointly by Rabbi London and Reverend Love, and would aim to both create opportunities for fellowship and to catalyze dialogue about race, class, and religion. Through the process of deliberation that had occurred through Bibliodrama, Linda had clearly determined that she wasn’t just open to personal relationships, but wanted to catalyze more overtly-political interaction.

The Limits of Fellowship and Deliberation

The Bibliodrama process nurtured a fellowship that was, at times, quite profound. As the stories in this chapter have indicated, the playful process enabled participants to temporarily suspend the choreographies of segregation and consonance, projecting themselves into high-stakes relationships that enabled them to “open to the otherness of

the other" and to explore the potentialities for relationships among the members of these two religious institutions. And yet, the infrequency and brevity of our sessions inherently limited their potential. Meeting for 75-90 minutes per session, once every two weeks (on average), makes it very difficult to launch a sustainable intervention into the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance.

The relationship between Laurel and Winton illustrates this point. Winton is a church member who occasionally attended Bibliodrama sessions. Laurel, a synagogue member, attended more regularly. They met on April 23, when they introduced themselves to one another in the Second Baptist Fellowship Hall (where we met that evening) with a formal handshake and a polite smile. But later that night, they found themselves in a small group together with Perry. The text of that evening's session depicted Jacob deceiving his father Isaac in order to receive a special blessing that was meant for his brother Esau. In their portrayal of this text, they determined that Laurel and Winton would portray two different facets of Jacob's persona. This involved an intricate staging of the scene, and a close coordination of their bodies, as Laurel and Winton grabbed each other's hands and shoulders, alternatively holding one another back, and leveraging each others' body weight to pull themselves forward. The fifteen minutes during which they planned the scene was full of excited gasps, broad smiles, and creative discoveries. At one point, Perry literally jumped out of his chair, arms flailing in the air, running over to Laurel and Winton with an inspired new idea. Months later, when I interviewed Laurel as a regular Bibliodrama participant, she mentioned how much she

enjoyed interacting with Winton, even though they only collaborated closely on this one occasion.

And yet, when Laurel and Winton next found themselves at a Bibliodrama session together, they didn't even approach one another to say hello. We met that evening in the sanctuary of the church, for a dress rehearsal of a special program we were preparing to present on a Sunday morning. When Winton entered the space, he sat alone in a pew, quietly waiting for me and Minister Smith to call the group together. Laurel entered and sat in the pew directly in front of Winton's. She too sat quietly, waiting. They were about four feet apart. Eight weeks had passed since they had divided the role of Jacob with a creative euphoria, and now, they sat quietly without interacting, without so much as a wave between them. Perhaps Laurel's associations of being in a church pew were formed in white churches where social interaction was discouraged and the value of silence was emphasized. But that surely would not have been an obstacle for Winton, who habitually sat in these very pews, in which congregants talk, sing boisterously, clap, and hug. Perhaps they had forgotten one another's names. Perhaps they remembered one another's names, but each feared that the other might not remember, rendering the encounter awkward. Perhaps they weren't even sure, at that moment, if the person in front of them was the same person with whom they had previously interacted. The time that had passed since their euphoric collaboration, and the spatial shift between the Fellowship Hall (where they had shared the role of Jacob) and the sanctuary (where they now sat silently), had reinstated the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance.

Moreover, now that the process of bi-monthly meetings has ceased entirely, the dominant choreographies of Evanston have reasserted themselves for all of the participants, marking the all-too-real limits of play's potential. For instance, when John and I met, six months after the end of the Bibliodrama program, his chance encounter with Aliza several days prior was exciting and newsworthy. Even for John, who had been one of the most regular participants, running into a Bibliodrama participant from the partner institution, and talking to that person for several minutes, was exceptional. John expressed faith that these relationships could lead anywhere, but seemed to have trouble envisioning and articulating *where* those relationships might lead, beyond sharing a cup of coffee ("Personal Interview in January 2014" n. pag.). Similarly, when I spoke with Perry, he conveyed particularly strong feelings of warmth for Charlotte, yet he had not seen her since the Bibliodrama program had ended. He *had* arranged to have lunch with Minister Smith, but only once. Communication was hard, he told me, noting that he and Minister Smith had trouble making plans both by email and by phone. When they sat face-to-face, they discussed the possibility of extending the Bibliodrama program, but ultimately, that didn't work out. They were both just too busy ("Personal Interview in January 2014" n. pag.). Evanston's dominant choreographies were spinning them in different directions.

Although Linda had joined the committee to continue planning joint adult programs, that committee had still not met when I returned to Evanston, six months after the end of the Bibliodrama program. Coordinating schedules was hard, and unpredictable inclement weather made it even harder. Rabbi London expressed to me a strong

continuing desire to get that committee together, but that desire also seemed tempered by a somber awareness of just how difficult it was proving to do so. These congregants did begin to meet in Spring 2014, but London and Love determined that this first phase of these committee meetings would happen in two subgroups, with a Beth Emet group and Second Baptist group meeting independently. Love explained to me that the difficulty of coordinating peoples' schedules lined up with her growing conviction that they could best prepare their congregants for this work in more homogenous groups. In my own terminology, I understand Love to be expressing that the choreography of consonance is so entrenched that they need careful preparation in order to intentionally nurture a different kind of encounter. Yet by the time I defended this dissertation in September 2014, the two halves of the committee had still not met together, and I began to doubt whether they ever would.

Within each of the two communities, Bibliodrama participants *did* continue to encounter each other. Perry emphasized to me that these relationships were much richer than they had been prior to Bibliodrama. For instance, he and Terri had long been a part of a Friday-morning Torah study group at Beth Emet. In that context, they sit around a table and engage in traditional Jewish text study, interrogating the text with a critical eye and an assortment of rabbinic commentaries. But, Perry said, while he valued this Torah study group, it had never nurtured much intimacy among the participants. Now, however, when Terri and Perry encounter one another, they feel close. "We have a different way of greeting each other, listening to each other, sharing," Perry said. Similarly, he said, he had recently run into Linda at a party. They were drawn towards one another, and

relished a half hour conversation. That conversation "had nothing to do with Bibliodrama, but it never would have occurred *before* Bibliodrama" ("Personal Interview in January 2014" n. pag.). The process of play – of lending themselves to an alternative reality, in which they have more intimate relationships with one another – had enabled them to experience a sense of fellowship that was somewhat sustainable, *within* the context of their own religious community. But the choreographies that structure Perry's life in Evanston bring him together with Terri and Linda with much greater frequency, and much greater ease, than they bring him together with Charlotte or Minister Smith.

For Perry, this doesn't devalue the fellowship they engaged in together. Short encounters "can last with you your whole life," he told me. And yet, he said, in his experience, the profoundness of short encounters only increases if the relationship lasts longer. "It's the difference between speed dating and a 75-year marriage. They can both be wonderful experiences and resonate with a person . . . and it's possible to have one perfect date with someone that you don't have a relationship with." And yet, he said, if that isolated date *could* have a longer life, it would be more impactful for the people involved. Similarly, he told me, he wishes that he could continue to engage with the Second Baptist membership ("Personal Interview in January 2014" n. pag.). While the fellowship was valuable, the process of deliberation – the active, imaginative exploration of where these relationships might lead – felt truncated.

Conclusion

The potential to nurture fellowship through play can be quite profound, but the limits of play to nurture fellowship and deliberation in intercultural contexts are also real and sobering. As the central story of this chapter demonstrates, the processes of play encourage a looseness, a performance of variability, that allow players to cultivate a dissonant tension that defies the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance. As they break these choreographic taboos, they expose and explore their own and one another's values, priorities, questions, and concerns. They open to the otherness of the other. Simultaneously, they share laughter, and they coordinate their bodies, sometimes reaching out towards each other in extended physical contact. Doing so, they expose their sense of vulnerability, and they align with each other as relational beings. They generate solidarity and camaraderie alongside an awareness of difference.

However, as Huizinga and Caillois both argued, play is bounded by time. While some play theorists, including Schechner, have argued otherwise, the evidence from Bibliodrama supports the classic interpretation that at any moment, the rules and logics of the "real world" can reassert themselves (Huizinga 14). This suspension of play limits the potential of play-based fellowship to emerge into an extended deliberation on how players might remain connected. In a place like Evanston, the end of play marks the resumption of the choreographies of segregation and consonance.

This is not to argue that the pursuit of fellowship is without value. As Perry told me, short encounters can profoundly affect people for their whole lives. Martin Buber seems to agree with this point: Buber argued that I-Thou relationships are always fleeting, and that humans inevitably live much more of their lives in the "it-world" than

they do in the "thou-world." This doesn't render genuine dialogue inconsequential: in fact, the rarity of these profound connections heightens its value. As the Buber scholar Maurice Friedman suggested, the ethical ramifications of this genuine dialogue may not be contingent on its longevity, but rather, on the ability of the parties to hear, remember, and act in accordance with "the unreduced claim" that partners in dialogue make on each other (123).

Similarly, the African American, Christian theologian Howard Thurman argued that fellowship between people of different socio-economic classes is very rare. It occurs when extraordinary circumstances render "all class and race distinctions impertinent" (105). Yet for Thurman, such fellowship can be extended through "painstaking discipline" (106). The inherently-fleeting nature of Buberian I-Thou dialogue can, at least according to Thurman, be developed into a protracted practice of engaging in fellowship. However, it is an uphill battle. To live a life of fellowship, then, may mean to work in dogged, persistent pursuit of such dialogue, and not to accept the "natural" end of deliberation that coincides with the "inevitable" end of play.

Others in Evanston – indeed, even in these two religious communities – would argue that fellowship is an inappropriate barometer for this interfaith partnership. As I mentioned at the introduction of this chapter, these individuals insist that fellowship without a political agenda is only a distraction from the potentially-important work that the two communities might do together. It is through this lens that I re-interrogate the Bibliodrama program in Chapter 3.

Chapter Three: Playfully Inducing Critical Dialogue

Introducing Critical Dialogue

In the introduction to this dissertation, I described the racial inequities that are deeply entrenched within the historical evolution of Evanston (and the broader United States). The legacies of slavery and Jim (and James) Crow have been sustained through an imbalanced legal and economic system that has stubbornly preserved privilege within an expanding "white" racial group. In Chapter One, I further argued that Evanston (like many other "progressive" American communities) suffers from choreographies of segregation and consonance – behavioral patterns that render intercultural encounters rare, brief, polite, and superficial. These choreographies make it more difficult for well-intentioned, progressive Evanstonians to jointly address these inequities. In Chapter 2, however, I began to investigate to what extent opportunities for play might intervene in the choreographies of segregation and (especially) consonance. Focusing on the Bibliodrama program that I co-facilitated with Minister Brian Smith of Second Baptist Church, I suggested that the choreography of consonance was still present within these sessions, and limited what we could accomplish therein; nonetheless, I argued, play – particularly the kind of mimetic play that we catalyzed through Bibliodrama – expanded opportunities for *fellowship*, a concept that I defined based on several theologians in addition to several Evanstonians. Chapter 3 continues this investigation of mimetic play,

investigating toward what extent – and with what limitations – play might invite participants into a *critical dialogue*.

To articulate the distinction between fellowship and critical dialogue, and to explain the importance of critical dialogue, I begin this chapter by sharing some of what I learned from local informants through a series of interviews that I conducted in June 2013, towards the end of my fieldwork. By so doing, I illuminate the distinctions between these two approaches not through my own words, nor through the words of published theorists, but through the descriptions of locals who were (and still are) wrestling with how they might best transform their society. I then further explicate what I mean by "critical dialogue" through the lens of some theorists, and I articulate why some of the existing literature in applied theatre has led me to believe that mimetic play might be able to catalyze such dialogue. At that point, I turn my attention back to my ethnographic data from the Bibliodrama program. I spend the remainder of the chapter investigating several sessions of Bibliodrama, which help me to illustrate both the potential and the limitation for catalyzing critical dialogue through play.

As I interviewed the clergy and the Sankofa educators from both Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church in June 2013, I often asked, simply, "What is this relationship *about*? And what *could* it be about, at its best?" I asked these questions at a time when the enthusiasm for this relationship was high in both communities: they had just (about two months earlier) conducted an ambitious trip to the American south with 38 teenagers, which was considered to be quite successful, and was gathering a lot of local attention. (I will return to this "Sankofa" trip in considerable detail in Chapter 4.)

Minister Smith and I were also on the verge of completing our Bibliodrama program, which was about to climax with a public presentation at Second Baptist Church in the midst of a Sunday service. It was a moment when people were dreaming big about the possibilities for the partnership, and most of their answers reflected this optimism. The people I interviewed also saw me as highly invested in the partnership, and since I believe they were appreciative of my time and effort, their answers may reflect an inflated sense of the possibilities inherent in the institutional relationship. However, what interests me most about the responses I received is not their ambitious scope, but the multiplicity of views they contain. When people who were dreaming big about this relationship sat down with someone they saw as invested in it, they defined their vision for it in divergent ways. I turn to these interviews now with an interest in this divergence, and with a sense that while the optimism for the partnership may wax and wane, the plurality of ways in which it is understood persists.

As I wrote in Chapter 2, some of the stakeholders emphasized the importance of fellowship. Deacon Jerane Ransom of Second Baptist Church, the deacon in charge of the church's youth education program, and Avi Stein, who did similar work at Beth Emet, both stressed this. Stein said that the partnership should be about "creating authentic relationships between people of different races" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). Ransom spoke about the value of nurturing personal relationships among congregants who "don't look alike" and "represent different statuses in this world," so that they come to see one another as "each others' sisters and brothers" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). When I asked them whether or not a commitment to politics and activism was important, they

both suggested that activism was a likely outcome of such relationships. "Those things to me are by-products of relationships between congregations that actually care about what happen to each other," Ransom said, distinguishing the "by-product" of activism from the "end-product" of fellowship ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). Stein emphasized the importance of activism emerging "organically" from relationships, and emphasized that it would be inappropriate for him (or other staff members) to determine the political goals of the activism that might emerge ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). Chapter 2 was devoted to this perspective, and it considered how, and to what extent, processes of play might advance the goal of fellowship between the two communities.

But Stein and Ransom sit together on one end of a spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum sits Taurean Webb, one of the twelve volunteer ministers at Second Baptist, who raised concern about interracial coalitions that emphasize the immediate goal of "coalition-building" over the ultimate goals that coalitions might accomplish in partnership. Webb, who is also a PhD student in African American studies at Northwestern University, developed this idea by hearkening back to an idealized political moment in US history:

> In the heavily politicized moment of the mid-20th century – the 1950s, 1960s, in the midst of all these liberation struggles – coalition-building was never the *end*. It was not coalition-building just for the sake of building coalitions. It wasn't coalition-building for the sake of saying, "We're coming together – look at us!" I think that moment has shifted a bit over the ensuing decades. Now . . . the instance of [coalitions] coming

> together is what we're celebrating . . . This is what [the discourse of] diversity does; this is what the language of multiculturalism does; this is what the language of tolerance does. Coming together is for the sake of coming together. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

In marking this distinction and disparaging the phenomenon of "coming together for the sake of coming together," Webb seemed to critique the emphasis on fellowship that others in the partnership (like Stein and Ransom) promote. However, Webb went on to say that he didn't know exactly what that end should be in the context of the relationship between Second Baptist and Beth Emet. He spoke generally about the importance of "learning the truths of the different faith traditions," and he suggested that these truths would have political ramifications, adding that "the theological is necessarily already political" when God is understood to care about peoples' suffering and "ground conditions." But he acknowledged that he didn't know exactly what ends the partnership should be working towards. It seemed as though, for Webb, the definition of this goal was an important early step that these communities had perhaps skipped ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

Reverend Velda Love, who led the team of Sankofa educators from the church, echoed these political concerns as she voiced a bold, sweeping vision. The work of the partnership, for Love, should be to "change the landscape of Evanston." This involves ensuring equal distribution of resources (both financial capital and cultural capital), dismantling racism, and creating equality in the schools and other public institutions. Doing so may require the kind of relationships that Stein and Ransom spoke about, but

those relationships in themselves are not the goal, in Love's perspective; they are the means to accomplish the structural changes on which she sets her sights ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

When I asked Rabbi Andrea London what the partnership was about, she articulated two key goals of the relationship. In doing so, she straddled the gap that seems to stretch between Love's and Webb's perspective, on the one hand, and Ransom's and Stein's perspectives, on the other. One goal, for London, was for congregants of the two communities to develop "real relationships, where we understand our similarities and differences as Christians and Jews, and black and white [people] . . . in order for us to grow in our own faith and understanding of the world." In this respect, she echoed the primary emphasis of Stein and Ransom. But a second, equally important, goal was "to create a better and stronger community within Evanston." When I asked her what it meant to create such a community, she spoke about the importance of changing the status quo in which "the life of a black child is [considered] not as important as the life of a white child" and in which the public schools serve white students far better than black students. As we got deeper into that conversation, she spoke about the importance of the two communities advocating for one another, but doing so from a place of affective connection, rather than simply of duty ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). In doing so, she expressly linked the value of fellowship to the process of making progressive, political change. This is subtly but substantially different from Ransom and Stein, who said that political change would likely emerge organically from relationship-building.

Similarly, Second Baptist's Pastor of Administration and Pastoral Care, Rev. Karen Mosby, spoke of multiple potential positive outcomes for the relationship. One would be for the congregants of each faith community to gain enough exposure to the theology of the other community to contextualize and productively challenge their own beliefs. If the institutional relationship could mature to facilitate more exposure to one another's modes of worship, study, and religious thought, it could present an opportunity for congregants to "think critically about their [own] theology – not necessarily towards the goal of changing it, but [to] think critically about it, so whatever it is you *say* you believe, you can stand on it when it starts being challenged." This first goal underscores the importance of fellowship for Mosby, and the potential value of turning towards the *otherness* of the other (which I discussed at greater length in Chapter 2). But also, for Mosby, the relationship presents an opportunity to work towards "social and political transformation" of Evanston, especially "issues around race and issues around injustice." She wasn't sure, however, which *particular* agendas the two communities might be willing and eager to jointly support. She first suggested that they might come together around some structural reforms at the high school, but then she pulled back, suggesting that might be too "dicey." Thinking out loud, she then said, "there's probably something around hunger that we could work together on." Her flexibility suggested that there was a lot of political and social work to do in the community, and that SBC and BE could ultimately figure out which agendas to pursue through dialogue and fellowship. "If Beth Emet and Second Baptist could wade through and navigate some stuff to get to a place where we could stand together around a few issues, that would be a powerful witness to

this whole community . . . it's gonna take a lot of work, though, and some real honesty around some hard issues" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). It was important to her that they work together towards greater justice and equity, but it didn't seem to matter to her which specific agendas they pursued together; it was more important to her that they would jointly determine those agendas in dialogue.

For London and Mosby, and especially for Love and Webb, the adoption of fellowship as a goal seems insufficient. Fellowship, in their minds, is the means to an end, and that end involves changing the political, material, and institutional realities of Evanston. It is important to note that this emphasis on structural change is neither a *church concern* nor a *synagogue concern*; rather, it s a concern that was articulated by some of the key stakeholders from each institution. It is also, I should note, a concern that was qualified by other stakeholders within each institution. I do not think this suggests that Stein and Ransom don't care about structural change, nor that Love and Webb don't care about relationship-building. I also don't think that peoples' priorities are static. Rather, I think that different people felt that it was important to emphasize particular priorities over others on the particular days that I interviewed them, and that to some extent, these may be indicative of those people's ongoing priorities. More importantly, however, I think that the coexistence of two distinct rationalizations for the relationship is significant. As Webb articulated most clearly, there is some tension between these rationalizations, yet as London and Mosby articulated, they may be compatible with one another.

This chapter foregrounds the urgency for structural and political change that was voiced by Webb and Love (and by London and Mosby, though perhaps to a slightly lesser extent). I consider Martin Buber's approach to "genuine dialogue," which undergirded much of Chapter 2, to be ill-suited for the purpose of directly and intently pursuing this systemic change. Buber proposes that nobody can anticipate what might emerge from a genuine dialogue, and that trying to predetermine an outcome actually forecloses the radical potential of that dialogue. Dialogue as a deliberate precursor to social-political activism demands not a Buberian dialogue, but a *critical dialogue*. The word "critical," in this context, does not refer to criticism or judgment, but rather, to the field of *critical pedagogy* (which has also been called *liberatory pedagogy*), and to the broader enterprise of critical theory. In these contexts, a critical approach is not one that finds fault with the parties involved, but one that interrogates power relationships. Critical pedagogy is an approach to education in which pedagogues raise the consciousness of their students about the unequal power relationships through which they live. Critical theory is an effort to understand the world with an attention to people's complex power relationships. Critical dialogue, as I am defining it, is *an encounter among multiple parties in which they jointly probe their evolving society(ies), and their places within that(those) society(ies), from multiple positions* – an undertaking which I believe would raise awareness about unequal power relationships in cases when and where those inequalities are present.

This definition of critical dialogue is my own, but it owes a debt to several influential scholars of critical pedagogy, who all understand tension and dissonance to be

a basic part of efficacious dialogue. Paolo Freire, the dominant voice in the field of Critical Pedagogy, insists that efforts to promote justice within a society must be rooted in an active, reflexive, explicit dialogue about the power structures of that society. Those who facilitate this dialogue must accept that it can cause tension and even pain, as participants reflect upon and articulate their own positions of complicity within corrupt and often invisible structures of oppression. For Freire, the explicit naming of oppression was an integral part of ultimately transforming that oppression. Elizabeth Ellsworth, writing almost twenty years after the publication of Freire's seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, emphasizes the desirability for multiple radically different perspectives within this dialogue. In doing so, she appeals to Audre Lorde: "Difference must be not merely tolerated," Lorde writes, "but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (Lorde 112, qtd. in Ellsworth 319).

This emphasis on explicit dialogue among radically different perspectives is echoed in the literature on Peacebuilding and Intercultural Dialogue, another field that informs my definition of critical dialogue. A number of social psychologists, writing in the 1970s and 1980s, pushed against the dominant idea of their time, formulated by Gordon Allport in the 1950s, that prejudice is based on "faulty and inflexible generalization(s)" about "outgroups," and that shared interpersonal experiences would help individuals understand that they were "pretty much the same as" each other (9, 271). These late 20th century voices, including Henri Tajfel, Muzafer Sherif, Rupert Brown, Miles Hewstone, and John Turner, suggested that conflict was based on unequal distribution of resources and processes of social identity formation that linked one's sense

of individual self-worth to one's pride in the groups to which one belongs. As these ideas about conflict gained traction, many theorists and dialogue facilitators began to operate under the assumption that assertions of sameness can mask or defer an active investigation of the inequalities within communities, and they can blunt peoples' capacities to recognize, articulate, and fight for needs that may be culturally-specific. At its most problematic, such dialogue "becomes a substitute for action," it "assuages the consciences of members of the oppressor group," and it serves as an obstacle to "real change" (Abu-Nimer 152, and Rabinowitz 78).[viii] Instead of merely promoting contact and friendship, many conflict mediators and dialogue facilitators developed an approach to dialogue facilitation known as "inter-group dialogue," in which participants meet each other not as 'individuals qua individuals', but rather, as 'individuals qua group members' (Brown and Turner 60, qtd. in Hewstone and Brown 34). In these contexts, groups are encouraged to have highly-political discussions about the kinds of changes they desire in their shared society(ies).

Critical dialogue and fellowship both involve dissonance, but in different ways and to a different degree. Fellowship, as outlined in Chapter 2, necessitates a fundamental reorientation of the self to the "otherness of the other," without ever collapsing that otherness into sameness. Even moments of agreement, for people in fellowship, must be accepted as "a mixing of understanding and misunderstanding, always holding the tension between the two partners in relationship" (Friedman 126). Those in fellowship allow their partners to make a claim on them, and fellowship necessitates "hearing the unreduced claim of each hour in its crudeness and disharmony and answering it out of the

depths of one's being" (Friedman 123). But where fellowship necessitates the dissonance of turning toward one another, critical dialogue necessitates the dissonance of turning toward the cruelty and injustice of the world beyond the relationship, and pivoting back and forth between the dissonance of the relationship and the injustice of the world. The explicit naming of that injustice – or rather, the effort to collectively name the injustice – can sometimes bring the differences between the parties into sharp relief, increasing the dissonance between the parties and the challenge of being in relationship. Whereas fellowship can be nonverbal and nonlingual, and can exist entirely through an affective and kinesthetic register, critical dialogue is inherently and essentially based in language, which allows the parties to evoke or articulate the conditions and the contradictions of the wider world in which they live. The centrality of language is thus a key element of both the power and pain of critical dialogue. [ix]

The inherent dissonance means that the practice of critical dialogue, much like the practice of fellowship, necessitates transgressing the dominant choreographies of Evanston. The Beth Emet and Second Baptist communities cannot hope to engage in critical dialogue if they are distant from one another, nor if they are working to sustain a "cheery and careful" consonance. Participants in critical dialogue must be willing to acknowledge and address conflicting perspectives and priorities, and to take stock of painful realities and iniquities in which they may be implicated. Can processes based in play, such as Bibliodrama, help parties to embrace the dissonance of such a dialogue? This question animates the current chapter.

Some of the existing literature in applied theatre suggests that they might. Shulamith Lev-Aladgem has argued that participants in participatory theatre programs can sometimes introduce concerns that they fear may be taboo by doing so in role. Under the cover of the Janus-faced nature of play, in which participants are simultaneously acting *as themselves* and *as a character* – they can express concerns through their characters that also have a real-world corollary. For example, Lev-Aladgem writes about an aging woman participating in a theatre project at a day-care center for the elderly. In role as a very old character, one of Lev-Aladgem's subjects articulates a sense that becoming old has rendered her valueless. Under ordinary circumstances, such a statement would be read by the staff as ungrateful and uncooperative, and voicing it could cause the speaker to be shunned. But the context of play creates a "protective frame" within which such dissonant concerns become speakable (38).

Sonja Kuftinec goes a step further than Lev-Aladgem, suggesting that role-play not only allows controversial ideas to be expressed, but also gives participants a chance to arrive at *new* controversial ideas based on epiphanies that they experience in-role (and then articulate those new ideas). Kuftinec, writing about a participatory theatre program that engages audiences throughout Israel and Palestine, recounts the story of an Israeli boy who stepped into role as a pregnant Palestinian woman at a checkpoint. Before the exercise, the student had empathized with the woman's plight but had not challenged the power relationship that left her at the mercy of Israeli soldiers whose only concern was with Israeli security. Playing the role "shifted the student's consciousness," and he emerged from the experience articulating a powerful challenge to the status quo. "On

stage I realized that they should let her through. She suffers. They have to let her pass," Kuftinec recounts the student saying after the role-play ended. Moreover, some participants emerged with a new understanding of the broader systemic circumstances under which the solider and the pregnant woman must operate. "It's a no-win situation," one participant said about the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, following the exercise. With this comment, she recognized and expressed the systemic shifts that would need to take place in order for individuals to act ethically. The opportunity to step into role had both enabled these students to change their minds and emboldened them to express their new opinions (131-132).

My observations in Bibliodrama corroborate the theory that play creates a protective frame for expressing the dissonance of contrasting opinions, and suggests that doing so may clear a path towards critical dialogue – but it also suggests that the group is often unable to walk very far down that path. Participants can introduce uncomfortable tension by doing so in role, under the cover of the Janus-faced nature of play. But the Janus-faced nature of play doesn't allow for enough traction for follow-up discussion in which a group can fully tease apart and think through these ideas. The following encounter, which happened in February, illustrates this complex phenomenon.

Sustaining Tension in Abraham's House

Linda and John, two regular Bibliodrama participants whom I introduced briefly in Chapter 2, stand at the center of this encounter. Linda is an Ashkenazi Jewish woman

in her sixties; she has high energy, a slight frame, and a pixie haircut. When she began coming to Bibliodrama, she had recently retired from her career as a schoolteacher, which began on the south side of Chicago, where she had taught at two schools in poor, black neighborhoods with the passion of a young, progressive teacher in pursuit of a more equal society. Yet Linda and her husband, who worked as an allergist, ultimately moved to the suburbs, where property was more affordable, and they could purchase a home. She stopped working, temporarily, when they had two small children, and ultimately went back to work part-time at a private Jewish day school in a nearby suburb. Part-time work led to full-time work, and she ultimately taught 28 years of social studies classes to middle school students there with a self-acknowledged left-wing agenda. There are many who would say that Linda is the quintessential Evanstonian: she's a parent and a professional, white and well-off, progressive and proud of it. As a member of Beth Emet, she has also affiliated herself with a broadly-respected local religious institution.

John, who played opposite Linda on this particular night, lived in a very different Evanston – an Evanston that people overlook when they call Linda the *quintessential* Evanstonian. John is black and working class, and was living temporarily in a room at the YMCA. Like most other working-class black Evanstonians, John's family did not come to the suburbs from Chicago, hunting for affordable real estate; rather, they came directly from the southern towns during the Great Migration. His grandmother had moved from Watertown, TN to Lake Forest, IL, a more remote suburb, where she had worked as a domestic servant for rich white people before moving south to Evanston. The Chicago suburbs, for John's family, never promised upward economic mobility as they did for

white (and whited) people; they promised an escape from the overt oppression of sharecropping and lynching. John's financial and housing situation reflected this reality. John, similar in age to Linda, did not seem to be close to retirement. He had worked as a builder for most of his life, and was likely to continue working for the foreseeable future. John's business had shrunk in the recent recession, a fate he discussed with me matter-of-factly, with a shrug of his broad shoulders and a gentle lift of his eyebrows. Unlike Linda, John didn't talk much about politics, at least not in an obvious way. John was generally more comfortable talking about God than politics: as a deacon at the church and an ordained Reverend, John's concept of justice hinged more on divine power than on legislative power.

While I am most interested in the relationship between John and Linda, and the dialogue that they sustain, there is also a third Bibliodrama participant who participated in the encounter. Her name is Aliza, and when the encounter took place, she was an 18 year-old high school senior at Evanston's public high school. She came from a middle-class home in South Evanston, a neighborhood that was predominantly, but not exclusively, white. When Aliza walked into our multipurpose room at the church that night, she waved subtly to the other teens but gravitated toward the adults, where she often seemed more comfortable. She removed her jacket and sat, with perfect posture, while she smiled and made polite small-talk for a minute before directing her undivided attention toward the text that I handed to her on her way in. Aliza often carried herself with this kind of managerial formality, and it distinguished her from other teens. She chose her commitments carefully and took them seriously, and her involvement with the

synagogue was among those commitments. A few years prior, she had been very engaged in the synagogue youth group, but ultimately distanced herself from those activities, feeling alienated by the fact that her peers seemed to not take it very seriously. Now that she was at a religious activity with others who shared her level of commitment, she always arrived at Bibliodrama ready to engage intentionally with the text and with the other participants.

On this particular night, Minister Smith and I had planned to continue playing within the narrative that we had begun to explore at the preceding session: the narrative of Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their Egyptian slave Hagar. In the selection of text that Smith and I distributed to participants, Sarah, infertile yet intent to raise children, instructs Abraham to consort with Hagar, the slave, and bear children through *her*. Hagar thus gives birth to Ishmael, Abraham's oldest son. But years later, Sarah miraculously conceives. When Sarah sees the older child, Ishmael, the son of Hagar the slave, acting in a way she doesn't like with her own son, she instructs Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael. And, after consulting with God, Abraham complies. Like all of the narratives that Minister Smith and I brought to the Bibliodrama group, we understood this story as a reflection of the complexities of partnership. Abraham sustains partnerships of different kinds with Hagar, Sarah, and God, some of which evolve to be at odds with others. Smith and I hoped that by challenging the group to fully imagine, and embody, the contours of these relationships, we could encourage the participants to think about the complex relationships in their own lives – both within and across their communities.

When Smith and I encouraged them to do so, John, Linda, and Aliza pulled their chairs together in a small circle, in order to develop a scene together. With barely any discussion, they slipped into role and began improvising. John spoke first, clearly marking himself as Abraham. "Hagar, listen," he said, leaning back in his chair, with his legs crossed, looking at Linda with a playful glimmer in his eye. "My wife, Sarah, she asked me to – you know you're really her handmaiden. Not mine. Even though we had a child together. And for whatever reason, she can't get along with you now, and apparently, Ishmael can't get along with Isaac. You're making my household very uneasy." His body was relaxed as he spoke, with his gaze gently moving back and forth between the text, which he held in his lap, and Linda's face, a few feet away.

When Linda sensed an opportunity to respond, she pointed her index finger at his face and then her body lurched forward. Her voice rang with the tones of accusation: "I don't believe you. You're doing this because Sarah doesn't want me around anymore. How dare you."

Immediately, they staked out antagonistic stances toward one another, setting up a zero-sum game. They welcomed the potential dissonance, at least within the realm of play.

Before long, Linda began hurling accusations at John, her body pulsing back and forth, and Aliza assumed the role of Hagar alongside Linda, sharing the part. John leaned back in his chair, facing Linda, nodding as he listened to her words. "It's not that I don't care," John said, softly and gently, his head shaking slightly. "It's just that God is telling me what to do."

"How can you tell what God is telling you to do?" Aliza challenged, her body taut, her mind engaged, her jaw chomping on a piece of gum.

John met Aliza's gaze. "You have to trust God, like I trust God."

Linda, as Hagar, suddenly leaned forward and spoke loudly and quickly: "You fought with God over your – and I know it's not in here but – you fought with God over your nephew. With Lot! But you're not willing to fight with God for us!" She was referencing another Biblical story here, in which Abraham pleads with God to spare the city in which his nephew resides. We had not read this story a group, but both other group members appeared to know it.

Aliza expanded on Linda's accusation, adding "or for your son!"

"That's true," John acknowledged, with his soft, deep voice. "I did fight with God about my nephew Lot. I've fought with God over many things." He spoke more slowly than the two women, allowing his vowels to breathe as diphthongs, and his back still rested comfortably in his chair, but he now leaned forward with his head and shoulders, and he gestured emphatically with his one open hand as he spoke. "However, I've come to know that every time God tells me to do something – when I do it, I'm blessed. When I don't do it, I'm not blessed." Linda attempted to interject, but John kept speaking. Linda waited quietly, her arms folded across her chest, her head shaking cynically, as John continued: "He's telling me to allow you to see his blessing as well. Trust me when I tell you: you can trust in God."

Linda finally broke in, speaking over John as he told her that she could trust in God: "Well, we've been the slave," she said, pointing to herself, leaning forward, and

nodding. “We haven’t exactly had the best deal. And now you’re turning us out to die. And the baby’s gonna die. You may trust, but I don’t feel that I can trust. I’m scared. And I’m angry that you would do this.” Her words may have suggested self-pity, but her feisty tone did not. She was flush with energy and passion. She tightened her right hand into a claw, and she repeatedly thrust that claw into her lap as she spoke.

John looked at her, his body still, both arms resting on the arm rests. “I don’t know what to tell you, Hagar.”

There was a moment of silence. They sat for a moment, eyes locked.

As they enacted this scene, I believe they did more than simply dramatize an argument. They also expressed and probed a difference of how they look at the world, particularly how they look at injustice. Linda was passionately enacting social-political activism. As a progressive Baby Boomer, she has experienced the ways that protest can catalyze change. Social activism defined her generation: in her childhood and teenage years, she learned about the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the lunch counter protests; she was in her early twenties during the famous march from Selma to Montgomery, which propelled the passage of the Voting Rights Act; and she was in her late twenties when the anti-Vietnam protests turned the tide of US foreign policy. Moreover, she was raised by a communist for whom “activism was a religion,” and who drilled into her the importance of standing up for those with less power. For Linda, the importance and the efficacy of social activism is unquestionable; it borders on sacred. That conviction comes from her life experience and not from religious teaching, but it is reinforced by the strands of Jewish theology that deemphasize a traditional, supernatural understanding of God and

stress the need for humans to engage in social action (Borowitz 29-52). In role as Hagar, she confronted the patriarchy with a defiant retort to his decree. Lauren Berlant might say that she has an optimistic attachment to activism and social protest; she is drawn to the scene in which social protest "hovers in its potentialities" (24). This attachment motivated not only her choices in the scene, but also, I believe, her decision to be a part of this group. The potentialities of interracial coalitions have a cherished place in her life; they draw her in.

Moreover, Linda's Hagar called herself a "slave," which is only one of many words that Biblical translations use to describe Hagar's position, including handmaiden and concubine. In this space, she knew, the word "slave" rang with the associations of 250 years of New World slavery. Implicitly, she leveraged the weight of that word to underscore the grave injustice of the power imbalance being dramatized. Like an activist in a protest march, she drew parallels between the injustice that her character was currently facing and the injustices that our society has agreed are reprehensible. She also nudged the group towards a potential discussion of racial injustice. If we proved able to talk about slavery, perhaps we would be able talk about racial injustice and the need for activists in our own day.

As I have written in the introduction, one way to theorize play is through Richard Schechner's tripartite formulation of "me," "not-me," and "not-not-me." Linda (the "me") is physically present in the room, yet she is enacting a character (Hagar, "not-me") who is very different than she is. Hagar is powerless and penniless, a circumstance that is very far from Linda's material reality. However, Linda's Hagar is also "not-not-me," in

the sense that she embodies Linda's own passionate embrace of social protest and speaking truth to power. The opportunity to play with John enables Linda's not-not-me to engage John's not-not-me in ways that the two might not be eager or able to do in the "real world."

John, in role as Abraham, was reluctant to take up the discourses or choreographies of social activism. In part, this was because the character he embodied, Abraham, represented the entrenched patriarchy at whose hands the subaltern woman suffered. To some extent, even if John wanted to champion the same kind of activism that Linda did, the scene couldn't have made sense if he had done so. But even later in the evening, once they de-roled, John remained circumspect about the issues that Linda raised. John, like many African American theologians who have shaped his thought, believes in a supernatural God who is working towards justice in His own, unknowable timeline, and humans have to carefully calibrate their actions with His (Lincoln 182-183). John suggested that Hagar's protest was premature, because she made it without consulting with God. He said that these characters "got themselves into this mess" because they decided *on their own* that Abraham should bear children with Hagar; they did so without slowly, carefully considering how *God* wanted them to produce children. For John, the rush to social protest was too hastily-considered, just like the characters' rush to produce children. Social protest may sweep everyone up in passion for their cause and hope for change, but it would be more efficacious, according to John, to slow down and consider the practical limits of what a human individual can accomplish when

fighting against the odds. In role as Abraham, he counseled Linda's Hagar not to pursue justice, but to seek in God the strength to survive.

Notably, John did not echo Linda's use of the word "slave." John avoided making explicit parallels between the power structures of the U.S. and the power structures of Hagar and Abraham's world; not all oppression is the same, and he seemed to suggest that the inflamed discourse of slavery is not helpful here. His advice was not to protest injustice, nor to fight it, but to find strength within it.

To Linda, and admittedly, to me, this felt like a conservative response. But Patricia Hill Collins challenges this judgment, reminding her readers that "public, official, visible political activity" is only one form of resistance to oppression. Moreover, according to Collins, the value that I place on this form of resistance, to the exclusion of more subtle forms, is classically characteristic of white men (140). In a chapter entitled "Rethinking Black Women's Activism" within her book *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins argues that there are two dimensions of the black women's activist tradition – dimensions which may initially seem contradictory, but which are actually interdependent. The first is the struggle for survival; the second is the struggle for institutional transformation (141-142). Faced with oppression, resistance must take different forms at different times: direct protest is sometimes useful, but so is the cultivation of separate spheres in which oppressed people can find safety and preserve self-respect. When he advised Hagar to find strength in God and not to resist, John seemed to express this element of "black women's activism" in the religious terms that are close to his heart. John's Abraham may not have captured the full complexity of John's ideas about resistance to oppression, but

the character may indeed have captured a part of his perspective. In that respect, we might understand John's Abraham as "not-not-John," just as we might understand Linda's Hagar as "not-not-Linda."

So the exchange between Linda's Hagar and John's Abraham was not *simply* an exchange between an unyielding, repressive patriarch and a victimized subaltern woman. At another level, it also suggests that these participants were working through complex questions about how to seek justice within a flawed world, and they did so from their distinct positions that have been shaped by the particularities of their real-world identities. Linda wanted to show that our ancient, religious understandings of justice (in which subaltern women suffer the consequences for acts that were perpetrated by the patriarchy) are biased, outdated, and in need of significant revision – an assertion that most of her peer group at Beth Emet would likely agree with. John wanted to show that injustice is a result of straying from God, and can be rectified (at least in part) by returning to God – an opinion that many of his associates at Second Baptist would likely share. By interacting not as "Linda" and "John," but rather, as "Hagar" ("not-not-Linda") and "Abraham" ("not-not-John"), they were able to sustain a passionate, ideological tussle that I suspect neither of them would have felt comfortable sustaining as *themselves*.

Moreover, even as they articulated their differences, they also may have found space to acknowledge some of their similarities. I understand the silence in this scene as a subtle moment of solidarity between the players. When Linda's Hagar articulated the stark power differential between them, John's Abraham said, "I don't know what to tell you, Hagar," and he fell silent. With both his speech and his silence, he subtly marked the

indefensibility of Abraham's actions. This silence may have been the only way that he could do so. He couldn't agree with Hagar, or decide that she has made a persuasive enough case to keep her; to do so would change the ending of the Biblical text. But he could acknowledge that Abraham has no retort. With silence, Linda and John could momentarily establish their agreement that the world is a deeply unfair and unjust place for people like Hagar, that inherited power imbalances are problematic.

And moments later, after sustaining a brief silence together, Linda, John, and Aliza resumed their dissonance. John's body was initially still, almost limp, as he spoke the words, "I don't know what to tell you, Hagar." But then he smiled. He lifted one arm off the armrest, stretched it across his body, pointing to Linda with a twinkle in his eye. And then, he revised his previous sentence: "*All* I can tell you," he said, "is stand still and see the salvation of God. Do as I ask."

John's body language – the twinkle in his eye, and the excited arm stretching across his body – suggested that he had a great new idea to advance their scene. But he didn't advance Abraham's argument; he just shored it up with a Biblical quote. "Stand still and see the salvation of God" is the King James translation of Moses's bold encouragement to the Israelites when they are staring doom in the face at the shores of the Red Sea. By instructing Hagar to act like those Israelites, John's Abraham was advocating that she embrace her apparent-crisis with trust in an omnipotent, supernatural God, which is exactly what he had been advocating before he joined Linda in a brief moment of silent solidarity.

Similarly, Linda responded to John by restating Hagar's position. She reconfigured John's words, "do as I ask," saying, "I'm not *doing* as you *ask*. We are *doing* cause we have no option." With her emphasis on having no options, Linda rearticulated the power differential between them.

Their investment in rekindling this dissonant argument is intriguing. They wanted to sustain the interaction, even if they had run out of new, substantive things to say that might advance the interaction. They wanted to keep playing; they wanted to sustain the dissonance.

When John, Aliza, and Linda engaged in this tussle about the power differential between them, and about the ethics of their relationship, they came a long way from the choreography of consonance that generally characterizes the interracial encounters of Evanstonians. They were able to do so, in part, because the sustained, playful interaction had made them comfortable with one another. The fellowship between them (which was discussed at greater length in Chapter 2) provided a foundation on which to conduct this rigorous critical dialogue. Paolo Freire acknowledges this relationship when he asserts that critical dialogue is impossible without first establishing love, trust, and faith in humankind (88-92). But in part, their ability to sustain dissonance of critical dialogue also rests on the opportunity, inherent in mimetic play, to obscure one's own identity as one engages with and through this dissonance. John was not speaking and acting *as John*; he was speaking and acting *as Abraham.* Linda, similarly, was not speaking and acting *as Linda*; she was speaking and acting *as Hagar*. So was Aliza. Mimetic play allowed them

to pivot away from their established senses of self to engage each other beyond the choreography of consonance that so often constrains them.

However, this pivoting comes with limitations. When we obscure our own identities in order to engage in a dissonant dialogue, we also limit (at least temporarily) the opportunities to interrogate our own implicatedness within the structures of power that we question and critique. Earlier in this chapter, I defined critical dialogue as *an encounter among multiple parties in which they jointly probe their evolving society(ies), and their places within that(those) society(ies), from multiple positions*. This definition comes, in part, from Paolo Freire's emphasis on consciousness-raising; it is vital for people to interrogate *their own places* within the power structures of their evolving societies so that they can discover how they are sustaining those power structures through the mundane decisions they make, consciously or unconsciously, throughout their lives. It is only through this reflexive process that people can come to understand the agency they have to remove themselves from, and to actively oppose, the oppressive structures in which they are embedded. Similarly, for the scholars of peacebuilding and advocates of intergroup dialogue, the purpose of dialogue is to embrace "a heightened awareness of the hard reality in which we are living;" such a dialogue "brings people to a far-from-easy confrontation with themselves and with the larger situation; it disturbs their peace of mind and the sense of comfort that hiding one's head in the sand can bring." Only after their peace of mind is disturbed can people exercise "the option to change and be changed" (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2004: 57). The dialogue that we sustained in Bibliodrama did embrace an unusual degree of dissonance, but did it invite them to probe

their evolving society, and their positions within that society? Or did it merely obscure their positions within their society in order to cultivate the dissonant dialogue that I have just recounted?

The answer is far from simple. The scene was ostensibly not set in Evanston in 2013, but in a mythic setting long ago and far away. Yet the world that these participants enacted was, in many ways, very similar to Evanston. According to Marie-Laure Ryan, who theorizes narrativity, and Jesper Juul, who theorizes play through the lens of video games, this blurring can be explained through the principle of minimal departure. According to this principle, people attending to (and creating) a fictional world draw on their understanding of their actual world to fill in the unspecified information about the fictional world. The fictional world is understood to mirror the actual world, unless specified otherwise (Juul 123, Ryan 48-60). This principle explains how players can be imagining a world more-or-less like their own, even when enacting a story from an ancient text. This is why it doesn't feel strange for people to speak English, use contemporary slang, or pantomime opening hinged doors in these scenes. This is also why Alex Sinclair, scholar of Jewish education, has concluded that Bibliodrama lends itself to a "radical hermeneutics," in which the learners weave their own "lives, concerns and experiences" into the narrative framework of the text (a phenomenon which I briefly alluded to in the introduction of this dissertation) (Sinclair 68-69). For Peter Pitzele, who has popularized Bibliodrama within the United States, the opportunity to read the Bible as resonant with and relevant to one's own life is part of the *point* of Bibliodrama (12-14). Of course, Evanston doesn't have slaves, but it certainly does have unequal status

relationships and workers who are very vulnerable in the face of fickle employers. Thus, the fictional world that the Bibliodramatists create does allow us to probe our own society. Just after these actors finished performing their scenes, and we began reflecting on them, a Jewish participant named Roni said that they could envision the scene happening in a contemporary urban landscape, with a woman and a teenager getting pushed out of their home or apartment, wandering through an alley, opening up a dumpster.[x] Minister Smith offered a similar idea, suggesting that the scene was reminiscent of the trials that are faced by so many single moms in our society, when they are abandoned by their partners with a child to feed and care for. Both Roni and Minister Smith quickly, almost instinctively, made the leap between the world of the scenes and the world in which we live, because the gap separating these two worlds is very small. And several days later, when I interviewed Linda about the scene, she said, "We were definitely in the twenty-first century."

Yet even when imagining themselves within a world very much like their own, I'm not at all certain that group members saw *themselves* as implicated within the power structures that they enacted. When I interviewed Linda, I asked her whether or not her small group (John, Aliza, and herself) noticed or acknowledged the irony of two white women portraying the slave of a black man. She seemed to misunderstand my question. Her initial response was, "I didn't see it as a race issue; I saw it as a class issue" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). She went on to talk about how Hagar was powerless in this situation, because of her class position as a slave.

I pressed her, asking, "And did you feel – was there a kind of irony for you in terms of class? I mean, I don't know socioeconomically where John sits . . ."

Linda answered, "Oh, I think the issue was he was the one who could make the decision. He was the one in charge. He was the one sending me out. And the fact that I was being sent out was that – I had nothing to lose in the way I spoke to him, because I was already being sent out. I could yell back at him and say whatever I wanted, but I knew it wasn't gonna change" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). The *I* in her statement was not Linda but Hagar, and the *he* was not John but Abraham. The irony, then, for Linda, was not that an affluent whited woman from north Evanston was enacting the slave of a black man who lives at the YMCA; the irony, for her, existed entirely within the imagined world: a woman of little means was being bold and brash, hurling accusations at a person with great power. Linda didn't actually see *herself* in the drama at all.

I don't see this as a personal failure of Linda's; rather, I think it speaks to a shortcoming of the form. When I interviewed John a few weeks later, the same issue arose, and John had a similar response. I asked John whether the scenes we enacted in Bibliodrama ever seemed to reflect the tension in our society between black and white Americans. "Well, the relationship between Abraham and Hagar," he said. "That one could be parallel" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

I followed up, acknowledging that when I saw Linda insisting to John that she was his slave, it struck me as ironic and significant. "Did that strike *you* as ironic when she said that?"

John responded: “No, not at all . . . It’s just two actors on stage. We’re not white and black; we’re just two actors, acting at a role” (“Personal Interview” n. pag.).

Of course, there may be reason to doubt that John’s response directly reflects his thoughts. The choreography of consonance that structures our social world also structured our interview, and someone in John’s shoes might feel like he is “supposed” to downplay the significance of race when sitting face-to-face with a white (or whited) academic. But of course, I am not *just* a white academic; I am also someone with whom John had spent significant time, and it is also possible that John felt comfortable enough with me to speak his mind. I want to err on the side of taking John seriously not only as a research subject but also as a co-theorist of this work, and thus, I want to entertain the possibility that he did not read the racial dynamics of the scene as ironic. John’s and Linda’s responses to my questions suggest that neither of them seemed to be conscious of *themselves* in the scene. They saw the power relationships, and they understood these power relationships as relevant to their own society, and they both seemed to suggest that the power differential they portrayed was problematic, but performing the scene didn’t cause them to reflect on their own position within their society. I want to propose that this is a limitation of using play as a catalyst for critical dialogue with intercultural groups: play enables a group to sustain the dissonance that is choreographed out of our everyday lives, but it does so by enabling us to pivot away from our real-world identities, which also enables us to obscure and ignore our own implicatedness.

A similar phenomenon was evident when our Bibliodrama group studied and played out the saga of Jacob and Esau, Isaac’s two sons. Over three sessions, we

examined and enacted three different stories of the tumultuous relationship between these two brothers. The younger brother, Jacob, usurped the exalted position of the older brother, Esau, with help from their mother, Rebecca, who favored Jacob. Like the story of Abraham and his own immediate family, this narrative offered us another complex network of partnerships to probe: Isaac and Rebecca (the conflicted parents), Jacob and Esau (the rival siblings), and Rebecca and Jacob (the conspirators). Smith and I were particularly intrigued that this was a narrative in which one party (Jacob) gained power and capital at the expense of – and through the manipulation of – another party, who is described in the text as being of a different color (Esau is notably "red" or "ruddy"). I hoped – and I believe that Smith also hoped – that the group might productively probe this imbalanced power relationship as a mirror of Evanston's own racialized power imbalances. Over the course of these sessions, our group members, speaking in role, characterized Jacob as "quiet," "philosophical," "intellectual," "talented," a "mama's boy," and a natural "leader" -- and characterized Esau as "physically strong," "angry," and "wild." They set up a binary using descriptors that are often used in our own society to disparage communities of color and to distinguish the "virtues" of the dominant, white community from the "problems" of the black and brown minorities.

Moreover, within the framework of play, they sustained a dialogue that directly acknowledged and problematized the disparities between these two brothers, welcoming the dissonance that came with doing so. For instance, an African American participant named Winton, speaking as Esau, asked "I feel like I'm getting second shrift. How come I'm not getting the blessing that I was supposed to get?" Rinat, a Jewish participant, used

even stronger language: "I feel like I'm being smacked in the face. Why do I have to go through [the embarrassment of serving my brother]? All of this was mine to begin with; why do I have to suddenly free myself from a trap that I didn't create? . . . Everything I was told I would have, I won't." In a discussion towards the end of one of these sessions, Charlotte, a middle-aged woman from the church, asked: "Why? Why [do there have to be winners and losers]? Was it to keep [Esau] down? To keep the peace between the people?"

And yet, despite the fact that these group members played out a story about one party's material gain, which comes at the expense of the other and which has ramifications for all of their descendants, and despite the fact that the group characterized these two parties with descriptors that have long been used in racially-loaded ways in our society, they never spoke explicitly about race or racial in/justice throughout this three-session saga. Some of them may have been silently making these connections, but they never voiced them out loud, with each other. As they engaged in play, they sustained a charged dissonance between the fictional characters they embody, and they even developed a vocabulary with which to speak about this dissonance, but when they pivoted back to their real-world identities, they left the dissonance and the vocabulary with which to speak about it within the realm of play. The principle of minimal departure enabled the group to inject vaguely-racialized descriptors into the story, but the treatment of play as a sphere of activity detached from real life allowed the participants to pivot back into their real-world identities without an explicit Freirian naming of our own world.

This may be a fundamental limitation of pursuing intercultural dialogue through play. As I suggested in the introduction, drawing on scholarship by Baz Kershaw, play may sometimes operate as a "safety valve for dissatisfaction" rather than a powerful resistance to the status quo (74). In this case, participants may be vaguely gesturing at a racism or class inequity through a playful engagement in the text in a way that supports a complicit return to a choreography of consonance and segregation.

Our group's reluctance to discuss the story in raced and classed terms may have also been bolstered by the ambiguity between a psychodramatic and sociodramatic relationship to the narrative. When Winton says that he's getting "second shrift," when Rinat says that she is being "smacked in the face," and when Charlotte rhetorically asks why there have to be winners and losers, it's not entirely clear whether or not they are reading the text as a reflection of a systemic power imbalance. I am obviously interpreting those comments as an indication that they may be engaging with the story as a mirror of the iniquities within our own society. Yet, as I have indicated in the introduction, Bibliodrama is a derivative of both psychodrama and sociodrama – and as such, it can swing back and forth along the continuum between an engagement with Biblical narratives as reflective of our interpersonal relationships, on the one hand, and as reflective of our collective social world, on the other. Rinat's comment, as Esau, that "everything I was told I would have, I won't," may reflect a Freirian demythologization of the notion that we live in a meritocracy – or, she may simply be reading the narrative as a coming of age story in which individuals learn to accept the vicissitudes of life. Unless the facilitators direct participants to interpret the story in a particular light, or

unless they actively encourage an extensive, detailed debriefing in which participants articulate the connections between the text and their own lives, the Bibliodramatic form obscures the thought processes that inform the creative ideas.

Pivoting *Back*: Attempting to Overcome the Limitations inherent with Pivoting

There were only a few times over the course of our eight-month Bibliodrama program when we overcame the limitation inherent in pivoting away from our real-world identities. At these times, Minister Smith and I succeeded at catalyzing a reflexive dialogue, in which participants not only *probed their society*, but also *probed their own positions within that society*. Notably, these moments did not feel particularly playful. At these moments, participants ceased playing their Biblical roles. They were informed by discoveries and connections made during the role-play, and the goodwill and fellowship generated during play continued to hover in the space, but these reflexive conversations were catalyzed when either Minister Smith or I signaled the end of mimetic play.

The clearest instance of such a conversation happened on the evening of March 11, when the Bibliodrama group studied and dramatized the reunion of Isaac and Ishmael. This encounter takes place many years after the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael that I wrote about in the preceding section. The Genesis narrative focuses almost exclusively on Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Isaac's descendants from that point forward, with one brief exception. When Abraham dies, Isaac and Ishmael come together to bury

him. It's a brief moment in the text that we spent several hours exploring together, and it ended in a remarkable, reflexive conversation.

Our group met that evening at Beth Emet, and we gathered together in a small, carpeted, wood-paneled room, adjacent to the sanctuary, which is sometimes used as a space for a small prayer group. Congregants refer to it as "the chapel." As usual, we spent much of the evening sitting in a circle, and Minister Smith and I asked questions of the group, in role. "Ishmael, why are you coming back to the land of your father?" I asked. Or, "Isaac, you've gotten word that Ishmael is coming. What crosses your mind and your heart as you hear that he's coming?" One by one, participants raised their hands to respond to these questions. Their answers, as always, were deliberately inconsistent with one another: the point, during this part of the evening, was not to collectively tell a coherent story, but to generate a variety of interpretations, to collectively perform the variability of this story.

Towards the end of the evening, we broke into three groups, and asked each group to dramatize this encounter in any way they liked. The first group chose a somewhat-abstract performance style to depict Isaac and Ishmael encountering each other silently at their father's graveside. Two actors, Charlotte and John, lay still, playing the dead bodies of Abraham and Sarah. Roni, a Beth Emet teenager, entered from one end of the space, holding a small vial and a piece of fabric. Roni walked over to the bodies, stood over the man's body, staring at it, silently. By staging Roni's entrance first, and physically marking Roni's proximity to the man (Abraham), the group established that Roni was playing Isaac. Then, Terri (playing Ishmael) entered from the opposite corner of the

room. Terri was a Beth Emet congregant in her early fifties, and she entered so quietly and unobtrusively that she almost seemed to glide towards the others in her formal shoes and black slacks. She stopped a few steps away from Roni, who had not acknowledged her. Stillness. Finally, Roni looked up at Terri, and extended one hand, holding the vial. Terri returned Roni's gaze, extended her hand, and took the vial, after which both broke eye contact, looking away. Roni stepped back, and Terri approached the body. She knelt over it, and pantomimed pouring the contents of the vial over their father's grave. Then she stepped back, and Roni approached the body. Roni unfurled the piece of fabric they held, placing it over Abraham's body. Then, for a moment, Terri and Roni once again made eye contact. They stepped towards each other, almost as though they were about to embrace, but they did not. Instead, they walked *past* each other, each exiting from the side of the room from which they entered.

The second group chose to portray the encounter through the genre of realism, depicting two individuals who haltingly, painfully, tried to sustain a cordial conversation. This group had two participants: Aliza, the teenager who had played Hagar alongside Linda several weeks prior, and Sierra, a middle-aged woman from Second Baptist (who also happened to be Minister Smith's wife). Aliza and Sierra asked Sierra's two young children, who were present as semi-participants, if they would lay on the floor as dead bodies, mimicking the mis-en-scene of the previous scene. The action began with Aliza, who played Isaac, and Sierra, who played Ishmael, approaching one another. Aliza stood near the bodies, her spine rigid and her hands clamped shut around the printed text that

we had distributed. Sierra approached from behind the audience, moving through them as she approached Aliza's Isaac. Aliza asked, formally, "Can I – can I help you?"

"Yeah." Sierra responded, her fingers nervously interlocking as she shifted her weight back and forth between her feet. "Um . . ."

"Are you here for . . .?" Aliza's voice trailed off, as her hands gestured towards the bodies on the ground.

"Yeah." Sierra paused, and took a deep breath. "*Isaac?*" she asked, taking two steps forward and one step back.

"Uh, yeah," Aliza stammered, taking a step backward. "Yes, yes, that's me."

"Uh, it's me," Sierra said, as her hands grabbed one another for strength. "Ishmael."

"Ishmael!" Aliza responded with surprise, almost dropping the piece of paper that she held between her hands. "Hi."

"Hi."

"Hi."

"Hi."

Through broken sentences, stiff handshakes, and awkward efforts to sustain conversation, the two portrayed estranged siblings who wanted to connect, but who had great difficulty doing so.

The third group's presentation was silent, like the first. Again, Minister Smith's two children lay on the floor. Rona, as Isaac, entered from one side of the space. She stood over the bodies, looking down at them, bangs falling into her eyes, as Shawna

entered from the other side of the room as Ishmael. Rona, a Beth Emet teen, looked up at Shawna, a senior citizen from Second Baptist, and then extended a hand with a forced smile. Shawna looked back, not moving. Rona's hand hung in the air. Slowly, after a pause, Shawna lifted her hand to shake Rona's. Then, they broke physical contact, and Rona spread an imaginary covering over the body of their father. Shawna stood still, watching, not participating. Rona looked up at Shawna, who looked back, blankly. Rona then broke eye contact, looking back towards the bodies. Finally, Rona reached out again, extending a hand, but not quite looking up at Shawna. Shawna took Rona's hand, and they shook again – and then Shawna turned and left.

After each of the performances, Minister Smith facilitated a brief reflection, remarking on the aesthetic choices and the interpretations made. But then, he explicitly indicated that he would like people to think about these encounters with respect to the Beth Emet - Second Baptist partnership. He did so by referencing a comment that Shawna had made a few weeks prior – not at a Bibliodrama session but at a large event at which Second Baptist and Beth Emet members had gone to see a play together about race and religion in the immediate post-Civil War era. At that event, Shawna had challenged the assembled crowd, critiquing them for not really engaging with one another. "I am disappointed with the way we interacted tonight," she had said, bravely speaking out from her front-row seat during the post-show discussion. "I thought Second Baptist and Beth Emet were supposed to be seeing this play *together*. That was my impression." Her voice was creaky, her tone accusatory. "But we didn't sit together, and we didn't talk to each other. We've been to Beth Emet several times, and you've been to Second Baptist,

but here - You talked to you, and we talked to we. Or, us. We're not really interacting here." Now, referencing that comment within the intimacy of our small group, in the aftermath of these emotionally-potent performances, Brian restabilized our identities as whited Jews and black Baptists, shifting our engagement from a creative one to a reflexive one.

> What you [Shawna] brought up in the discussion after *Whipping Man* – I think that's relevant to what we're discussing now – which is – it's not enough to just be in a room with somebody. It's not enough just to show up. But what are the tiny steps that we're taking so that we're actually connecting? That's what I gathered [from your statement after the play]. You know, all of us are in places where they preach diversity. You [Aliza] are going to college [in the fall]; you're gonna hear all about that. All diversity, we're one community, we're one family. We [the adults in the room] go to work: they have diversity specialists come out to us. [They talk to us about] how to do all these things to become a unit. But it really only happens – and if you notice, I hug every single one of you when I see you – it only happens [he touches Roni on the shoulder] when you have a genuine touch. You know, all the facebook, and all the texting, that's nice, but the true connectivity occurs really through touch. That hasn't changed. Do you all see the broad implications here? Anybody care to talk about the broad implications? Or, do you see what I see?

I think that Minister Smith intended to introduce a discussion about touch in ways that might echo the scholarship of Erin Manning. Recall that for Manning, touch radically challenges the Western cultural emphasis on individualism; it reorients people to one another and foregrounds their identities as relational and transitory. Yet the conversation that Smith catalyzed was far more complex than a simple affirmation of our interconnectedness. His comment generated ten minutes of discussion and reflection about the interaction between our two communities. We had already run over time, which often meant people would need to get up and go during these final conversations, but nobody left during this discussion. Shawna spoke first, challenging the terms on which Smith was implying we ought to engage one another. "This young man doesn't have to be my friend," she said, gesturing across the circle to Roni. "He doesn't really have to like me. But there is a job that we're required to do." She went on to stress the importance of intercultural collaboration over intercultural love; she didn't say exactly what "job" we might be "required to do," but it seemed like she was referring to the pursuit of social justice, stressed in both religious traditions (albeit differently). She acknowledged, as she did so, that intercultural encounters carry an anxiety that "we're gonna lose a part of us to become a part of them." She seemed to imply that she thought this anxiety was natural but unhelpful, and that we needed paradigms for intercultural dialogue and collaboration which respected peoples' community boundaries.

Terri then raised her hand to speak. She seemed to respond directly to Minister Smith's comments, not to Shawna's, and she was also pushing back on his assertion, but in a different way. Terri stressed that there were many ways to engage in dialogue and

reconciliation, and that touch was an important one, but not the only one. We also need to recognize smaller, more tentative steps, as important parts of building and sustaining relationships. It's important, she said, to "give people credit . . . for showing up . . . There is something about showing up – presence isn't nothing. It merits something. Actually a lot of something." As she spoke, and one idea led to the next, she also suggested that potentially-offensive actions, like *not showing up*, were also sometimes important parts of being in relationship. They help to clarify issues of concern, and they can provide parties with space to gather strength before returning to the challenges of relationship-building. Terri spoke from a standing position in the semi-circle, rather than sitting with everyone else. But she didn't seem to remove herself emotionally: her tone was gentle, her gestures fluid, and as she spoke, she made eye contact with many people around the circle.

John spoke next. Leaning back in his chair, with his legs spread wide and his boots planted firmly on the floor, he raised his hand to speak. He looked primarily at Terri, and as he spoke he wiggled uncharacteristically, suggesting that he may be slightly uncomfortable contradicting her so directly. And yet, he was clearly comfortable *enough* to do so. He emphasized that we need to go beyond "showing up," to actively affirm one another. Referencing the Isaac/Ishmael scene, John said, "They're acknowledging each other, as brothers, as human beings. And that's what *we* have to do, as human beings. We have to acknowledge each other. And like Shawna says, we don't have to hang out in each others' houses, we don't have to kick it, but we have to acknowledge our fellow

man as a human being who has a right to exist just like I do. And when we fall short of that, that's when we got a problem."

Shawna then tried to bridge these views, by reemphasizing Brian's point about the importance of human touch as an element of the affirmation which John values – but which is impossible unless two parties show up, as Terri stressed. "When you show up, and you touch, when you show up and you touch, to me that's a sign of hope. That there is a possibility that we're gonna get through this and work it out. If you don't show up –"

"Then there's actually no chance at all," Terri said, finishing Shawna's sentence.

"Exactly," Shawna affirmed.

I then spoke, reemphasizing Shawna's original point: "But what I heard you saying (Shawna), in the midst of coming together, it's also important to be able to honor *difference*. So it's a complicated – a complicat*ing* addendum you're adding [to the importance of affirming one another]. . . It's about coming together and still to acknowledge – yeah . . ." As my voice trailed off, my gesture indicated that sometimes pieces *don't* quite fit together perfectly.

Charlotte spoke next, leaning slightly forward in her folding chair. She acknowledged that there were still a lot of unanswered questions about racial reconciliation, and about the interaction between our communities. "That question was raised by Reverend Karen. When [Curtis de Young, a guest speaker] was there. What does that look like? How can I just be me, and you just be you, and there's racial reconciliation? What does that *look* like? If no one's assimilating? Otherwise we *are* just coming together. If there's no change. I'm just being me, you're just being you,

We're gonna show up – we're gonna say . . ."

"There has to be interaction," John said, breaking in. "That's why it's so important that we reach out and touch. And converse." John's implication, I think, was that we have to push ourselves past our comfort zone; we have to engage across lines of difference even when we don't yet know how. But Charlotte's challenging question still hung in the air: If we want to do anything significant together, then we have to risk becoming *like* each other, and being changed *by* one another. Interaction is not just an act of civility. It has lasting consequences. She seemed to be encouraging people to take the risks involved in intercultural encounter, but she was also taking stock of those risks and taking those risks seriously. I'm not sure, from John's comment, that he fully heard the cautious undertones of Charlotte's comment. If he did, he didn't seem to share that concern.

Sierra had the last word in this dialogue, as we stepped into a tighter, standing circle, anticipating the closing prayers. She said, "We were mentioning nations, you know: we have Ishmael, and we have Isaac, and different nations. And them coming together. I think before anything can happen there has to be – uh, uh - the question about forgiveness, and you know allowing that to you know – admitting whatever sins we have committed. And asking for forgiveness, so we then we can be open to move forward, so we can start the conversation, and we can be in the space together but be individuals within the space. . . to be present." In other words, with some hesitation, Sierra spoke to the importance of acknowledging imperfection and injustice, as individuals and as

groups, as a *prelude* to serious dialogue. We can confidently take the risks that Charlotte mentioned if we first acknowledge personal and historic wrongs.

I have quoted this conversation at length, and I described with some detail the scenes that preceded it, because it is an example of a frank, reflexive encounter in which *parties jointly probe their evolving society, and their places within that society, from multiple positions.* Using the biblical narrative, and their own interpretations of it, as a springboard and a touchstone for discussion, this interfaith, interracial group discussed the fears, the hopes, the expectations, and the challenges of engaging in intercultural dialogue together. There were limitations to this dialogue, as they were not prepared to directly critique one another, yet they were willing to sustain dissonance, respectfully disagreeing with each other, and asking hard questions of one another. They didn't speak with detail about the pain of injustice, but they did reference the historic "sins we have committed," the need for "racial reconciliation" and "change," and the essential differences between the communities. They were willing to suspend the choreography of consonance, acknowledging (as Shawna did) fundamental differences and fears about mixing, and acknowledging (as Charlotte did) that she didn't always understand the tangible purpose behind the emphasis on diversity. The tone was curious and purposeful: people leaned in, listened carefully, and chose their words deliberately.

This dialogue thrived in a space of play. It took place among members of a group who came together regularly to collectively perform variability. This group was used to sustaining dissonance among them (as Linda, Aliza and John had done so potently a few weeks prior), and they had developed a degree of trust based on the shared experiences of

studying sacred text and imagining themselves as members of the same families. However, while the dialogue thrived in the space of play that we had carefully cultivated for several months, the *reflexive* dialogue was not the norm within our group, and it did not take place *through* the mimetic role-play that we habitually engaged in together. In order to catalyze this dialogue, Minister Smith performed a maneuver that felt *unplayful*: he restabilized one group member's real-world identity, quoting back to her a comment that she made in a different setting, several weeks prior. In doing so, he discouraged the group from continuing to playfully project their focus and consciousness *into* the story.

In the following (and final) chapter of this dissertation, I further develop this idea of the reflexive push. I continue to argue, as I do in this chapter, that mimetic play inherently obscures our ability to see *ourselves* in unequal power relationships, and that facilitators (or other group members) often need to suspend that mimetic play in order to catalyze reflexive critical dialogue. However, I also argue (and I want to note here) that while these pushes may feel jarring and *unplayful*, they too involve a performance of variability. When Minister Smith quoted Shawna's words back to her, and challenged the group to think together about the BE-SBC relationship in light of the scenework they had just done, he challenged them to perform their variability, holding on to the dissonance of the mimetic play as they reclaimed their identities as Evanstonians. To consider this shift an act of play initially feels counterintuitive, but as I argue in the next chapter, understanding these shifts as playful acts may help community leaders understand how to facilitate them.

Conclusion

Throughout the eight months of the Bibliodrama program, Minister Smith and I typically met every other week, during which we would reflect on the past session and to plan the upcoming session. In one such meeting in early May, over coffee and baked goods at Panera, I finally asked him a question that had been taking shape for some time: Why don't participants at Bibliodrama talk explicitly about race? They talk about fairness, justice, and ethics; they talk about different understandings of God; they talk pretty explicitly about gender inequality; they even sometimes talk about slavery and servitude – why not race and racial justice? Smith's response was simple and profound: "I think people are tired and jaded."

By "people," I understand Minister Smith to mean the African American participants. Members of the synagogue may be *afraid* or *reluctant* to have conversations about race, but I don't think they're *tired* or *jaded*. On the other hand, the church members – particularly, Minister Smith said, "the older ones" – have had these conversations over and over again, and he thinks they have grown sobered and saddened by the lack of change that results. It is too painful to sustain these conversations, especially without much hope for meaningful change. When I asked Pastor Karen Mosby about this supposition, she agreed that there was fatigue and cynicism in her church community – and in the African American community in general – around discussions of race and racism. "I don't think that means that [African Americans] are unwilling to have the conversations," she said, "[but] I think that means we are probably more selective as

to when and where and with whom we will have those conversations" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

And so, through play, we may not have facilitated many of these conversations about racial justice, but we took several steps in that direction. Through our performances of variability, we established a degree of love, humility, and faith among the members of our diverse group. We cultivated fellowship. By opening up a space in which people could playfully pivot into "an imaginary milieu" (Caillois), and take on a character that was simultaneously "me," "not-me," and "not-not-me" (Schechner), we intervened in the choreography of consonance that structures the lives of so many Evanstonians. And yet, we found that Shulamith Lev-Aladgem's claim about play was only partially-true in our experience: yes, the Janus-faced nature of play *did* enable players to introduce concerns in-role that were taboo in our real-world interactions – but no, that element of play didn't usually enable us to break those taboos. The taboos remained in place, and our choreography of consonance largely remained intact, back in the real-world that we returned to at the end of each session. Ironically, it was only when we directly, blatantly *suspended* the understood conventions of mimetic play that we were able to capitalize on the power of play to crack open those taboos, and intervene in the choreography of consonance.

The theorists of critical pedagogy and intercultural dialogue whom I referenced early in this chapter – from Paolo Freire to Miles Hewstone to Mohammad Abu-Nimer – would likely say that we didn't suspend those conventions of mimetic play enough. Interactions like the one on March 11 reveal that we had the opportunity to conduct

reflexive, explicit, intercultural dialogue about racial injustice, and we didn't do so. These theorists and activists value explicit dialogue about power imbalances; it is only by naming injustice that we equip ourselves to dismantle it. Perhaps Rev. Velda Love and Minister Taurean Webb, who emphasized the importance of critical dialogue within the partnership, would agree with them. After all, they might point out, the Bibliodrama participants did not get involved as a group in the local elections that took place that April, nor did they show up as a group to an anti-gun violence rally that took place in Evanston's African American neighborhood that June.

And yet, the participants' persistent avoidance of race, combined with Minister Smith's analysis of that avoidance, gives me pause. I understand Minister Smith's evocation of his congregants' fatigue, pain, and cynicism as a suggestion that to force such a dialogue might constitute a betrayal of his pastoral responsibilities to them. He has to balance his interest in systemic transformation with his interest in their personal self-preservation, a complex maneuver that echoes the concerns of Patricia Hill Collins. To what extent is it appropriate for community leaders to lead their communities into painful conversations that they may need to avoid? Perhaps the most helpful thing such leaders can do is to facilitate interactions in which groups playfully suspend the choreography of consonance and introduce narratives that invite an engagement with issues of partnership and justice – and at that point, if people prefer not to engage in explicit dialogue about inequality, perhaps it is appropriate to respect that limit.

Or, perhaps community leaders may decide to push a bit harder. The next and final chapter of this dissertation examines a project in which community leaders, with

Rev. Velda Love and Rabbi Andrea London at the helm, decided to do just that. They framed this project as an exciting but emotionally-difficult journey that teens from the two congregations would take together, and they warned participants that they would be pushed beyond their comfort zone. This "Sankofa" project was not a participatory theatre program, yet I profile it with the conviction that the opportunities and limitations of play, as I have developed them over the past two chapters, can help illuminate the accomplishments and the shortcomings of this program. By applying the understanding of play that I developed through the study of applied theatre to a non-Applied-Theatre program, I hope to demonstrate how our field can contribute to a broader discourse about play and intercultural dialogue.

Chapter Four: Play Beyond Theatre

Introduction: On the Genesis of "Sankofa" and my Ethnographic Study of It

The first three chapters of this dissertation have interrogated in what ways, and to what extent, participatory theatre-making practices might alter the status quo of intercultural encounters in "progressive" yet relatively segregated and unequal communities like Evanston, IL. The first chapter, based in a broad ethnographic study of Evanston, proposed that Evanston's various racial groups engage in choreographies of segregation and consonance that render their interactions rare, brief, polite, and superficial. Throughout Chapters 2 and 3, I have argued that the power of participatory theatre projects to alter these choreographies may lie in their ability to catalyze *play*. In the context of play, participants pivot beyond the supposed boundaries of their "real life" identities, and may thus experience a willingness to transgress the dominant choreographies that structure their lives. They may feel more comfortable, once situated in the gray area where they are neither clearly themselves, nor are they not-themselves, to welcome the dissonance that comes with both fellowship and critical dialogue. And yet, I have also argued, play has significant limitations: the freedom from self-consciousness that characterizes mimetic play also often limits players from seeing *themselves* clearly enough to engage in a critical analysis of their own behavior.

In the current and final chapter, I attempt to investigate how these insights about play apply to intercultural encounters *beyond* the realm of participatory programs, and

how an interrogation of such programs might further refine an understanding of play that can in turn enrich a robust theorization of applied theatre practices. I want to suggest that one of the merits of theorizing participatory, intercultural theatre projects as a form of play is that the scholarship can resonate beyond the field of applied theatre, and can inform how scholars and educators approach other initiatives to nurture intercultural encounters. Similarly, the field of applied theatre can grow, and can understand itself better, from studying how play operates in broader contexts. This chapter focuses on the "Sankofa" program that Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church co-facilitated for their teenagers, which I have alluded to briefly throughout the dissertation.

"Sankofa" is a word in the Akan language of West Africa: it is translated as "go back and get it" and suggests that one cannot forge one's future without understanding one's past. An iconic image of a "Sankofa bird" shows it flying forward while facing backward, bravely moving into new territory with its gaze fixed on what it has already experienced. Since 2000, North Park University – a university in northern Chicago affiliated with the Evangelical Covenant Church – has been taking its students on various "Sankofa trips" (some to the deep south, some to various parts of Chicagoland) as part of an effort to teach them about the history of racial oppression and resistance, and the ongoing struggle for racial justice in the United States. This program has taken hold in multiple arenas of the university; there are undergraduate Sankofa trips in addition to Sankofa trips for seminary students at North Park. The name of the program – Sankofa – suggests that these young adults cannot forge a more just future without confronting the overt oppression of the past or the sacrifices that were required to make change.

Reverend Velda Love, who serves as a Minister at Second Baptist Church, also works at North Park Theological Seminary as the Director of Justice and Intercultural Learning, and has been involved with many of the seminary's Sankofa trips: she initially attended one as a student, and since taking a job at the seminary, she has led some of them, and prepared students for many more with a course that she teaches. In 2012, after getting to know one another in the context of planning and evaluating the congregations' commemoration of Martin Luther King Day (which I wrote more about in Chapter 1), Rabbi London and Rev. Love began discussing the possibility of a similar Sankofa trip for Beth Emet's and Second Baptist's teens. Throughout the following months, each of them recruited three other adults to join them as chaperone/educators, and each of their institutions identified about twenty teenagers as participants. Approximately a year after the idea was first proposed, it happened.

Like the trips that Love had facilitated at North Park University, this Sankofa trip brought together an interracial group of learners to sites of historic racial oppression and resistance. It did so in order to elicit dialogue about the ongoing quest for racial justice and the participants' potential place within that quest. It was framed as a religious experience, as Love's previous trips had been: it included opportunities for prayer, it highlighted the role of churches in the Civil Rights movement, and it suggested that working towards greater racial justice was a moral and religious imperative. Unlike Love's previous trips, however, this group was not only interracial but also interfaith. As students at a Christian college, the participants on North Park University's trips see their faith as a commonality, and they evoke their common faith as a binding agent when the

discussions about race get difficult. On this trip, in contrast, religion was another axis of difference, though race was the primary emphasis of the trip.

By many indicators, this Sankofa trip was the most significant collaboration that Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church had attempted. It did not engage the most people (that distinction goes to the 2012 commemoration of Martin Luther King Day), but it did demand more time and commitment from participants than any other initiative, and certainly necessitated the most coordination and collaboration among the leadership of the two institutions. It was also, at $30,000, the most expensive joint venture that they had attempted.

Rabbi London invited me to join this collaboration as one of Beth Emet's chaperone/educators, and I enthusiastically agreed, as I wanted to engage with as many elements of the BE/SBC partnership as I could. As I write this chapter, I draw on several sources of information about the trip. First, as ethnographers always do, I draw on my own memories of my experience as a participant-observer, and on the field notes I wrote after our return. However, the pace and the intensity of the trip did not permit me to remove myself from the field at regular intervals in order to write fieldnotes, as ethnographers are often trained to do (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 39-42). Having been asked to help organize and lead the trip, it was an ethical imperative for me to engage first and foremost in that capacity – and only secondarily as an ethnographer. Fortunately, there are a few other sources of information which enable me to flesh out my own partial notes and memories. I also draw on nine interviews that I conducted about two months after our return – two with chaperone/educators from Beth Emet, three with

chaperone/educators from Second Baptist, two with participants from Beth Emet, and two with participants from Second Baptist. Finally, I draw on video footage that two participants (one from each congregation) captured throughout the trip, using small video cameras that I provided. I encouraged the two videographers to take a variety of different kinds of footage: they could film our discussions, but they should also conduct their own interviews with their peers about the experience, and I encouraged them to capture informal interactions among the group members.[xi] This chapter analyzes many encounters from the trip, integrating all of these sources of information.

I argue in this chapter that many of the properties of play that I have analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 – through an analysis of Bibliodrama – are also highly relevant in contexts like the Sankofa trip, which are presumably outside the realm of applied theatre. People engage in play frequently, in facilitated and unfacilitated contexts. Play – whether framed as "theatrical" or not – has the capacity to suspend and shift the choreographies of segregation and consonance that structure and limit intercultural encounters. I argue, as I do in Chapter 2, that certain types of mimetic play can be catalysts for fellowship, and I further argue, as I do in parts of Chapter 3, that fellowship can be a productive platform for critical dialogue. However, as I have suggested throughout the dissertation, play also has limitations. The ethnographic data from Sankofa draws focus back to some of the limitations that were visible within the Bibliodrama data, and it also brings some new limitations to light. For instance, this chapter reinforces a suggestion that I made in chapter 3: that while critical dialogue may benefit from fellowship generated through play, it often requires a firm, reflexive push, which may feel *unplayful*, to initiate such

dialogue. The chapter also suggests two new limitations: first, that that play can reinforce problematic choreographies just as it can suspend them, and second, that play can sometimes catalyze *communitas* – which is similar to yet fundamentally different from fellowship, and which can sometimes stifle critical dialogue, even as it creates warmth and cohesion within an intercultural group.

The Beginning: Enacting the Dominant Choreographies of Segregation and Consonance

At 9:30 pm on the evening of March 26, 2013, 17 teenagers from Second Baptist Church and 21 teenagers from Beth Emet Synagogue arrived in the Beth Emet parking lot. They carried rolling suitcases, and in some cases, pillows and blankets for the long bus ride ahead. They were joined by their parents or grandparents, who had come to see them off, and by eight chaperone/educators (four from each institution), who would supervise and guide them over the next six days. The Jews in the group were celebrating Passover, and had come straight from their families' seders. The Christians had begun celebrating Holy Week, and were gearing up for Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday.[xii] They barely knew one another. As I recounted in Chapter One, we – the leaders – had intended to bring the youth together several times throughout the fall, winter, and early spring, which might have enabled us to gradually, subtly shift the participants' dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance. But we had not managed to do so, a failure which marks, in part, our own difficulty communicating and coordinating with

one another. Therefore, the teenagers had only met twice before, during a Tuesday evening logistical briefing (when I performed the unpacking of my bag, as I recounted in Chapter 1), and a Saturday afternoon orientation, during which we conducted some initial community-building activities and began to talk about race, racism, and religion in broad strokes.

As we gathered in the parking lot, two of the educators (Jerane Ransom, the deacon in charge of youth programs at Second Baptist Church, and Avi Stein, who did similar work at Beth Emet) read aloud a list of the participants. But the list wasn't organized alphabetically, nor randomly. It paired Beth Emet participants with Second Baptist participants, and as each pair of names was read off, those two individuals bid goodbye to their families and boarded the bus with one another. They sat down together. And for the next six days, they were expected to sit together on most bus rides, sleep in the same hotel room, eat most meals together, and process the trip with one another. In a few cases, two BE participants were "paired" with one SBC participant, creating trios that accounted for the slight imbalance of total participants. These groupings were listed in an email that participants had received a few days prior, but since they barely knew one another, the names of their partners hadn't initially meant much to them. This element of the trip intimidated many of them; they worried what it would be like to spend a full, very intense week with a virtual stranger. They had voiced this concern several times, and each time, Rev. Love had responded by saying that she understood their concern, but that in her experience, these partnerships were valuable, and that they would remain a central part of this experience. Now, for the first time, as they heard their

partners' names read aloud, they could make eye contact with one another. And then they sat beside each other for the 15-hour bus ride to our first stop: Atlanta.

The chaperone/educators had also talked extensively among ourselves about the importance of the partnerships, and the value of the bus rides as time for partners to engage in dialogue with one another. We decided together that we would prohibit electronics on the trip (except for cameras), in an effort to discourage the kind of "checking out" that iPods and phones encourage. We agreed in advance that there would be no retreating from these partnerships: if they weren't getting along, they would need to reflect on that tension and work through it together. We could facilitate these conversations, but we could not offer them any alternative to engaging with their partners. We also determined that we would model this intense engagement in our own "Sankofa pairs;" I, for instance, was paired with Rachel Hudgens, one of the chaperones from SBC. Hudgens and I both identify as white, but we were paired together because she affiliates with the church, and I was considered a representative from the synagogue. The church, while almost entirely African American, does have a few white members, including Hudgens's family and one teen participant in the SBC Sankofa group. Hudgens and I spent a great deal of time together on this trip, discussing our racial identities, our religious identities, and our commitment to social justice, and responding to the videos, the discussion prompts, and the various sites.[xiii]

The emphasis on dialogue – which we conducted both in pairs, and as a large group – evidences a commitment to critical pedagogy. In advance of the trip, Love shared with the leadership team that Paolo Freire, a key shaper of the field of critical pedagogy,

was a major influence on her, and many of the other chaperone/educators (across both congregations) acknowledged that Freire was a major influence on us, too. Freire's critical pedagogy emphasizes the need for students and teachers to engage in dialogue with one another, working together to identify and analyze the inequities that we may have become inured to. It also emphasizes the importance of reflecting together on our own actions in order to equip ourselves to take more ethical and efficacious action in the future. This kind of dialogue can only happen, according to Freire, when participants exhibit love, humility, and faith in humankind (88-92). Thus, to use terms that I have employed throughout this dissertation, we chaperone/educators would work to promote fellowship among the partners early in the trip, so that they could sustain the critical dialogue that we hoped the sites would elicit.

However, as I have already argued over the last two chapters, both fellowship and critical dialogue require a fundamental deviation from the choreographies of consonance and segregation that structure Evanstonians' lives. They do not come easily. We showed several films during this first bus ride as stimuli for conversation, yet it was still difficult to keep the partners invested in one another. Hudgens and I sat towards the back of the bus, with 12-13 rows in front of us and 6-7 rows behind us, situating us in the midst of the participants. Occasionally, I would stand up in my seat and crane my neck to see how people were interacting. In the seats behind us, there were many Beth Emet participants who were seated on the aisle, and who were turning towards one another, talking with each other. The Second Baptist partners were sitting right beside them, either sleeping or staring out at the windows. And in the seats in front of us, there were many Second

Baptist teens seated on the aisle, turning in and talking to each other, while the Beth Emet teens seemed largely disengaged. Wednesday morning, when we briefly disembarked at a rest stop, and we had our first "open" space where peoples' feet moved them where they wanted to go, I observed an exaggerated version of the same phenomenon. At this moment, we had an entirely segregated community: I turned to one side and saw all the SBC teens hanging out in one space, and I turned to another side, and saw all the BE teens hanging out in another. The dominant choreography of segregation, so present in their day-to-day lives, was still in tact when the rules of interaction did not explicitly dictate otherwise.

As I argued in Chapter 1, drawing on a variety of scholars including Arun Saldanha, Thandeka, Joy DeGruy, and Isabel Wilkerson, different racial groups participate in this choreography of segregation for different psychological, sociological, and historical reasons. Many of the teens on Sankofa likely executed this choreography unconsciously, just like many of the adults at the City Council meetings I described in Chapter 1. Yet our habits of body and mind have been shaped by a racist system in white elites continue to benefit from a social segregation that has outlasted the technologies of slavery and Jim Crow laws which shaped it.

As Freirian-inspired educators, one of the ways that we (the chaperone/educators) tried to encourage reflection and change within our large group was to encourage as many fora for dialogue as possible. Periodically, we would invite an "open mic" session on the bus to sustain the paired conversations with a broader range of voices. These open mic sessions benefitted from the paired hashing-out of ideas that preceded them, and they

energized the next round of paired conversations by providing fresh perspectives that partners could reflect on together. We continued to do this throughout the trip, especially when we wanted to debrief a particular historic site or activity. The bus microphone, located next to the driver's seat, would be available for any participant (or any chaperone/educator). If someone wanted to speak, they would come to the front of the bus, take the mic and speak for several minutes. At these times (and others), participants initiated a custom of snapping in affirmation of one another, a custom that I read as a manifestation of the dominant choreography of consonance that crept into our dialogues. "I'm with you," teens seemed to say with their snaps. "I share the values and the interpretation you are suggesting. There's no daylight between us here." Of course, agreement has its place within Freirian dialogue, but so does dissonance, which teens did not develop a gesture to express.

One moment of one early open mic session stands out prominently in my mind. It is a moment that the chaperone/educators have discussed many times amongst ourselves. Towards the end of this first long bus ride, Aniyah, one of the teenagers from the church, stood at the front of the bus with the microphone. "I don't really see race," she said. "I just care about being nice to people. If you're nice to me, I'll be nice to you. That's it." Aniyah's peers snapped in affirmation as she handed the mic back to Rabbi London and Reverend Love, heading back to her seat.

Like the snapping that followed so many of the "open mic" comments, I read Aniyah's comment as evidence of a persistent choreography of consonance. Aniyah, whose values were shaped in liberal, consonant Evanston, felt like she should be as open

to relationships with white people as she was with black people. In an effort to reach out to Beth Emet participants, she denied the racial difference that seemed so prominent to my own eye, as I watched people affiliating primarily with their own racial groups. Ironically, the choreographies of segregation and consonance were happening simultaneously.

Avi Stein, recalling this incident in an interview several months later, described what happened next as he reflected on how we – as chaperone/educators – intervened in this choreography of consonance. "I'm pretty sure Rachel [Hudgens]'s feet never actually touched the ground, because the time it took her to get from her seat in the middle of the bus, to the microphone [in the front of the bus], was astonishing . . . She said something like 'Thank you for sharing' – she was affirmative of Aniyah's sharing – and then was like, but here's what's problematic when people say that." Hudgens went on to explain how assertions of colorblindness can obscure structural racism and thus leave it intact. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has argued over a number of publications, "post-racial" discourse (like Aniyah's) is on the rise among all racial groups in the United States, and such discourse implicitly attributes inequality to "natural" market forces and cultural inferiority of African Americans and Latinos (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 192-194).

In Freire's book *Pedagogy of Hope*, he clarifies that critical pedagogues who find themselves in the position that Hudgens found herself in at this moment – facing students who voice ideas in dialogue that they find problematic – have a very tricky balance to strike as they voice opinions that contradict those of their students. Freire writes:

> To defend a thesis . . . with earnestness, defend it rigorously, but passionately, as well, and at the same time to stimulate the contrary discourse, and respect the right to utter that discourse, is the best way to teach, first, the right to have our own ideas, even our duty to 'quarrel' for them . . . and second, mutual respect. (78)

Hudgens was the first chaperone/educator who would try to strike this balance throughout our Sankofa journey – but certainly not the last. As we chaperone/educators tried to teach our participants to "name the [subtle inequities of the] world," we often tried to convey respect for them and their opinions while passionately presenting a case that they need to think about the world differently. Freire, it seems, would approve of this maneuver, but might also insist that we have the duty to "stimulate the contrary discourse" as we do so. As Stein described this moment, several months later, he did so in a spirit of reflexivity, recalling Hudgens's response as emblematic of choices that many of us – himself included – made throughout the trip. He agreed with Hudgens's critique of Aniyah's statement, but he was rethinking whether or not it was wise for the chaperone/educators to make such explicit interventions in participants' discourse.

His concerns resonate with another passage of *Pedagogy of Hope*, in which Freire warns:

> The moment the educator's "directivity" interferes with the creative, formulative, investigative capacity of the educand [student], then the necessary directivity is transformed into manipulation, into authoritarianism. Manipulation and authoritarianism are practiced by

> many educators who, as they style themselves progressives, are actually taken for such. (79)

Our intervention in the choreography of consonance was often blunt and direct, sometimes bordering on the "manipulation and authoritarianism" that Freire describes. Had Aniyah felt the opportunity to challenge us as we challenged her, then comments such as Hudgens's might have stimulated the productive dissonance that is so often choreographed out of Evanstonians' intercultural interactions. But as a young person who had just been "corrected" by an adult, Aniyah did not seem to feel like she could push back with the kind of "contrary discourse" that Freire describes. A new axis of consonance and deference took hold, as youth deferred to the expertise and articulation of adults.

As our bus continued south, the choreographies of consonance and segregation persisted along both the axis of age and the axis of race (the latter of which aligned almost completely with a third axis, the axis of religion). When we arrived in Atlanta around midday on Wednesday, we went straight to the "Martin Luther King National Historic Site." At this site, which is considered a national park, a small museum about the Civil Rights Movement sits beside the Atlanta church where King began his career and an enormous, tiered fountain that extols his memory. In six small groups, each with one educator, we navigated our way around the site. As an educator, I found it very challenging to foster intercultural interaction among the participants in my group. As we walked from one part of the site to the next, the Second Baptist participants tended to clump together, as did the Beth Emet participants. They spoke quietly toward one

another, relaxing into their comfortable friendship groups from Evanston rather than effortfully sustaining the interfaith, interracial conversation with people who still largely felt like strangers. Only when I gathered the group in a clump and asked them to collectively discuss some aspect of the site (such as "Why do you think the fountain is tiered like this? What does that represent?") did they speak and listen to one another across the cultural divide.

The following day began with a four-hour bus ride from Atlanta, GA to Selma, AL – a block of time during which we chaperone/educators again tried to intervene in the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance. Teens again sat with their partners. During the ride, we showed two short documentaries, and we asked the teens to reflect on these documentaries, both in their pairs and in a large "open mic" session. We also asked the teenagers to engage in some specific activities in their pairs. For instance, one activity, which many of them remembered months later (when I interviewed four of them about their memories of the trip), required that one person ask the other, "Tell me who you are." The person being asked would then speak uninterrupted for five minutes. Whenever they paused, the partner would prompt them with the same phrase: "Tell me who you are."

A few of the participants found this to be a useful "push" towards honest, revelatory conversation. For instance, Stephanie, a participant from the church, did this activity with her two partners from Beth Emet, and she later told me that it unearthed some fundamental theological differences. Stephanie and her partners continued to discuss these differences throughout the trip, as they wrestled with the gap between the

Baptist emphasis on an active, authoritative God and the more abstract, even agnostic theologies of many Reform Jews (a difference that gets more direct treatment in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation). Thus, in some instances, this framework helped participants to probe some of their essential differences, and to embrace the social dissonance of doing so.

However, many participants found this to be a challenging, frustrating, and unrewarding exercise. For instance, Tabri, one of the Second Baptist teenagers, recalled,

> I felt like I couldn't even say who I was . . . to a person [that] I don't really know . . . [I thought to myself:] 'I'm not gonna tell you who I *am.*' And I felt like I was skipping basics about myself in everything that I said. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

I interrupted her, to make sure I understood what she was saying: "You were skipping basics about yourself. Like, there were still some parts you were hiding?" She continued:

> Yeah. I didn't want to tell her at all. And I felt like she felt the same way about me. We were just saying stuff that you should just know about somebody. Or that you would just tell somebody. [Stuff like:] "Oh I play a sport. I have siblings. I have a cat." Like, we would say those things but we wouldn't really say who I am *as a person*. Like, [we wouldn't] really go deep into who we really are because we don't really know each other at that point. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Tabri expressed this discomfort in the context of explaining the arc of her relationship with her partner, Leanne, which she ultimately found to be very rewarding. She was not complaining or criticizing our pedagogy, but noting her own initial emotional resistance. Others, however, were less reserved than Tabri. For instance, Candace, another SBC participant, spoke about her frustration in our open mic session immediately afterwards. She wouldn't have volunteered to do so, but when the chaperone/educators encouraged her to speak publicly, she took the mic and said, "I did not like this activity, because . . . like, we had to talk for five minutes, and – I don't know her [my partner Shoshanna], she doesn't know me, and I'm not about to tell my life story to somebody I don't know."

Both Tabri and Candace seemed to suggest that their reservations mirrored those of their peers from Beth Emet. Tabri said, "I didn't want to tell her at all. *And I felt like she felt the same way about me*" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.). Candace said, "I don't know her, [and] *she doesn't know me*" (emphasis mine). Indeed, their peers from Beth Emet may have also felt awkward in these conversations. As Daniel Yon explains in *Elusive Culture*, his ethnographic study of a racially-diverse Canadian high school, the discursive act of naming one's identity can trigger "anxieties of naming." Drawing on postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, Yon explains that statements of identity quickly become questions of identity as "the very act of naming one's identity is also a moment of recognizing the limits to the name" (59). Yon does not suggest that this anxiety of naming is felt only by minority groups – and neither did Candace or Tabri. However, while this anxiety of naming may have been felt by participants of both groups, I do not

think it was felt equally. Psychologist Beverly Tatum explains that black adolescents are often just beginning to experience racism, and thus to understand and question their racial identities in ways that they did not do as pre-pubescent children. Racism becomes a pervasive environmental stressor, leading to profound, challenging questions about their identities that white adolescents don't have to face (52-62). For black adolescents to talk about *who they are* with white (or whited) strangers, who may be kind and sympathetic but do not share the confusion or the pain of the devaluing racial messages that they (black adolescents) receive, may be particularly stressful.

This reflexive activity felt decidedly *unplayful* to many of the teens, and at least for Tabri and Candace, it led to awkward and uncomfortable interactions. Talking about their identities triggered an "anxiety of naming," compounded by the stressor of racism. Moreover, whereas mimetic play invites people to assume a role, to pivot into an imaginary circumstance, this activity asked them to explicitly speak *as themselves*. This reflexive and unplayful frame led them to feel particularly guarded, and to retreat to superficial talk in the face of tension. As they carefully, reservedly identified the sports they play, the siblings with whom they live, and the pets they care for, they sustained the choreography of consonance, and they opted to avoid the more difficult discussions about racial identity and experiences of racism.

Playful Interventions: Play and Communitas

We never entirely overcame the choreographies of segregation or consonance on Sankofa, but we did, at times, manage to temporarily suspend or mitigate them. In retrospect, after reviewing the video footage of the trip and triangulating that data with my own fieldnotes and with the nine interviews I conducted, I believe that part of our ability to suspend and mitigate these choreographies lay in our group's ability to play together, to *perform our variability* vis-à-vis one another. However, play worked in at least three different ways on our Sankofa trip. Sometimes, playing together enabled our group to experience a phenomenon of enthralling and complete togetherness that anthropologist Victor Turner called *communitas.* At other times, play enabled our group to experience something closer to the dissonance of fellowship, which I wrote about at length in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. And finally, there are other times when play was simply a platform in which the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance were reasserted. I attend to each of these in the next several sections of this chapter, in an effort to illuminate both the potentiality and the limits of play.

I begin with the instance of play that we experienced as the most unifying, in hopes to explore the value and the limits of these intense feelings of togetherness. This experience took place shortly after the challenging bus conversations that I described in the previous section. On Thursday afternoon, when we arrived at our second stop – Selma, AL – having challenged our Sankofa partners to sustain intense dialogues about *who they were*, we disembarked at the Selma Interpretative Center, where the National Parks Service has established an infrastructure to accommodate groups like ours. After an informative, historical lecture from a park ranger at the center, we gathered our group on

the northern bank of the Alabama River in order to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge – an activity that Velda Love had done with many groups before ours, and had long emphasized would be a vital component of our trip. I will suggest, in this section, that this activity constituted a *ritual* for our group, and the ritual framework enabled us to play, to perform our variability, and to deviate from (at least partially, and at least temporarily) the dominant choreographies that were limiting both our fellowship and our critical dialogue. And yet, I will also argue that the communitas it evoked is in some ways less constructive than the complex fellowship that I wrote about in Chapter 2.

The bridge is one of the paramount landmarks of Civil Rights Movement history in the United States, due to three marches that traversed the bridge. The first of these, on March 7, 1965, was catalyzed by the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson**,** a local African American man who was murdered several weeks prior, following another Civil Rights march that he had attended. In the days leading up to this first march, activists had announced their intention to walk from Selma, where the murder took place, to Montgomery, the state capitol, in order to dramatically ask the governor for greater protection. However, on the day of the march, which became known as "Bloody Sunday," the 600 marchers were stopped by state troopers with tear gas, nightsticks, clubs, whips, and charging horses, as a white crowd cheered on the state police. The activists were beaten severely; more than ninety were rushed to a nearby hospital and clinic. Over the next two weeks, the marchers would make two more attempts to walk from Selma to Montgomery. One occurred on March 9, two days after Bloody Sunday, when state troopers again met the marchers (this time, 2000 of them) at the end of the

bridge, and stopped them. Martin Luther King, who led this second march, expected this and turned the marchers around; they would wait for a decision from the courts that protected their right to march. Finally, on March 21, having received federal protection for their right to march, 3200 activists marched out of Selma, towards Montgomery. Now protected by federal troops, the activists successfully crossed the bridge, and they completed their march in Montgomery five days later.[xiv] The combined effect of these three marches galvanized congressional and public support for the Civil Rights Act of 1965, which was signed into law that summer (Lewis 327-362).

To begin our ritual crossing of the bridge, we gathered in a circle, standing next to our partners, in a plaza at the foot of the bridge. Rachel Hudgens held John Lewis's memoir, and read several paragraphs of his recollection of Bloody Sunday. Then, very slowly, Minister Taurean Webb (one of the chaperone/educators from SBC) began walking away from the plaza, toward the sidewalk that led onto the bridge. Hudgens and I, clasping hands, followed Webb, and all the participants lined up behind us. We walked two abreast, just as the marchers did on Bloody Sunday (337). According to Emily Nidenberg, one of the Beth Emet chaperone/educators who walked at the back of the pack, many of the partners held each others' hands, as Hudgens and I did, in a gesture of intimacy and solidarity. Others walked closely beside one another on the narrow sidewalk. We walked slowly and silently, expanding what might normally be a five-minute walk into a forty-minute pilgrimage. Sometimes, Webb would stop, and we would all stop behind him. At these moments, the group remained silent – a silence that echoed the eerie silence of the marchers on Bloody Sunday, as described by John Lewis (338).

We were not just going from one place to another; we were, especially at those moments, allowing ourselves to be *on the bridge*.

Months later, when I interviewed both educators and participants about the trip, many of them recounted this experience as one of the most powerful moments that we spent together. Avi Stein spoke about the architecture of the bridge, and how the physical experience of crossing the bridge contributed to the emotional experience:

> You walk up the bridge, and . . . [because of the arched shape of the bridge] you can't see what's on the other side. All of a sudden, as you yourself are crossing, you have a moment – *I* had a moment – of thinking, "What if there are police officers on the other end?" You sort of *get* - you get the randomness that they must have been feeling as they crescendoed the bridge the first time on Bloody Sunday, and the panic of not knowing what was on the other side the second time they crossed – not knowing whether or not there were gonna be police on the other end. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Many of the participants made similar comments. Two participants – Roni (from Beth Emet) and Brooklyn (from Second Baptist) – carried small video cameras throughout the trip, and they often used those cameras to record brief moments of the trip and brief interviews with their peers. The video that Roni captured shows Roni's partner, Corey, reflecting on the experience on the bus ride that immediately followed it. Sitting in his seat, angling his body towards Roni's camera, and looking right into Roni's face just beyond the camera lens, Corey recounted, "The whole silence let it sink in for me.

When we crossed over the top of the bridge, for a moment I imagined the sea of police officers that were there. And for one point, I was pulled back into time. For me that was just really powerful."

Several of them then took the bus microphone and spoke about their individual experiences of crossing the bridge, and Roni captured their thoughts on video. Jordyn, a young woman from Second Baptist, stood in the bus aisle, her hair blowing in the wind from the open hatch on the top of the bus, and said:

> When I was walking with Amanda, and holding hands, that actually kind of made me felt safe . . . I had a vision of me being there. And hearing Martin Luther King's voice. And when we stopped, I could vision like the troops just sitting there. And the officer saying, "you can't pass," or whatever. I felt scared.

These reflections from Sankofa educators and participants have led me to interpret our act of crossing the bridge as a ritual. A ritual, according to Richard Schechner, is a type of "restored behavior" or "twice-behaved behavior," in which people repeat an action that others have performed in the past; when we perform a ritual, we display a "transindividual" quality of ourselves, demonstrating that our bodies can take on an action that other bodies have taken on (*Between Theater and Anthropology* 36). We display that we are not alone in time. In a Schechnerian sense, then, we performed a ritual with our physical citing of the 1965 march with our bodies, and by physically citing the other groups and individuals who have ritually crossed the bridge in memory of those marches.

But crossing the bridge was not only a ritual in this Schechnerian sense of citationality; it was also a ritual in the transformative sense articulated by the anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner distinguishes rituals from ceremonies by suggesting that rituals can "transform," while ceremonies merely "indicate" ("Social Dramas" 126). In rituals, "actuality takes the sacrificial plunge into possibility and emerges as a different kind of actuality" (129). The actuality of living in 2013, in a time and a place in which basic civil rights are guaranteed for everyone regardless of race (at least on paper), and in which teenagers (often) take their presumed equality with one another for granted, took the "sacrificial plunge" into a possibility of living in a world of gross, legalized inequality. Participants and educators asked themselves, "What would I risk to create a more equitable world? Who would I trust to take these risks alongside me? Can I find greater strength with these people than I possess alone?" And they emerged into a slightly "different kind of actuality," in which they continued to ask one another these questions, in which they oriented themselves towards, and drew strength from, the collectivity of the group.

This Turnerian sense of being transformed through ritual fosters an experience of play, as I have defined and developed the concept of play throughout this dissertation. Our group's experience on the Pettus Bridge was not necessarily joyful or light, as play is commonly thought to be, but it did constitute a *performance of variability*. Crossing the bridge with one another, we *performed* our variability both in the sense that we publicly *displayed* our ability to walk as others walked, and in the poietic sense of *activating* the

latent potential of our variability. We discovered ourselves as being capable of orienting to one another in a different way than we had done up until that point.

This performance of variability enabled some members of our group to discover and articulate a profound sense of purpose, which they discovered in the alternative life context that we conjured together. Having liberated dormant possibilities of the self and rediscovering ourselves in different life contexts, these dormant possibilities may not immediately dissipate when play ends. Rather, as Huizinga states, players sometimes experience an intense absorption in the world of play and in the alternative contexts that they elucidate. This may have been true for participants like Amanda, a young woman from Beth Emet who gave an impassioned speech during the bus ride that followed. Standing erect, with the microphone in one hand, and with the other hand touching a bus seat for stability, as her reddish-brown bangs blew in the wind rushing through the open hatch, she said:

> I kept thinking when we were on that bridge about how much we've been talking about the past on this trip . . . and it keeps coming back to me how many people always tell you "Don't live in the past! Think for tomorrow! Think in the present!" And it occurred to me how that's kind of like B.S. – how we *need* to live in the past and we need to remember all these things that happened. Because if we forget what happens, or we don't think about it about it, then nothing is ever gonna change; we're just gonna think, "Oh, you know, what can we do? We can't do anything." But [when we encounter] stuff like this [like the marches that began in Selma], we have

to live in the past to remember, if we don't like something, if there's an injustice in the world, that we *can* change it, and that we *need* to change it.

Amanda's passionate speech at the bus microphone – particularly her quoting and debunking of dominant discourses about history ("Don't live in the past! Think for tomorrow! Live in the present!") – evidences how ritual and play can support the critical pedagogy that was so important for many of the chaperone/educators. By subtly encouraging a performance of variability wherein participants might imagine themselves and each other as comrades on the dangerous but triumphant 1965 march, the ritual of bridge-crossing empowered Amanda to probe the discourses and of her own (2013) world through the vantage point of a different place and time.

Assertions of moral imperatives, like the one Amanda made at the bus microphone, may have carried greater power than other contributions to discussions due to their association with a powerful ritual. According to Sociologist Emile Durkheim, the primary purpose of rituals (especially religious rituals) is to articulate and reaffirm a society's values, and to strengthen the bonds between the individual and the society out of which the individuals and the rituals both emerge (*Elementary Forms* 257-258). Durkheim claims that we depend on and benefit from the sense of a moral "collective conscious" that we evoke and strengthen through ritual (*Elementary Forms* 389-390, *Solidarity* 162). In our Sankofa trip, we had gone a full day and a half before we experienced a ritual that provided this sense of a moral calibration for both subgroups. This may have differentiated our interfaith group from the Sankofa trips from North Park University, where the common religious identity of participants, and the frequent

opportunity for prayer in the tradition of the Evangelical Covenant Church, may have helped groups to establish a sense of collective identity and common values earlier in their shared experience.

And yet, despite (or perhaps in part due to) how potent it was, the bridge ritual had an impact on our group that was complex and in some ways concerning. Our ritualized act of play fostered a reorientation of our group members toward one another in a way that was similar to – yet distinct from – the reorientation of participants toward one another that I described in Chapter 2 (which I referred to as *fellowship*). Jerane Ransom and Avi Stein, who crossed the bridge hand-in-hand as Sankofa partners, both described their experiences to me in ways that evoke an absorption of an individualized self into a grander and more powerful sense of group identity. Ransom recalled:

> I felt like everyone experienced the history again – they actually lived it for a moment. That was my feeling. I felt like going across the bridge was something that I had heard about but I had never experienced. I knew all about the Pettus Bridge; I knew it when it happened. I was at an age when I could understand that. But actually walking across it, and getting to the top of that bridge, and having to look down, and to realize how those people were slaughtered . . . I felt like, "Oh my goodness, if I was on this bridge, and I was walking down, and I saw all of the police officers lined up there with guns pointed, all the hatred, all the stuff that was there . . . would I have had the strength to keep going?" And then I realized: yes, I would have. Because it would be hard to come that far with a group and

> not go all the way. That's not courage you get just to jump up and do; that's something you've been working for. [So you can do it, with the group,] even though you know that death may be imminent on the other side. It was just feeling what that must have felt like to them, when they got to the top of that bridge, and they realized what they were going to be encountering. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Stein recalled:

> It was really the first time that we were, as a group, doing something collectively together. We weren't just [physically] together as a group, we were together *emotionally* as well . . . We really felt like one group as opposed to 48 individuals, or opposed to Second Baptist and Beth Emet. It felt like *chevra*. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

I will return to Stein's Hebrew word, *chevra*, in just a moment. First, I want to underscore that both Ransom and Stein described their experiences as performances of variability during which they experienced a profound sense of group cohesion that eclipsed their senses of individualized identity. As Caillois suggests in his own writing about play, this alternative way of being with one another did not constitute a "sham reality" but rather enabled them to liberate dormant possibilities and to rediscover themselves in alternative life contexts. The act of play enabled them (and perhaps all of us, to different degrees) to reorient themselves toward each other and towards the group, to experience a profound sense of the collective that our choreographies of segregation and consonance might otherwise prevent.

Stein's Hebrew word *chevra* is directly translated into English as "society" or "folk," but in the context that he used it, it might be better associated with Victor Turner's concept of *communitas*. Turner developed the concept of communitas to refer to a "direct immediate and total confrontation of human identities," freed from the "culturally defined encumbrances of . . . role, status, reputation, class, caste, sex, or other structural niche [such as race]" (Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* 47-48). People experience communitas as a "communion . . . between definite and determinate identities" ("Variations on a Theme" 58-59). Communitas is similar, in many ways, to the concept of fellowship that received extensive treatment in Chapter 2 of this dissertation; in both cases, people feel profoundly connected to one another. But the two are fundamentally different in that fellowship, as I use the term, involves a tuning into the *otherness* of the other, whereas communitas involves a full or partial negation of otherness in an overwhelming sense of group cohesion. I suggest in this chapter that communitas, like fellowship, can be experienced through play, and that (like fellowship) it can strengthen a group. The strength that a group acquires through communitas can in some ways support critical dialogue, as I have argued that fellowship can do. A group that has experienced communitas can feel more invested in one another, and thus more willing to endure the uncomfortable and painful dissonances of critical dialogue. However, the minimizing of otherness in communitas is also directly opposed to the process of critical dialogue, in which groups probe the power differentials within their subgroups. Hence, it can be very difficult to transition from experiences of communitas into experiences of critical dialogue. At its most problematic, communitas can verge on

the "abundance of sentimentality masquerading under the cloak of fellowship" that Howard Thurman warns his readers about, and that I discussed at slightly greater length in Chapter 2 (75). At its best, however, communitas can enable people to explore and express the values and concerns that they genuinely hold in common.

Our group soon got a taste of just how difficult it can be to transition from experiences of communitas into experiences of critical dialogue. As Amanda (and others) spoke at the bus microphone, we rumbled on toward Montgomery. Our bus was tracing the path of the five-day civil rights march, and our next stop was the Loundes Cultural Center – a museum that sat roughly at the half-way point between Selma and Montgomery. Hudgens and I were to lead a large-group discussion at a multipurpose room there, and we determined that we wanted to lead an activity that would help the group to process the interracial tensions and mistrust that arise even in well-intentioned groups – groups such as ours, and such as the groups of 1965 Civil Rights marches. We wanted to create a space to acknowledge, and approach with curiosity, the differences and tensions within our group that might be developing. We wanted to harness the energy and commitment that was generated through the bridge ritual and deepen the conversation by acknowledging our dissonances.

It was a carefully-considered, yet perhaps unwise, pedagogical decision. The sense of communitas that they experienced on the bridge was so strong, and so intoxicating, that they were not ready to acknowledge dissonance in the immediate aftermath of the experience. I tried, but failed, to elicit the discussion I was after *through play*: I asked them to imagine themselves as the activists on the 1965 march. This

interracial and justice-oriented group had successfully crossed the bridge, and walked together out of Selma and into the rural stretches southeast of the town. And then, they got to a campsite, and got ready for their first night of the five-day trek. I asked our group to consider the feelings of tension, mistrust, and fear that these marchers might have harbored towards each other as they prepared for sleep, despite the fact that they were committed to the same cause. I hoped that if they were able to do that, then they would be able to articulate some of the similar tensions that our own group might be silently and consonantly harboring towards each other. But they were not able to do so. Sitting in a big circle in the multipurpose room, with most group members on chairs but a few sitting on the floor, in front of the chairs, the group members expressed only fear and mistrust of the Alabama police that might come in the night. Probing their answers, and trying to steer the group somewhere they were reluctant to go, Hudgens and I lost control of the discussion, which became unwieldy, with multiple unrelated strands.

And then something remarkable happened. When Hudgens and I began using the term "white privilege," Melanie, one of the Beth Emet participants, raised her hand to express frustration with *us*, the chaperone/educators. "I feel like you guys [the chaperone/educators] are trying to make us [the white, Jewish participants?] feel guilty. But I don't feel guilty, and I don't think I *should* feel guilty. We didn't do these things. We are all really nice people." As Hudgens and I challenged the group to acknowledge uncomfortable dissonance, their resistance to acknowledging fissures had caused Melanie to push *against us*, to reject what we were saying. In her mind, I believe, she was sacrificing the consonant deference along the axis between adults and youth in order to

preserve the sense of solidarity and communitas that existed among the youth at that moment. Had Melanie stopped talking at this moment, it might have been an unremarkable moment, another statement in the midst of a conversation that was not going according to plan. But then Melanie went on: "And also – I guess there are some ways that being white is an advantage, today, but not really that much. It's not really that significant anymore." There was a murmur around the room, as many hands went up in the air. This may have been a great opportunity, finally, to elicit and acknowledge the tension and the power differential within our group. I suspect that people were ready to challenge Melanie, to express some uncomfortable differences between the racial groups in the room.

But I, at this moment, made a decision that I continued to regret for the rest of the trip (and beyond). As hands shot up and murmurs spread around the room, I became fearful of the tension that might escalate in the room. I felt the urge to gently "correct" Melanie myself, and to mitigate the tension that might erupt among the teens. I felt this despite the fact that my (and Hudgens's) goal had been to elicit expressions of this dormant tension. So I said that I wanted to hear what people had to say, but that I wanted to respond first. With a gentle tone of voice, I thanked Melanie for her comment, and said that it was important for us to consider this perspective, because "this is the dominant narrative." I was not the first educator to use the term "dominant narrative" on the trip, but still, as Melanie's forehead crinkled, I understood that I was speaking jargon that was inaccessible for her (and others). I tried to explain what I meant, using terms like "this is what we often hear people say," but the longer I spoke, the more I squandered the

opportunity to let *them* address the disparities between their perspectives. Participants did speak after me, but I think probably not with the urgency, the sense of purpose, or the clarity that they were ready to speak with when they initially raised their hands. My own intervention and "correction" of Melanie's comment, combined with my jargon that confused many of them, had diluted the potency of the difference of opinion that they were (I suspect) about to express.

In retrospect, I understand my own intervention as an intuitive and affective desire to protect the communitas among the participants that was flourishing in the aftermath of the bridge ritual. While Hudgens and I had rationally decided that we wanted to cultivate an opportunity to express dissonance, I had anticipated that dissonance emerging only gradually and tentatively. When I felt Melanie's comment might possibly trigger a strong and sudden backlash, I had an emotional reaction to protect the very phenomenon that I had carefully, consciously decided to undermine. Having participated in the ritual with the participants, and having felt the profound power of group communitas that Stein, Ransom, and so many of the young people expressed, I was unable – at that particular moment – to truly cultivate the reflexive dissonance that I had rationally determined was desirable.

This is not to say that I think the communitas was entirely problematic. It is important for me to reemphasize that groups can feel more invested in one another, and thus more willing to endure the uncomfortable and painful dissonances of critical dialogue, after experiencing communitas.

As Theatre scholar Jill Dolan suggests of similar phenomena in her book *Utopia in Performance,* experiences of communitas lift "everyone slightly above the present" and "make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better" (5-6).[xv] Such moments might "persuade us that beyond this 'now' of material oppression and unequal power relations lives a future that might be different, one whose potential we can feel as we're seared by the promise of a present that gestures toward a better future" (7). They inspire investment in one another. They arouse a faith in humankind, without which Paolo Freire suggests that true dialogue is impossible (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 90-92). In our experience, communitas did not help us to catalyze critical dialogue, in which groups probe the power differentials within their subgroups. In fact, communitas made it more difficult to do so, at least in the short-term. But our experiences of communitas, such as the ritual on the bridge, were an "index to the possible:" while they didn't necessarily advance the goal of justice in any tangible way, they did provide a sustaining optimism in the midst of a long, difficult journey (Dolan 13).

Play and Fellowship

As I argued at the beginning of the last section, some of our group's playful experiences may have catalyzed a sense of communitas, but some of them yielded a more nuanced, differentiated expression of *fellowship*, similar to the experiences in Bibliodrama that I wrote about in Chapter 2. In this section of the chapter, I document and analyze four such moments, one of which was structured and facilitated by the

chaperone/educators (again, in the form of a ritual), two of which were spontaneous, participant-initiated phenomena, and one of which was catalyzed but not tightly facilitated by a chaperone/educator. While these playful evocations of fellowship are quite similar in many ways to the experience of communitas that I described above, they differ in the extent to which they engender a Buberian "opening to the *otherness* of the other" (emphasis mine).

The first of these occurred late Thursday evening in our Montgomery, AL hotel. It was the end of a very long day, which had included a four-hour bus ride from Atlanta to Selma, a lecture at the Selma Interpretive Center, the cathartic ritual of bridge-crossing, the frustration of our attempted group discussion at Loundes, a logistical snafu that delayed our dinner, and then, the tension of another (more successful) group discussion about race and privilege (which I will write more about later in this chapter). Many of us were exhausted, but today was Maundy Thursday, and there was an important ritual that could not be put off for another day. According to the Christian calendar, Maundy Thursday (three days before Resurrection Sunday) was the night of the last supper, when Jesus humbled himself before his disciples by washing their feet. To commemorate this moment and ritually prepare the group for Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, we all sat in a giant circle, facing inwards, where a smaller concentric circle of twelve empty chairs faced back at us. These empty chairs were the "washing stations." On the floor, near the inner ring of chairs, Emily Nidenberg and Jerane Ransom (chaperone/educators from Beth Emet and Second Baptist, respectively) had set out big aluminum pans of water and a collection of hand towels that volunteers

would use to wash the feet of anyone who chose to have their feet washed. Rev. Love spoke for several minutes, explaining that Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet was a demonstration of his love for them, and it was a symbolic part of a larger demonstration of how love can subvert the existing order of the world. She then invited twelve preselected volunteers (participants from both congregations) to kneel on the floor near the inner circle of chairs, and she invited anyone who wished to publicly come forward, sit in a chair of the inner circle, and have their feet washed by one of the volunteers.

When Rev. Love stopped speaking, people initially started giggling and chatting. Then Hudgens stood up, and asked everyone to remain quiet and reverent throughout this process:

> I ask that you guys keep an atmosphere of quiet respectfulness – some reverence. I might sing a little bit while we do this. Don't feel like you need to rush as you get up here. If you want to sit in your seats for a little while before you come up to get your feet washed, that's just fine. Take your time. Again, I ask that you respect the silence. Respect the silence. Respect the silence. Respect the silence.

Several people gently shushed each other, and some of the washers began to wet the feet of the first few volunteers. Then, Hudgens began to sing a song that she had taught earlier in the day:

> Lord prepare me / to be a sanctuary /
> Pure and holy / tried and true. /
> With thanksgiving / I'll be a living /

Sanctuary / for you.

She sang very, very slowly, repeating the short song several times. Many people joined in with her, singing together while individuals came forward to have their feet washed. The whispered chatter never entirely faded away, but it did decrease significantly, and after several cycles through the lyrics, Hudgens (and those singing with her) began to hum the melody wordlessly.

Before the ceremony, many on the trip – especially the Jewish participants, for whom the notion of footwashing was very strange – had been laughing together about the prospect of washing each other's feet. Embedded in a culture where feet are commonly thought of as smelly and gross, the idea of gently, humbly washing each other's feet caused some giddy anxiety.

Earlier that day, when Rev. Love first told some of the participants that there would be a footwashing ceremony that night, Brooklyn caught some peoples' initial reactions on video. Rev. Love had been casually walking down the bus aisle, and Brooklyn had turned on her camera, asking Rev. Love, "What are we going to do today?" When Rev. Love explained the foot-washing ceremony, Brooklyn pointed the camera towards Aurelia and Jennifer, the pair sitting in front of her.

"Aurelia, what's your opinion on foot-washing?" Brooklyn asked, in a formal interview style.

Aurelia, sitting by the window, shifted on her seat and twisted her body so that she could face Brooklyn, sitting behind her. As a very devoted Christian, I suspect that

she was familiar with the ritual. She answered with a smile, “Um . . . it’s cool. You have to humble yourself to do it.”

“Would you wash somebody’s feet?” Brooklyn asked Aurelia.

With a brief glance towards her partner Jennifer, and then a turn back to Brooklyn, Aurelia answered, “I’d wash my partner’s feet.”

Jennifer, sitting beside Aurelia, and outside the camera frame, squirmed. “Oooooh! I’m really –”

“Would you wash *my* feet?” Brooklyn asked Aurelia.

Both of them giggled.

“Maaaaaybe,” Aurelia answered.

Brooklyn began asking a follow-up question: “What are you looking to get –”

But then Jennifer broke in, and Brooklyn’s camera shifted to Jennifer, who exclaimed, “I just don’t like feet!”

Brooklyn’s own partner Michelle, curious, then asked Rev. Love a follow-up question: “What is it, exactly?” she asked, with her neck craned upwards toward Rev Love, her eyes wide with curiosity. “What do you do? You wash someone else’s feet?” Brooklyn’s camera shifted again to capture the interaction.

“You just have a pan of water, and you just sprinkle water, and then you just dry them off,” Love answered, standing in the bus aisle and pantomiming the act as she spoke.

“Ooooooh!” Jennifer squirmed, scrunching up her face and turning towards Brooklyn.

"Can we have gloves?" somebody asked from outside the camera frame.

Another voice chimed in, "To be honest, I really don't want –"

Brooklyn turned the camera toward the speakers, catching a few reactions nearby. Across the bus aisle, Kayla looked up at Rev Love with a huge smile, and asked, "Are we washing each other's feet?"

"Guys. Honestly, it's not that bad." Jordyn declared, without looking at either Kayla or Jennifer.

"*My* feet are bad" someone responded to Jordyn from out of the frame.

"No, I'm just curious, I don't know what it is," Michelle said, gently, reacting to Jordyn.

"Oooooh!" Jennifer exclaimed again. "I hate feet!"

Out of the frame, someone started singing, to the tune of a pop song*:* "Toooo-niiiight, we're washing feeee-eeeet."

Brooklyn, ignoring the singer but responding to Jennifer, asked, "So, would you wash your partner's feet?"

Jennifer, with an uncomfortable smile, answered, "Maybe. I gotta see them first," and then turned her head away. But a moment later, she turned back, with her face now twisted into a pained grimace, "Feet, I just don't like. Like, when people have their feet near me – ugh."

"But *you're* open to it?" Brooklyn asked, shifting the camera back to Aurelia.

"Yeah my feet are not – like my toes aren't painted so my feet are kinda ugly right now," Aurelia said.

"Thank you," Brooklyn said, laughing, as she shut off the camera.

Jennifer didn't mean to make a racist statement. I accept that she thinks of feet as gross, and the thought of washing feet – presumably *anyone's* feet – made her squirm. But her visceral rejection of washing Aurelia's feet foreclosed the possibility of reciprocating Aurelia's gesture of humility. Aurelia was willing to "humble [her]self to do it," but Jennifer seemed unwilling. While I don't know what emotional impact (if any) this reaction caused for Aurelia, I suspect that a young, black woman who may already be struggling with the dominant group's judgments of her body may feel particularly stung by such a reaction. Jordyn's declarative reaction from across the bus aisle – "Guys. Honestly, it's not that bad" – suggests that Aurelia might not be the only African American who felt hurt or degraded by these reactions.

Yet the reactions continued. Later that day, over lunch in Selma, Brooklyn asked Leanne (one of the Beth Emet participants) several questions on camera. Leanne responded with very poised, serious comments about the partner system and about the prohibition of electronic devices on the trip, but then Brooklyn asked, "Would you wash your partner's feet?" Leanne suddenly had to force back the edges of her mouth which were widening into a smile.

"I would *not* wash their feet," she said with a sassy smile, "because feet – actually if they had not-so-gross feet, I might wash their feet. But feet are kind of gross, so no."

The initial reactions of the Beth Emet participants ranged from Michelle's gentle curiosity to Leanne's sassy rejection to Jennifer's disgust. Yet once the ritual began, most of the group did choose to engage in it, and as it went on, with the singing in the

background, the group seemed to relax into it. They performed their variability, ritually and playfully embodying the epic humility and love that Jesus reportedly demonstrated toward his disciples. Recalling this ritual during our interview months later, Jerane Ransom said:

> I just felt like it was such a sacred moment, where everybody just kinda felt like we were *one*, for this one time on the trip . . . I can't remember who did me [who washed my feet]. [But] it was great, I felt like I was having a conversation with them in a whole different way. Not that I was talking. It was just more of a respect, and a brother to sister, or sister to sister type conversation. And you didn't have to say anything. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Through the playful enactment of ritual, we varied ourselves to become like Jesus and his disciples, to simultaneously experience humility, connectedness, and investment in one another. While Ransom described this sense of connectedness with the word "one-ness," which seems to evoke communitas, and while Ransom may indeed have experienced a sense of communitas during this ritual, I think that many of us experienced a profound sense of connectedness that operated with and through difference – a connectedness that I would describe not as communitas, but as fellowship. The relationships we evoked in that ritual – the relationships between Jesus and his disciples – are very different than the relationships among the thousands of activists who walked with King in 1965. The activists were – at least for a moment – all running the same risks, despite the racial differences among them. They were bound together as one mass

of people. But when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, he did not become indistinguishable from them; rather, he inverted the power relationship among them, playing with the potentiality of their relationship, while preserving a sense of difference. As we cited that relationship, putting white hands on black feet (and vice versa) for a gentle, cleansing touch, I believe that many of us may have experienced a sense that our relationships were in play, that they were variable, and that we did not and could not yet know what we would come to mean to one another.

Even for the Beth Emet teens, who may not have fully understood the dynamics of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, the physical act of making contact with one another, particularly in an unconventional way, may have catalyzed a shift in their relationships. Cultural theorist Erin Manning, whom I introduced briefly in Chapter 2, theorizes the radical potential of touch to reorient people to one another, without entirely collapsing the differences between them. She slows down the process of touch as she poetically describes and theorizes it: in touch, she writes, "I *will* reach toward you and allow the texture of your body to make an imprint on mine," and I will "feel . . . my body in relation to yours." She goes on:

> With touch, I enter (into communication with) you, with you I create the interval between me and you, I am moved by you and I move (with) you, but I do not become you . . . I negotiate that untouchability, that surface that cannot be penetrated, the unknown and (in)finite distance which separates me and you. . . [In touch,] I *will* reach toward you and allow the

> texture of your body to make an imprint on mine . . . [I will feel] my body in relation to yours." (11-13)

As we played out the action of Jesus and his disciples, we also allowed that physical choreography of touch to play itself out in our bodies, and to recalibrate (or at least to question) our sense of the boundaries between us.

* * *

Throughout the trip, the participants' own spontaneous acts of play also may have catalyzed a similar recalibration of the boundaries between them. I suspect that I, as an authority figure on the trip, am probably unaware of many of the instances of play that happened subtly among participants, often in their hotel rooms, in the small spaces between bus seats, over tabletops of restaurants, and in whispered exchanges. But some instances of play were loud, boisterous, inclusive, and highly visible, such as the times on the bus when participants would break out in song together. On Friday night, as we drove back to our hotel after a very difficult Shabbat service in Birmingham (which I write about later in the chapter), Brooklyn caught one of these sing-alongs on her video camera. The sing-along began, as it often did, with a few people, sitting near one another, who began singing a pop song. In this case, while I can't be sure that Brooklyn's video caught the very beginning of the sing-along, it seems like the singing began with Elenor, Candace, and Felicia, who were all sitting near one another, at the front of the bus, when they started singing Rihanna's "Take a Bow." Those three girls were all SBC participants, and their BE partners – Kayla, Shoshanna, and Sarah – didn't initially join in. Perhaps some of them didn't know the song. Perhaps they didn't initially feel that they

were *supposed* to sing along. They smiled at their partners, watching them closely, seeming to enjoy the sing-along happening around them and (is it just me, projecting?) wishing they could participate fully. But then, Leanne, a Beth Emet participant who clearly *did* know the song, sitting slightly further back on the bus, craned her neck to get a better sense of what was happening a few seats in front of her, and started singing along, her mouth broadening into a smile as she did so. Rebecca, another BE participant sitting further back on the bus, also began singing along, swaying and clapping, a giant smile plastered on her face. Jordyn, an SBC participant, and Samantha and Elana, two BE participants, all sitting even further back in the bus, also began singing. Roni, towards the front of the bus, started clapping their hands over their head, with a giant grin plastered on their face, twisting in their seat so that they could feel more involved in the action, whose center was situated behind them on the bus.[xvi] Natalie, another BE participant sitting near Roni, enthusiastically waved her hands over her head.

The end of the song, in this environment, did not mark the end of the sing-along, but rather, an opportunity to sing other songs. In another short video, which Brooklyn took shortly after the first, the bus was pulsing to the beat of R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly" and Cascada's "Every Time We Touch." While not everyone was singing, about three-fourths of the participants were participating in some way by this point, whether singing, clapping, swaying their torsos, waving their arms, drumming on the overhead bins, or breaking out spontaneously into solo riffs between lines of the songs. Brooklyn, sitting in the middle of the bus, zealously waved the camera around the bus, trying to capture the full sweep of people engaged in the singing.

With this sing-along, and others like it, participants *performed their variability* to act not as fully-independent, autonomous beings (which is how our democratic, capitalist culture usually encourages us to see ourselves) nor as a unison bloc (which is how our group rituals encouraged them to act) but rather, as interdependent parts of a whole, containing some of the dissonance of harmony and fellowship. At times like these, the modes of participation varied: some sang the lyrics while others waved their arms, improvised solo riffs, and beat out rhythms on the overhead bins. Some clapped. In fact, some clapped on the downbeat, while others clapped on the offbeat – an iconic cultural difference that manifest itself in the midst of this play. This inability of the group to clap together was significant, rhythmically manifesting our cultural differences in the midst of experiences that otherwise felt quite euphoric. Of course, this is a moderate expression of dissonance; they are ultimately only singing pop songs together, not acknowledging the power differential among them. It is important not to over-valorize such moments. Nonetheless, it is also important to recognize that something slightly different is happening here than happened on the Pettus Bridge, when the group experienced the communitas of orienting to one another as a bloc.

* * *

Months later, when I was interviewing Roni, they told me about another similar form of play that happened several times in the hotel rooms that they shared with Corey, Michael and James: "At night, we would have dance parties and we would hang around and jump around the rooms and dance. And it was really fun and we would turn on the radio and we just run around the rooms." Fascinated, I pressed Roni for details:

"How and when did these dance parties start?" I asked them. "I imagine they didn't start the first night. Or maybe they did."

Roni recalled:

> No, the first night we watched some basketball on TV. And I don't really know basketball, but it was fun. It was the second night, I think. Second or third. Where James just turned on the radio and he was dancing in between the beds. And we just laughed so hard . . . But it was late so we didn't start dancing. And then the next night we were like, "Ok, we're gonna have a dance party." James started it, and we were all kind of like, "This is awesome! Let's do this!" It was really fun.

Again, I pressed Roni for more details. I took out a scrap piece of paper, and sketched out the birds' eye view of a hotel room. "So, if a hotel room looks like *this* – where was the dance party?"

Roni pointed to the space between the beds, and then to the beds themselves, and then to the areas around the beds, as they said, "It started *here*, and then it would move *here* and *here* –"

"Onto the beds?" I asked.

"Yeah; we would jump onto the beds, and then it would also just be *around*, and we'd run around a little bit - but it was mostly between the beds."

I then asked Roni to compare the hotel room dances to the dances that their public high school holds. They had a lot to say about this:

> I don't really like school dances because they're awkward. They don't feel natural. The dance in the hotel room was different because it wasn't planned out. I wasn't like, "Corey, would you like to dance with me?" We were just like, "Lets dance!" And it was more celebratory than kind of like expected . . . There's no drama behind it; its not like we would go home and gossip about each other, because that's lame. And also, it wasn't that environment. A school dance is such a worryful environment, and that was a worryfree environment . . . At the school dance [I'm] looking around, trying to see who's looking at me. I always kind of feel like I'm like – it makes me uncomfortable. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Less than a year after I conducted this interview, Roni came out as transgender – first to a few close friends, then to their family, and finally to their facebook community and their wider social world. With the benefit of hindsight, it is not surprising that a transgender teen would find the heteronormative school dances to be alienating and "worryful," and would prefer this playful group dancing, far away from the eyes of high school gossip chains. Yet even when I first interviewed Roni, and (mis)identified Roni as a cis-gendered male, this aversion to school dances, and the preference for the playful dancing of four young men in a hotel room, made sense to me. I suspect that if I had the opportunity to interview Roni's (cis-gendered) roommates, they would have expressed many of the same feelings. The feeling of being watched and judged at school dances creates anxiety for teens of all genders, who worry about being noticed and labeled as "different" than their peers – for dancing more exuberantly than others, more reservedly

than others, less "skillfully" than others, or with different moves than others. The playful dance he described to me was liberating and joyful, allowing for those differences without judgment, manifesting the bodily pleasure of expansive movement in tandem with others. Roni then went on to talk about how he grew increasingly comfortable with his peers on this trip, through the combination of this playful interaction and the high-stakes, reflexive conversations.

> Obviously I wouldn't have been as good at sharing opinions and as good at forming opinions about things that people said if I wasn't comfortable with them. The way that we all got comfortable with one another [i.e., through singing, dancing, sharing space, etc.] definitely helped me to be like, "Oh, these people will hear me out. These people won't just hear me say something and then write me off. They [will] listen." . . . But also, having the tough conversations and seeing peoples' emotion, and seeing how people felt [helped to establish a greater sense of comfort]. . . . In a school environment, sometimes it's hard to relax with people you aren't already comfortable with – because we don't generally talk about our emotions at school, and I won't talk to the girl in my Chemistry class about how she *feels*. Or the guy who sits next to me in lunch, about what he's *feeling* that day. Unless . . . I'm [already] very comfortable with them. And so the emotions that people showed made it easier to be like, "Wow, I *like* people who have feelings, and I *like* people who can *express* their

> feelings." And that makes it a lot easier to express myself and to be comfortable with people. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

For Roni (and I suspect for others), the informal play that participants sustained among themselves established a comfort that then allowed them to verbally express their intellectual, ideological, and experiential dissonances. *And vice versa*: The vulnerability that they expressed in those conversations buttressed the comfort they had with one another, which then made them feel less self-conscious in their interpersonal relations, and more open to expressing themselves playfully. Fellowship, stimulated in part through play, provided a foundation for critical dialogue, and critical dialogue bolstered fellowship. Immersed in play, participants could safely perform their variability and experiment with different ways of being in relationship with one another, different instances of dissonance and connectedness. Play thus bolstered their capacity to sustain dissonance within critical dialogue, and the satisfaction that came from sustaining dissonance within critical dialogue emboldened their play.

* * *

A fourth example of fellowshipping through play occurred about two thirds of the way through the trip, on Saturday night, when unexpected traffic in Birmingham made for a very long bus ride back to our hotel from the nearby Whole Foods, where we had eaten dinner. During this bus ride, like many bus rides, Minister Webb helped to catalyze a small-group conversation in the back of the bus that gradually grew to include more and more people. These conversations in the back of the bus became a hallmark of our trip – loved by some (who participated in them), admired by others (who wanted to be a part of

it, but who sat in the front of the bus and felt they should not crowd into the back), and resented by some others (who felt excluded). In this conversation, like all such conversations, people huddled together, twisting in their seats and standing in the aisles, to face one another and hear one another as they spoke. But this particular conversation went on for longer than most, and grew to include more people than most. When I interviewed Tabri months later, she remembered this particular conversation as one of her most potent memories, when she experienced a strong sense of connectedness with the other participants on the trip. They started imagining the prospect of building the infrastructure for a movement when they returned to Chicagoland:

> We talked about what we were gonna do after Sankofa, like what was gonna be our big thing. And we had taken this conversation so far, we were coming up with websites we were gonna be connected to, what was this organization gonna be called, if we were gonna start an organization, like how were we gonna touch base with the different schools – Like, how we were gonna reach Niles North [High School, a local high school which nobody on the trip attended]? . . . And how were we gonna get other kids to feel Sankofa without actually going on Sankofa? So I felt like that whole conversation, that little chit chat on the back of the bus, gave me so much hope for Sankofa. Like, this was like actually the big thing, this was the *it* moment. Like, people said this was only the beginning, and I truly believe that was only - Sankofa was just the beginning of Sankofa. Just the whole trip and going on the bus was actually the beginning. There's more

> to be done, and I feel like we are gonna fulfill the legacy, or we are gonna fulfill our actual dreams that we want to, once everyone gets everything together. And we actually get the actual idea that we need to cover. And that gave me the most hope because I felt like everyone was on board with each other. We were like, "We wanna do this; this has to be done; this is gonna be like amazing." Everybody was so excited. We weren't gonna get off the bus until we actually got down packed everything that we were gonna get done. That gave me the most hope. That moment. And I still think about that – we all still talk about that. And we're like: "So when are we gonna like do this?" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

There is, of course, an irony to Tabri's excited recollection of that night. When she recounted this memory to me, about two months after our return, nobody had actually done the things that they were anticipating doing when they had that conversation. Tabri acknowledged this reality, but still anticipated doing it "once everyone gets everything together." Yet as I write these words, more than a year after the journey we took together, Tabri and her peers have still not taken the steps that they once felt emboldened to take. Nonetheless, on that particular night, when their focus shifted from the historical lessons of museums and sites to the potential future of the movement in the Chicago suburbs, it felt real to them, and they felt a surge of collective energy. Perhaps even more significant, they felt connected *to each other* in a profound way. "Everyone was on board with each other. . .everybody was so excited," Tabri recalled during our conversation.

This sense of connectedness is particularly intriguing, given that this was not a conversation that skirted or denied their differences. I, too, was at the back of the bus for this particular conversation, and remember it well. Just before the conversation turned toward the long-term planning that Tabri spoke about, the teens sustained a thoughtful, vulnerable conversation about racial profiling, in which members of both racial groups acknowledged the ways they engage in racial profiling, and in which they thought together about its causes, its effects, and the appropriate responses to it. This part of the conversation, in which participants acknowledged and analyzed their participation in an oppressive system, required them to orient themselves to one another as members of distinct racial groups, with different relationships to power. It may have been particularly painful for the African American participants who confronted their own internalized oppression. It is with an acknowledgement of these differences that the teens turned to one another as potential leaders of a movement, excitedly planning the future. In fact, I want to suggest that their acknowledgement of their differences may have *allowed* them to begin imagining themselves as partners in leading a movement. They collectively *performed their variability* to sustain dissonance among themselves, something that their typical choreographies discourage, and that orientation to one another felt so different from their "quotidian" realities of consonant interaction that they experienced it as part of a grand vision for a potential future. As they engaged in this act of planning and envisioning, they engaged in an act of play, relishing the sense of purpose that comes from being at the helm of a movement, and casting themselves in the mold of the civil rights leaders we were learning about. "We weren't gonna get off the bus until we

actually got down packed everything we were gonna get done," Tabri recalled, months later, remembering what it felt like to be transformed, even if only momentarily, into a movement leader.

These four examples of times that play – the performance of variability – enabled the Sankofa participants to experience fellowship – an orientation to the *otherness* of the other – vary significantly in form. They include a ritual, a discussion, an outburst of song, and an exuberant dance practice. They are so different that perhaps it may seem strange to characterize them all as manifestations of the same phenomenon. Yet while it may be important to recognize the differences among these, it may also be instructive to recognize the element of play that cuts across them all. Before they began playing together, when they sat with their partners on the bus and tried to sustain conversations about *who they were*, they were largely unable to orient themselves to their differences. Once they began to play in these many different ways, those differences not only became speakable but also the fuel for imagining a different, more equitable reality.

Play and Segregation

While this dissertation argues that play can be productive in the pursuit of intercultural dialogue and progressive change, it is also crucial to acknowledge that play is not always necessarily productive. As the *performance of variability*, play can also be quite regressive, and can reinscribe dominant patterns of behavior. The following instance of participant-initiated play tempers the optimism of the last two sections, as it

calls attention to the potentiality of play to catalyze segregation in the midst of a group that is gradually, playfully warming up to one another. This interaction occurred on the afternoon following the powerful bridge-crossing ritual and the unsuccessful discussion at Loundes. We drove straight from the Loundes Cultural Center to our hotel in Montgomery, where the participants had free time until dinner. Meanwhile, the eight chaperone/educators gathered for a meeting, so I didn't know exactly what the participants were up to. But I got glimpses of it, after the fact, based on the video footage that Roni and Brooklyn recorded, and one of these glimpses provides a fascinating study of playful interaction that reinforces, rather than challenges, the dominant choreography of segregation.

In this video fragment, Brooklyn (one of the African American participants) approached four Beth Emet participants who were sitting together on and around a leather couch in the hotel lobby. As Brooklyn, who was holding the camera, began filming, David, wearing a tank-top, was sitting next to Kayla, wearing a t-shirt and short shorts, on one half of the couch. On David's other side, Solomon sat, perched atop the couch's arm, leaning against the wall behind the couch, wearing jeans and a t-shirt. The other half of the couch, to Kayla's right, was empty. Natalie sat on the floor in front of this open half of the couch, with her feet nuzzling up between Kayla and David. The overall image was thus of four teens, sitting casually with one another, very close together: two on the couch seats, one atop the couch arm, and one on the floor. In the first moments of footage, Natalie pulled herself up off the floor to sit in the open space on the couch next to Kayla, as Kayla scooched closer to David, to hug him around the waist.

The movement on the couch caused Solomon to fall off the arm, onto the couch, into David. “You guys are on video, by the way,” Brooklyn said to them.

“Right now?” David asked.

Kayla’s mouth opened wide into a joyful smile, and she waved at the camera. Natalie pressed her body into Kayla’s, smiling for the camera, arching her back in an iconically feminine physical gesture that accentuated her breasts. Meanwhile, with one hand, she executed a giant, performative wave, while she exclaimed a loud, joyful, “Hiiiiiiiiii!” She then immediately lied down on the open half of the couch, her head resting atop the couch’s arm. Of course, there was not space on her open half of the couch for her to fully stretch out; so her legs were bent, with her knees pointing upward, and her toes tucked under Kayla’s thigh. Solomon, his body wedged into the tiny space between David and the couch’s other arm, said nothing. Neither did David.

“How are you feeling about the trip?” Brooklyn asked, her voice chipper.

“It’s fun!” Kayla said, laughing, as she leaned forward, and David wedged his head and shoulders into the space between her torso and the back of the couch. He and Solomon were now talking and laughing quietly, but their words not are quite audible on the footage.

“The trip is really fun,” Natalie echoed, running a hand through her long straight hair. “We get to bond with people we’ve never even seen before.” She then extended one her legs across Kayla’s lap.

“Yes, I can see you’re bonding,” Brooklyn said.

Kayla's smile suddenly fell into a look of concern, and she shot Natalie a glance. Perhaps she recognized the irony of four whited, Jewish people who had known each other for years, perched on a sofa, their bodies rubbing against one another, claiming that they were bonding with people they hadn't ever seen before. She then looked up at the camera, smiled, and extracted her arms from under Natalie's legs, stretching them out towards Brooklyn. "Brooklyn, come bond with us!" she implored. Brooklyn took a step closer to Kayla, whose torso suddenly filled the frame. She leaned forward, reaching for Brooklyn's hands (or perhaps for the camera Brooklyn was holding), and then Brooklyn shut off the camera.

The four whited, Jewish teens on the couch were engaged in play, but not in a way that invited an engagement with their African American peers. As they pressed their bodies into one another, the four of them (but especially Kayla and David, who sat beside each other, David with his arms totally exposed, and Kayla with her legs almost entirely exposed) engaged in a kind of sexualized play: they performed the variability of their bodies, displaying and enacting a kind of sexual energy, and a zeal for bodily contact, that teenagers are often beginning to explore. Kayla was happy for Brooklyn to join them, but the two communities had different cultural norms around these quasi-sexual public encounters. The Beth Emet teens, many of whom had known one another for years, and who came from a community that (by and large) affirmed playful touching as an appropriate manifestation of adolescent hormonal development, engaged in this performance of variability to explore the sexual beings they were becoming. But this kind of public touch is not considered appropriate in all communities, and I didn't see any of

the African American participants engage in it. Their playful touch thus excluded the African American participants, whether intentionally or not, and it serves as an important reminder that play can both transcend and reinforce dominant choreographies.

Moreover, Kayla's and Natalie's final comments underscore the fact that even when people engage in behavior that reinforces the choreography of segregation, they don't recognize themselves as doing so. Natalie's statement, "We get to bond with people we've never even seen before" was made without any deliberate irony, with no apparent recognition of the fact that the four people pressing their bodies into one another constituted a homogenous group and had known each other since preschool. Kayla seemed to suddenly realize that they were being exclusive, but didn't seem to understand that their peers from Second Baptist may not have wanted to engage in the physical intimacy with which they were engaging one another. While the bridge ritual had momentarily brought the group together in intercultural communitas, only hours before, the dominant choreography of segregation reasserted itself through play during the free time in the hotel. Play can be a powerful way to suspend dominant choreographies and encourage fellowship within an intercultural group, but it can also reify the same choreographies that progressive educators and dialogue facilitators might like to interrupt.

The Reflexive Push Towards Dissonant, Critical Dialogue

Over the preceding three sections of this chapter, I have recounted and analyzed six experiences of play from over the course of our six-day trip. In aggregate, I have suggested that the act of play, which is itself the performance of variability, can vary the extent to which intercultural groups adhere to the dominant choreographies that structure their relationships. It can sometimes reinforce those choreographies, as in the above example in the hotel lobby, but it can also promote the cultivation of new choreographies. However, as I suggested when recounting the failed discussion at Loundes, I believe that play itself was often insufficient to catalyze reflexive, critical dialogue on Sankofa. Even if we needed play in order to build the relationships that could sustain such a dialogue, we ultimately needed to be pushed *out* of that playful realm in order to embrace the dissonance and discomfort of such a dialogue. In this section of the chapter, I recall several of the more robust, multiperspectival discussions that we sustained on the trip, and emphasize that they all began with a firm push that did not feel playful.

The first of these began on Thursday night, after the bridge-crossing ritual in Selma, the discussion at Loundes, and the free time in the hotel (all of which I have already written about, in various places within this chapter). After dinner that evening, we again gathered the group in a circle, asking everyone to sit beside their Sankofa partners. In the hours that had passed between the Loundes discussion and this gathering, Hudgens had suggested that we print copies of Peggy McIntosh's essay, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." This article features a list of fifty manifestations of McIntosh's own white privilege, such as "I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed," and "When I am told about

our national heritage or about 'civilization,' I am shown that people of my color made it what it is." (McIntosh 1-2).[xvii] We distributed these copies around the circle, saying that we wanted to return to some concepts we had discussed earlier in the day. We asked the participants to collectively read this list out loud, each individual giving voice to one of McIntosh's statements. Then, we broke the group into six or seven smaller groups to reflect on the text, before reconvening the large group for a discussion about what resonated (and what didn't) from McIntosh's essay.

While some of McIntosh's statements (written in the late 1980s) felt dated to these teens, and some of the statements (which mentioned workplace politics, the IRS, and the choice of where to live) felt very *adult* and thus remote, many of the statements felt very relevant. First in small groups, and then in larger ones, teens acknowledged the differences between their racialized experiences of their racist world. The Beth Emet participants began to understand that while they may indeed be "nice" people (as Melanie had insisted earlier that day), and while they may indeed feel a sense of solidarity or communitas with their African American peers (as many of them had experienced profoundly on the bridge), the world still would treat them differently. The Second Baptist participants who felt that they "didn't see race" (as Aniyah had expressed a day before) grappled with the stark depiction of a world in which their identity as cultural "others" was not only seen but also constantly reinforced through small and quiet acts of neglect and judgment. Earlier in the day, I had tried but failed to ease the group into this kind of critical dialogue through role-play. Hudgens and I succeeded at doing so when we changed tactics, cultivating critical reflexivity through the act of reading a list of painful

observations – an act that did not feel playful. Like the discussion in Bibliodrama that Minister Smith led on March 11 (which I described at the end of Chapter 3), play could help to create the conditions for a critical dialogue, but it couldn't successfully catalyze that dialogue.

* * *

The following night, we encountered another reflexive push, which again catalyzed a robust, dissonant discussion. The discussion again took place in a multipurpose room at one of our hotels, but the catalyst for this one began earlier in the day – when we attended Shabbat evening services at Birmingham's Temple Emmanu-el.

The rabbi of the synagogue met our bus outside the synagogue, and we huddled around him on the sidewalk as he began telling us about the building and the congregation. He showed us, from the outside, the multiple parts of the massive building, explaining the decisions that his congregation had to make as they expanded an historic building based on contemporary needs. He then led us into the building, which elicited gasps of awe as the teens entered a giant lobby with high ceilings, a giant skylight, sparkling marble floors, and beautiful spiral staircases aesthetically framing the room. The rabbi directed us into a small sanctuary – not the main sanctuary where we would be having services that evening, but a more intimate space where he could tell us more about the history of the congregation. Sitting in rows facing the rabbi, we listened to him acknowledge, and attempt to justify, the lack of action that the congregation took during the Civil Rights movement. He said that the members of this congregation were "not racist," but that they felt threatened by Christian white people who frightened the Jews of

Birmingham into submission with anti-Semitic graffiti on the building. He acknowledged that his predecessor, Rabbi Hilton Grafman, had a blemished reputation for co-authoring and signing the public statement by eight prominent Alabama clergymen that Martin Luther King responded to in the form of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." But he also defended that predecessor, arguing that he was perhaps not "fully heroic" yet still "9 out of 10 parts hero" and that these issues can appear clearer with historical hindsight than they are when people actually need to make decisions. Our group listened politely, though some of us were troubled by what we understood as a defense of inaction when courage and action were most needed. As our group was dismissed and we headed up to services, some of the chaperone/educators lingered for a brief moment, checking in with each other and sharing our disappointment in the historical narrative that had just been presented.

Yet if the teens were disturbed by the narrative, they did not show it. They obediently moved into the main sanctuary, with its giant domed ceiling, its beautiful dark wood pews, and soaring arches. During the service, we again sat beside our Sankofa partners, with the Jewish teens helping the Baptist teens navigate the service. But even the Jewish teens found the service difficult to follow, as the music was unfamiliar and thus disorienting to them. Somewhat alienated, and therefore tuning out, a few of the teens didn't notice when the rabbi made a particularly problematic statement. Noting that it was not only Shabbat but also Good Friday, the rabbi told a short story about an encounter he had with his wife several years ago when traveling in the Caribbean. Little local children approached them, eagerly shouting "God is dead! God is dead! God is

dead!" Confused and taken aback, it took the rabbi and his wife some time to realize that the children, with broken English, were announcing Good Friday. "But that's really the essential difference between Jewish theology and Christian theology," the rabbi said, speaking to the congregation. "In Christian theology, sometimes God is alive, but sometimes, God is dead. In Jewish theology, God is always alive. We can lose sight of God, and we can question God, and we can get angry with God, but God is always there."

It was this statement, even more than the earlier defense of the congregation's historic inaction, and certainly more than the dull service, that most alienated me. Our group remained at the synagogue for several more hours, as we had arranged to have dinner there and engage in an evening program with a local interfaith, interracial teen group who joined us there. But for the rest of the time we remained at the synagogue, I couldn't bring myself to feel invested in anything that was happening. The same, I realized, was true for several other chaperones. Both Rev. Love and Rabbi London had approached the rabbi after the service to talk about his problematic statements (both before and during the service), and the local rabbi did make a public statement later in which he acknowledged that his statement about Good Friday was misleading. As he did so, he invited Rev. Love to clarify the significance of Jesus' death within a Trinitarian understanding of God. "Thank you," he said publicly to her after she spoke. "Tonight, you are my rabbi." Yet Rev. Love and Rabbi London, like me, remained skeptical and eager to leave a place that didn't seem to share our group's values. The teens, meanwhile, seemed to engage in the activity with relative ease. They were tired, and the activity

didn't excite them much, but they were polite and participatory and willing to do what was asked of them.

Back at the hotel, gathered in a circle in a multipurpose room, Rabbi London and Reverend Love invited the teens to reflect on our time at the synagogue. As Paolo Freire often did in his own pedagogy, they invited the group to examine and discuss a concrete manifestation of larger, troubling, social issues. I was surprised that the teens' response was at first relatively muted. The Second Baptist teens expressed intrigue at the Jewish rituals and the Jewish service. Some of them remarked with curiosity and humor at their Jewish peers' inability to follow the service. The Jewish teens expressed feeling alienated by the unfamiliar melodies. Some gently critiqued the music, noting that in addition to the unfamiliar tunes, it seemed like local people weren't really singing, and that the musical leader wasn't very "good." Nobody mentioned the rabbi's comments – either about the inaction during the Civil Rights Movement or about Christian theology. I presume that broaching this topic felt too threatening for the precarious consonance that we had managed to preserve throughout the evening. The Second Baptist teens didn't know if they could critique a Jewish authority without implicating and upsetting their new friends from Beth Emet. The Beth Emet teens didn't want to implicate themselves, or their community, in a sustained comfort with a racist and myopic status quo. Finally, after fifteen or twenty minutes, the chaperone/educators began expressing discomfort with some of the rabbi's statements. I was the first educator to voice this, but right after me, both Minister Webb and Rev. Love voiced similar comments.

Suddenly the emotional register of the conversation shifted. As we spoke, the participants snapped in affirmation of what we said. Hands raised, and many teens began to voice frustration, confusion, and pain based on the comments that the rabbi had made. A few brave participants then sought to mitigate what we had said. Rinat, for example, a Beth Emet participant, said that the rabbi was just one person, and that SBC participants shouldn't assume that his ideas were mainstream. Jordyn and Brooklyn, both SBC participants, expressed that they were bothered by the comments, but that they were willing to forgive, and that we all need to be willing to forgive. They said that we don't know much about this man or what caused him to say these things, and that he seemed willing to apologize when Rev. Love corrected him.

One Beth Emet participant, Amanda, grew profoundly troubled, and when she spoke, she choked back tears. She expressed that "everyone" was disparaging this rabbi, who maybe said some problematic things, but didn't seem to be the bully we were all making him out to be. She felt implicated by his statements, and she felt vulnerable in the face of the group's critique of him. She worried, I think, that she needed to defend the honor of a flawed but well-intentioned Jewish community and Jewish leader. As soon as she finished speaking, she broke out in sobs. Rachel Hudgens, who had been sitting beside me, moved to sit beside Amanda, to place a hand on her back and comfort her, displacing a participant who came to take Hudgens's original spot beside me.

I was both impressed and disturbed by the dynamics of this discussion. On the one hand, once we, the chaperone/educators, demonstrated that strong critique was welcome, the participants engaged in a dynamic, multivocal discussion in which they

found the courage to express divergent points of view about a topic that was clearly very important to them. Even Amanda, who felt very alone in this conversation, found the courage to contribute honestly. Whereas the actions of historical figures like Bull Connor, which we were learning about through documentary films and museums, were easy to identify as oppressive, the historical and contemporary actions of this Temple Emmanu-el constituted a much more subtle type of cultural arrogance and self-interest. I was impressed that the teens were able to grapple with this subtlety openly and honestly, and to listen to one another as they expressed divergent opinions about the complexities of what they had witnessed. On the other hand, I recognized that they were *only* willing (or able) to do so once the chaperone/educators modeled a willingness to express frustration with, and criticism of, our hosts. They needed a strong "push" from us (the chaperone/educators), in addition to the strong "push" of the rabbi's statements, to voice the most dissonant ideas that they harbored.

Like the reflexive discussion on white privilege one day prior, and like the reflexive conversation about intercultural partnerships that Minister Smith facilitated during Bibliodrama on March 11, the "push" that this dissonant conversation did not feel playful. We had encountered an instantiation of cultural arrogance and a defense of historic inaction that entirely situated within the "real world." We pushed the participants to take this cultural arrogance seriously by demonstrating our own real concern and emotional discomfort. They *then* responded to that arrogance, and that historic inaction, from their own points of view as whited Jews and black Christians. That conversation was hard for some, but it was within reach.

* * *

For many Sankofa participants, the most potent "reflexive push" of our trip came in the form of another ritual, on the final day of our journey. That morning, our group visited the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King was shot while visiting Memphis to participate in a rally for the sanitation workers strike. Like our experience on the Pettus Bridge several days prior, we approached the motel in pairs, walking slowly and silently. Like we did when we walked the bridge, many held each others' hands. But unlike our experience on the bridge, most of us did not report feeling transported to another place and time. Rather, the experience rooted us in the present. People were caring for their partners in moments of radical vulnerability, and contemplating the enormity of the risks and sacrifices that people have to make in the fight for greater justice. It was a ritual in the Schechnerian sense, but not in the Turnerian sense. We performed a "restored behavior" in the sense that we literally walked in King's steps, standing where he bled, walking the walk that so many visitors have done, and thus demonstrating that our bodies can take on an action that other bodies have taken on. But most of us did not imagine ourselves *as King*; we didn't take what Turner describes as the "sacrificial plunge into possibility." It was not – for most of us – an act of mimetic play.

A few weeks after the trip ended, eight of the participants composed a collective memoir about this experience. Many of them recalled a very strong sense of providing and receiving emotional support to and from their partners, often in a nonverbal way. "I held Amanda's hand tighter. To let her know I was there for her. I wanted to be the strong partner…to let her know that if anything went wrong I was there," Jordyn wrote,

emphasizing her own awareness of her body, her own emotional state, and her relationship to her partner.

"We were linked arm in arm, connected," Leanne wrote in a similar vein. "As if we were telling each other 'It's ok, I am here for you.' She was holding me up and me her. I was afraid that if I let go we would crumble."

And yet, some of them felt a profound *disconnect* with one another at that moment. Samantha, a BE participant, wrote: "I look around at my peers crying. Why can't I feel anything? Where are the tears? It was if my heart was numb. Maybe it just hadn't hit me yet, but as I kept walking I wondered if it ever would."

Tabri wrote, "At the motel I really didn't say anything to Leanne; I wish I could have shared some words, and let her know how I felt, but I felt like I couldn't. I was so speechless." Later, when I interviewed Tabri, she expounded on this at much greater length:

> I didn't feel like I could cry and hug her at that time. Because once, automatically, I started crying, I ran to Ms. [Jerane] Ransom and just cried in her arms. I felt like I couldn't cry with my partner. And I don't know why . . . I was sitting right next to Leanne and I could have just hugged her and cried with her and carried a memorable moment. But I got back on the bus and me and Leanne just started talking, and she was like, "I hate to see you sad. I know you ran over to Ms. Ransom and I felt like I had to give you space. I didn't want to crowd you because I thought you'd run back to her." . . . I didn't know if she was gonna feel what I was feeling at the

> time because all of us had different thoughts about what was going on, different experiences. And I didn't think she was gonna feel exactly what I felt at that time. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

The contrast of our experience at the Lorraine Motel with our experience at the Pettus Bridge underscores that rituals – even those with a remarkably similar form – can be *playful* to varying degrees, and in varying ways. When we crossed the Pettus Bridge, framed with John Lewis's memoir, so many in our group experienced that ritual through a performance of variability in which they imagined themselves within the historical context that they were physically citing. Doing so nurtured an experience of communitas, or "*chevra*," as Avi Stein recalled it. It helped the group to develop a sense of cohesion, trust, and support, early in our trip together. In the short term, the experience made it more difficult to catalyze a multiperspectival discussion, yet in the long term, it helped us to establish the sense of trust and connectedness that would make robust critical dialogue feasible. In contrast, when we physically executed many of the same behaviors at the Lorraine Motel – silently walking with our partners, holding hands, across the length of a raised structure – we did so in a way that (for most of us) rooted us firmly in the present, allowing people to experience support for one another but also to recognize the profound differences among us. It was not an act of mimetic play; we didn't imagine ourselves at a different moment in history, we didn't think of ourselves as taking a "plunge" into anyone else's consciousness. It was, perhaps, an act of play, but it didn't *feel* playful: it was playful only in the sense that it enabled us to *perform our variability* vis-à-vis one another, interacting in a more caring state of heightened awareness.

We remained in the shadow of the hotel for about a half hour, after everyone crossed. Many were crying. Others were talking about Dr. King's legacy, and about their own sense of responsibility. Still others were talking and debating about whether our group should stay onsite for a press conference with one of Dr. King's sons, which was rumored to be taking place later in the day. This was not really up for discussion, as we (the chaperone/educators) had told them. We had to get back to Evanston. The teens had to be in school the following day. We were skeptical about whether or not there would actually *be* a press conference, but even if there was, we asserted our power and clarified that we couldn't stay for it. We had to get lunch and get back on the bus. Nonetheless, many of them clustered together and expressed their divergent thoughts and feelings about whether or not they should challenge our authority and insist upon staying for this. With emotional support but intellectual dissent, they challenged one another to think about this from various perspectives. They questioned their own complicity with our undemocratic decision. They engaged in a critical dialogue – which they weren't able to do immediately after their walk over the Pettus Bridge.

* * *

Right after our experience at the Lorraine Motel, we walked one block towards a barbeque restaurant, where we had prearranged to have lunch. But shortly after we got there, two of the African American participants decided that it was important for them to boycott the establishment – so they got back on the bus. A protestor outside the restaurant had apparently critiqued the commercial relationship between the restaurant and the museum. She charged that the white businessman who owned the restaurant was milking

its proximity to the Lorraine Motel for his own financial gain, and was not living out King's values, not contributing to the community. Meanwhile, the museum was contributing to the gentrification of the neighborhood, resulting in businesses like this one. These two participants – twin sisters – did not reach out to their Beth Emet partners to think this through in an interfaith, interracial coalition. Perhaps they were skeptical that their partners would understand or share their convictions. Rather, they turned to one another, and decided to take a stand by themselves. They left the restaurant and sat on the bus.

Meanwhile, others agitated. Word spread through the group about the twins' protest. Participants clustered in little circles on the covered porch where the restaurant was accommodating our group, planning how to address the concerns that the twins had addressed through their absence. Some of the African American participants entered the main building and asked to speak with the owners. They were told that the owners couldn't meet with them, which outraged them. Finally they got an audience with the kitchen manager, a black man. I heard some tell others, with cynical laughter, "They sent a black guy to talk with us!" A few minutes later, two of the Beth Emet participants went to demand a meeting with the owners. They wanted to see if the restaurant would be more receptive to white kids seeking an audience with the owners. Finally, a racially-heterogeneous group of participants got to speak with a manager. He apparently talked a little from his perspective about ways that the business gives back to the community. "We did this for the community and that for the community," Marvin (one of the SBC participants) later recalled the manager saying, as he spoke to our group at the bus

microphone, "but the way he told me the story was like he had a prepared answer, and he was very dismissive . . . He seemed quite irritated about what I was asking him . . . I would have to do some research [to be certain, but I believe the business] was not operating under a moral premise but instead on a financial premise."

In various ways, the participants at this final stop on the trip were playfully experimenting with how to be activists. Two of them boycotted. Many more engaged the owners in conversation. They did so with a keen awareness of how they were perceived differently from one another, according to race. They shared a concern in common – they wanted to patronize an institution that shared their core values – but they differed on how to react to the prospect that they might *not* be doing that. They questioned their own complicity with capitalist structures that privileged the interests of the white business owners over the apparent interests of the black community. Some expressed themselves by removing themselves physically from the group; others expressed themselves verbally in dialogue. This performance of variability was catalyzed not by an educator with a deliberately-playful exercise, but by a push from a local demonstrator outside the restaurant. Moreover, the dialogue and the activism thrived in the immediate aftermath of our ritual pilgrimage to the Lorraine Motel – a reflexive ritual that rooted us in the present moment, attuned to our relationships, our connectedness, and our differences.

None of these pushes – not Peggy McIntosh's list, not the painful comments of a Birmingham rabbi, not the ritual of walking in King's final footsteps, nor the words of a local activist – *felt* playful. They oriented us towards a painful reality that many people (particularly, but not only, those who carry the white privilege to do so) often ignore.

Accordingly, in an early draft of this dissertation, I referred to these as "unplayful pushes." I argued that while play could nurture the trust and love necessary for critical dialogue, we ultimately needed to be pushed *out* of the realm of play – back into the "real" world – in order to sustain a reflexive, critical dialogue. But when I showed this early draft to Andrea London, she challenged me to see reality as more variated, which in turn caused me to question the description of these pushes as "unplayful." To call them "unplayful" suggests that there is a singular "real" world which exists in a stark binary with a "play world." Rather, I want to suggest, as Caillois does, that there may be multiple realities, and that toggling among them is in itself an act of play. For instance, there is a reality in which white and black Evanstonians cordially treat one another with emotionally-distant respect (in accordance with a choreography of consonance), as though they are all equals and it is only coincidence that they are not more intimate with one another, and there is another reality in which the divisions among them are so stark, and so clearly indicative of painful injustices, that they feel compelled to name those injustices with one another and work together to dismantle them. There is a reality in which lunch is an opportunity for teenagers to refuel their bodies, and a reality in which lunch is an opportunity to challenge dominant practices and assert their values. To move between these realities is to perform their variability, though it does not necessarily *feel* playful. Similarly, when people are "pushed" out of a mimetic role, they may be pushed into a different reality than the one they inhabited when they slipped *into* that mimetic role. This push is indeed *unplayful* in the sense that it ruptures one playful reality – one performance of variability – but *not* in the sense that it restores us into a singular

"reality." In the final section of this chapter, this multiplicity of reality becomes increasingly important, as does the potentiality of play to toggle between realities.

Playfully Considering the Outcomes of Sankofa

I have argued over the course of this chapter that playful elements of the Sankofa trip existed in a precarious but productive relationship with reflexive pushes, phenomena which often felt *un*playful. Opportunities for play often (thought not always) allowed participants to suspend their choreographies of segregation and consonance, to experience intimacy with one another, and to cultivate trust. Some of these opportunities allowed them to begin orienting themselves to some of their cultural differences. Still, they often needed a reflexive push to engage in critical dialogue, to probe the inequalities of the world and reflect on their own actions and positions within that unequal world. This finding nuances but largely reiterates and substantiates many of the assertions about play that I made in Chapters 2 and 3. However, some observations from the final hours of the trip – and from the weeks and months following the trip – may elucidate some of the deficiencies of this balance, and it is toward these observations that I now turn in this concluding section.

Our trip concluded with a 10-hour bus ride back to Evanston, and our dialogue continued throughout that ride. In part, it occurred casually, in small groups, as little clusters of individuals debriefed their experiences and anticipated the return of their day-to-day reality. But to a large extent, this dialogue occurred within a large group, and it

centered around the bus microphone. Many talked about how much this trip had meant to them. Several cried as they did so (especially the SBC participants). They noted the importance of the history they had learned, but moreso, they noted and celebrated the importance of the connections that they had made with one another. They anticipated the "movement" that they would lead when they returned to Chicagoland, which they still discussed in ambiguous but confident, hopeful terms. One comment from this conversation warrants particular attention. Recall that Aniyah, on the initial ride down to Atlanta, had said at the bus microphone that she did not see race. Now, on the bus ride back home, Aniyah took the mic four times, to say several distinct things, and when she took the mic for the fourth and final time, she said:

> Ok, so – a day into this trip I made the comment that I don't see race, and I know a lot of the chaperones got on me about that and shot out jabs, but it was true. And now I really see how important race was, and I –

Aniyah paused briefly. She momentarily stopped gesturing with her open hand, which had been making a constant circular movement as she spoke, accentuating her words. In this brief lapse, she collected her thoughts, and then went right on:

> I came on this trip not because I wanted the inter – I came on this trip to get a part of, like –

Again, Aniyah stopped for a second, collecting her thoughts, her eyes darting up into the corner of her visual field.

> I don't know what I'm trying to say. I came on this trip to, you know, start to, not, like, stop being "color blind," as people say – but – and I found that. And I found the answer to why I don't see race. And –

Again, Aniyah paused. Again, her wrist stopped circling. She collected her thoughts, and continued:

> No, not really. But I'm starting to see it more than I *did*. I just thought that in six days, I actually, like, *saw* race in the first two days of this trip. And you know I just thought that was a big thing for me, and –

Aniyah took a final brief pause, and apparently decided she had said enough. Sending a shout-out to her partner and to the group, she concluded:

> Yeah. I love you Elana. I love you guys.

After the trip had concluded, several of the chaperone/educators would recall this comment as the indication of a triumph. In six days, a smart, thoughtful African-American young woman who had denied that she could see race had developed the ability to "see race." And yet, I am troubled by this comment. Aniyah claimed to see race where she had not, and she understood that the chaperones would consider this to be worthy of affirmation. But she didn't seem to understand or express what might be problematic about claiming not to see race, nor was she able to say *why* she had been unable to see race, though she momentarily claimed to have discovered why she hadn't seen race. She seemed to understand, vaguely, that seeing race was something to be celebrated, so she claimed to do so, but her frequent lapses in thought and her self-corrections (i.e., "No, not really. But –") indicate to me that she hadn't fully thought this

through. She was speaking the social script that had been written for her by adults whom she had come to admire and respect, but who had taught her the script by shooting out "jabs." The assertion she was able to articulate most clearly was that she loved her partner and the group – a love that she had experienced experientially, through multiple performances of variability.

Of course, it is possible that Aniyah *did* experience a transformation, or a partial transformation, of her racial consciousness. It is conceivable that her difficulty articulating that transformation, and her frequent lapses in thought, indicate only that this transformation was new and raw, and that she was brave enough to talk about this transformation while she was still in the midst of it. This is how Rev. Love interprets her statement, and I include that interpretation here out of respect for it, though I do not share it. If Aniyah had indeed experienced a transformation of racial consciousness based on her own discoveries and experiences, I think that she would have been able to articulate more than she did. Rather, Aniyah's comments – particularly the lapses in her thought, and the incomplete ideas she sputtered – indicate to me that our pedagogy was (at least to some extent, and at least in some instances) one in which we – the authorities – indicated that some ideas were good and some ideas were bad. We taught them to discard an old social script that was based on a celebration of color-blindness, and we had taught them some pieces of a new and more critical social script, but they didn't all understand the principles behind the new script. We hadn't quite enabled all of them to come to new conclusions on their own, through a process of open inquiry, critical dialogue and discovery. Rather, we had "shot out jabs" at certain moments, asserting our opinions

authoritatively. Comments like this one can help us – particularly those of us who enthusiastically embrace the tenets of critical pedagogy – to refocus on the delicate balance that Freire challenges pedagogues to strike in being "directive" while remaining "democratic," and "defend[ing] a thesis" while still "stimulat[ing] contrary dialogue" (*Pedagogy of Hope* 78-79). What might we do, as reflexive educators, to better strike that balance? Can *play* be a part of a more balanced, nuanced, democratic pedagogy?

In Bibliodrama, Smith and I had used play to facilitate a process in which individuals could express and explore nascent ideas without claiming those ideas as their own. For example, recall from Chapter 2 the scene between Perry and Charlotte, in which they used their roles as Rebecca and Isaac to work through emergent ideas about how to resolve apparent clashes between tradition and justice. Play enabled them to express and explore these doubts and questions, without asserting a definitive answer to this problem. Doing so had limitations: by convening this high-stakes exploration within the realm of mimetic play, we were unable to highlight and probe how our own positions as Christians and Jews, or as African Americans and whited Americans, inform how we resolve tension between tradition and justice. Yet the playful approach enabled an open exploration of the tension. In contrast, on Sankofa, we (the chaperone/educators) predominantly encouraged the participants to discuss the high-stakes issues through formal discussion, which was less playful than the Bibliodramatic approach. They declared their personal opinions to one another, often in an electronically-magnified voice. The moments of play that we intentionally convened (like the bridge ritual and the foot-washing ritual) were largely moments in which we affirmed cohesion and/or support

for one another – not opportunities to articulate divergent or nascent opinions. While this approach, in which we expressed ideas through discussion, rather than mimetic play, enabled an interrogation of our relative power and privilege as raced beings, it also resulted in a fear of saying the wrong thing and a desire to speak words that would be affirmed.

Our relatively-unsuccessful attempts to extend the intercultural dialogue beyond the final day of the trip further indicate how a greater and more sustained commitment to play may have better facilitated an intervention into the choreographies of these teens' lives in Evanston. Neither we (the chaperone/educators) nor they (the participants) were able to figure out how to integrate the experiences of the trip into the rhythms of their daily lives. We all tried. Immediately after our return, many of the teens felt an urgency to preserve the momentum from their trip and transform it into a "movement." On the two Sundays following the trip, they used facebook to organize big group meetings, in which all the teens were invited to gather and discuss their future plans. We, the chaperone/educators, determined that we would help them organize spaces to meet (at the synagogue and the church), and that we would intervene if necessary, but that we would not lead these discussions. These would deliberately be youth-led meetings, and they would constitute an opportunity for them to determine what, if anything, they wanted to do next. While I was not personally able to attend either of these sessions, my sense – from the chaperone/educators who attended and from the teens – was that these meetings felt like high-stakes gatherings. The teens were proud of themselves for convening the gatherings, and we were proud of them. However, they could not agree on what exactly

the “movement” would *do*, what it would be *for*, or who would take charge of it. Not surprisingly, after these two meetings, the group failed to reconvene. Their enthusiasm for a vague movement petered out. Several individuals expressed enthusiasm for more meetings within their Sankofa facebook group, but that never materialized.

Meanwhile, we (the chaperone/educators) attempted to bring the teens together for several occasions, on our own terms. One month after our return, on the first weekend of May, we convened a post-trip celebration in the church sanctuary, to which we invited the press and local dignitaries (the mayor, the city council, etc.). At this event, eight teens (four from the synagogue, four from the church) performed a “collective memoir,” focused primarily on their visit to the Lorraine Motel, which two of us helped them write. Two other teens spoke independently about their Sankofa experiences, and both Rev. Love and Rabbi London offered words about the trip. The participants also all stood at the front of the church in a long line and sang together, in a collective performance of communitas. Attendance at this event was high, and participants seemed to feel proud of themselves as they spoke to a local reporter, but as one of the teens later critiqued, it was backward-looking, reflective. It didn’t offer any vision of how to move forward together.

The following month, on the first weekend of June, the chaperones again encouraged the group to come together for Friday night services at Beth Emet. Again, the eight teens who had created the “collective memoir” performed it for the congregation. After services, the teens all ate dinner and hung out together. Then, after dinner, Rev. Love suggested that the teens sign up for committees – small groups that would continue to meet regularly and would take on distinct responsibilities for the sake of the larger

group. One group, to be led by Minister Webb, would plan educational programs for the larger group. Another group, to be led by London and Love, would be in charge of religious programming. A third group, under Stein's guidance, would take charge of social programming. And a fourth group, under Ransom's leadership, would be in charge of marketing and publicity.

I am now submitting this dissertation more than a year after our trip, and none of these committees have yet met. But when I interviewed several participants in mid-June 2013, they expressed great hope and enthusiasm about the prospect of continuing to meet, continuing the Sankofa journey. "Once we all get everything together and get focused on what we actually want to do . . . people will actually wanna get involved and get going with what we have to do," Tabri said to me in our interview. "[Right now,] we're all crazy all over the place – "Well *I* wanna do *this*, *I* wanna do *this*," she said, indicating that different individuals had different ideas about what the goals the group should be pursuing. "We have to all want to do *one thing* so we can move forward, and then we can do many things after that. We have to get started on one thing, that one basic thing . . . Teenagers want to get involved, we really do, it's just that we just need . . . to get like that main idea we need to be focused on. . . . Once we get that big main idea we'll be able to go somewhere with it" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

Similarly, Solomon and Roni expressed optimism that the committee structure would provide a solid framework with which to move forward and continue meeting. Solomon called it "brilliant," and Roni called it "a good way to move forward," both expressing enthusiasm about a structure that would allow relationships to continue

growing without the onus of participants having to organize meetings and determine what they would be for (Seth "Personal Interview" n. pag.; Roni "Personal Interview" n. pag.).

But despite their optimism, all four of them acknowledged that it was difficult to sustain the relationships. Solomon said,

> Sometimes I start thinking about *that time on Sankofa* – like . . .[for example] about that time in the hotel when we were playing cards or something – [and I'll think to myself,] 'I really wish I could hang out with James again.' [And then I'll realize:] 'Oh wait! I can!' And then I don't. I don't know. Yeah, I don't know. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

As I pushed Solomon to consider why he didn't just call up James and make plans, he admitted, with a little embarrassment:

> I don't think I'd be comfortable just hanging out with them [participants from SBC], one on one . . . We don't all have stuff in common, besides Sankofa. People are really different . . . but if I was in a *group* of people from Sankofa, it would be better . . . it's easier to interact in a group than one-on-one. ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Solomon feared social awkwardness. So did the others that I spoke with. Many of them seemed to express a lack of confidence that they would know what to *do* with one another outside the structured context of Sankofa. The trip lived on in their minds as a particular *kind* of interaction, and they feared that they might not know how to interact outside that context. When they encounter one another at school, or outside of school,

Solomon said, "we're not talking about regular 'friend stuff' . . . we all take each other so seriously, as some sort of business partners" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.)

Stephanie expressed that when the group came together – either at the church or the synagogue, she was very excited to see the Beth Emet participants. "It's like, if I see Ariella, if I see Rinat, it's like –" and then, to complete her sentence, Stephanie took a big, audible inhale, and a giant smile spread across her face, in a full-body gesture of her excitement at reencountering her partners. "Its one of *those* type of relationships. I don't have to be with them 24:7, but if I see you it's like – *'HI!'* . . . If I see David, its like – *'HI DAVID!'* If I see Roni, it's like – *'HI RONI!'*" With each of these imagined encounters, Stephanie's body, voice, and breath seemed to indicate a mix of genuine enthusiasm and nostalgia – but the repetition of a simple "Hi" also indicated that she didn't really know what to say or do in order to sustain relationships with these individuals. She really only knew how to function in a group, which provided a vital sense of context. "It's not one of those things where you have to see them every day. . . You can't force that [friendship], it just has to come naturally" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

The comments from Stephanie and Solomon also indicate that they simply don't know how to assimilate their Sankofa relationships into the racialized patterns and choreographies of their day-to-day lives in Evanston. They seem to like each other, but they don't know how to interact within the reality of a social world that is shaped (and largely segregated) by the peers they see in their classes, their interactions within their extra-curricular activities, and the casual hanging-out that they do within their established

friend groups. The chaperone/educators struggled with the same problem. None of the chaperone/educators who had determined to lead committees ended up convening those groups, as communication within the group of chaperone/educators trailed off. This was due in part to the difficulties of reconciling cultural differences in communication that I discussed at greater length in Chapter 1, and in part to the fact that the chaperone/educators each needed to prioritize other professional and personal commitments that had taken a back seat to Sankofa programming for the past several months. Due to the dominant choreography of segregation, these other commitments moved the chaperone/educators into separate spheres. Their paths did not cross when they didn't deliberately set up meetings, and setting up meetings was difficult and no longer felt urgent. Some of them continued to sustain paired relationships (for instance, Avi Stein and Jerane Ransom continued to meet occasionally, as did Velda Love and Andrea London), but we were not able to sustain our interaction or our visioning as a collective.

Both Stein and Ransom found it difficult to integrate continued Sankofa programming into the existing youth programs that they ran. They were uncertain how to sustain the investment and the discussions-in-progress among the trip participants while also remaining inclusive to the members of their communities that did not go on the trip. Ransom ended up creating a separate program on African American history that she ran at Second Baptist with Love and Webb, alongside the existing program that she led for all church teens. This new group invited Beth Emet's Sankofa participants to attend their meetings, but their outreach to Beth Emet, according to Stein, was inconsistent and

unclear. Beth Emet youth who attended the first such event felt uncertain about what their place was within this program, and they stopped coming. Love, noting that choice, felt rebuffed; perhaps others in SBC felt similarly. But while Love expressed these feelings to me personally when I asked her for feedback on this chapter, nobody from SBC confronted Stein or London about these feelings – perhaps due to the investment of energy that it requires to defy the choreography of consonance. Perhaps it was also beneficial for SBC teens to discuss race and racism amongst themselves, in the context of the historical analysis that this continued Sankofa programming offered. As Love told me, some of the SBC teens participate more freely when their peers from BE, whom they perceive as more articulate, are not present. Meanwhile, Stein, who was already overwhelmed with 13 youth programs at BE, and who needed to devote time and attention to members of his community who had not attended Sankofa, felt maxed out. Gradually and reluctantly, the teens and chaperones re-acclimated to the choreographies of segregation and consonance that limit intercultural encounters in Evanston.

I believe that to do otherwise – to push against these choreographies – would have necessitated a sustained commitment to play. Again, this does *not* mean that I think the group would have needed to play *games* or engage in theatre-based activities together; play is far broader than that. Rather, I think that the teens and the chaperone/educators needed to realize that the relationships and conversations that they sustained on the trip were stark deviations from the choreographies of the world in which they live, and that their experiences were thus not easily integratable into the rhythms and realities of life in Evanston. Many of the teens felt genuine enthusiasm for building a movement that would

permeate their social world and transform its choreographies, but to do so is a Herculean task that they were unprepared for. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that the conception of themselves as a movement was *itself* an act of play that had required a performance of variability in order to articulate. The only way, I believe, to sustain their relational lives would have been to acknowledge that the reality in which SBC and BE participants interacted, challenged one another, and thrived together was a separate reality from the reality of their day-to-day lives, which were marked by choreographies that keep them apart – and that they needed a set-aside space and time in order to *perform their variability* and project themselves into this alternative reality. This, I believe, is what Solomon was getting at when he described his Sankofa relationships as "business partner" relationships, and "not regular 'friend stuff'" ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

Of course, as I have suggested elsewhere in this dissertation (most notably, towards the end of Chapter 2), sustaining the relationships may not be the only – nor the most important – barometer of success. Responding to an early draft of this chapter, Jerane Ransom agreed that it would have been desirable to help teens sustain their relationships, but she also emphasized that the experience was valuable in other ways. It provided a context for significant self-interrogation, it enabled them to reconsider their own place in the world in relationship to cultural and religious "others," it provided historical lessons about the costs of social and political change, and it instilled the values of self-acceptance, openness, and justice.

Understanding Sankofa in light of play theory can help to explain both how this group accomplished such significant goals, and also why it did not transform the

participants' choreographies in an ongoing way. Although the first day and a half of the trip was marked by the same choreographies of consonance and segregation that characterize life in Evanston, the bridge-crossing and foot-washing rituals of the second day offered an opportunity to playfully explore different ways of orienting towards each other. The first resulted in a sense of profound and inspiring communitas, while the second offered the more nuanced, subtle dissonance of fellowship. The teens continued to explore the multiple possibilities of their relationships through various forms of play, including song, dance, and back-of-the-bus discussions in which they imagined themselves as the leaders of a movement. The Sankofa experience fully capitalized on that play when it *pushed* the participants to reflexively interrogate what they were learning about themselves, the world around them, and their peers. These pushes were stronger and more frequent on Sankofa than they were in Bibliodrama, offering these participants more opportunities for critical dialogue than the Bibliodrama participants had. But, like the Bibliodrama participants, the Sankofa participants did not sustain the interaction, because neither the participants nor the chaperone/educators provided a framework through which to continue this play; instead, they imagined themselves integrating their relationships into their day-to-day lives, which they were unable to do.

Play can be a tremendous asset in the cultivation of a rich intercultural dialogue. It can enable people to explore the dissonances between them, thus promoting fellowship. It can also encourage people to discover and cultivate a spirit of communitas among them. In both of these ways, it can enhance the trust within a group. It can also enable a group to express and explore nascent ideas, even controversial and contradictory ones.

However, play can also reinforce dominant choreographies. Moreover, to the extent that it *challenges* dominant choreographies, it does so by enabling people to pivot away from the specificities of their "real-world" identities, which can make a critical dialogue – in which people probe their own positions within their flawed societies – very difficult. Often, a firm, reflexive push, like the ones the teens often received on Sankofa, can be a vital enhancement to intercultural dialogue. However, even the enhanced dialogue that results from these pushes cannot always intervene in the dominant choreographies that structure peoples' lives.

Conclusions

Applied Theatre

In its most narrow sense, this dissertation has been about applied theatre – and specifically about the use of participatory theatre projects to promote transformative intercultural encounters.

In this sense, the dissertation begins with the premise that the existing scholarly literature on intercultural theatre-making programs could benefit from integrating a focus on play into its conceptual frameworks. As I argued in the introduction, the existing literature pays relatively little attention to participants' *play*, privileging at least four other analytic approaches: theatre-making as a superordinate goal, theatre-making as a focus for offstage cultural negotiation, theatre-making as an aesthetic and material rerendering of cultural conflict, and theatre as a spectacle through which to demonstrate the possibility of peacebuilding (for more on these, see introduction pp. 5-6). While I see value in all four of these, I do not think that any of them sufficiently explore the sense of enthralling possibility that wells up within a space, or within individual participants, when an intercultural group begins to play, to perform their variability. In this dissertation, I have sought to capture that sense of possibility, and to examine both its potential and its limits.

I have proposed that a US history of racial injustice and economic exploitation has nurtured pervasive intercultural choreographies of segregation and consonance in the

locality that I studied – a reality which I would suggest is also instantiated, with some variation, in many other localities throughout the United States. At first glance, these choreographies may not seem racist: they are not marked by the kinds of "blatant, intentional acts of racial bigotry and discrimination" that Beverly Tatum calls "active racism" (11). However, they do render intercultural encounters rare, brief, polite and superficial, and by so doing, they preserve social and economic capital – and thus, power – within a small group of white elites. Examining these choreographies has enabled me to argue that participatory theatre-making becomes powerful and transformative when it emboldens players to play out different choreographies, in which they can introduce greater dissonance. By entering a realm of play – a realm in which multiple realities co-exist, and in which we feel liberated from the choreographies that limit our "real lives" – players can interact in ways that typically feel out-of-bounds and speak truths that typically feel taboo. They can perform their variability.

In some circumstances, this performance of variability may enable players to cultivate and experience a sense of intercultural fellowship with one another. In this dissertation (particularly in Chapter 2), I have described fellowship as an intimate, embodied encounter between multiple parties in which they experience a reorientation of the self to the otherness of the other. Fellowship requires an entry into the tension of otherness, and forbids the collapsing of otherness into sameness; it is impossible to experience fellowship without transgressing the dominant choreographies of segregation and consonance that I have observed. As they break these choreographic taboos, players expose and explore their own and one another's values, priorities, questions, and

concerns. Doing so, they allow themselves to become vulnerable with one another, and they align with each other as relational beings. They generate solidarity and camaraderie alongside an awareness of difference. They also engage in a process of deliberation, which I have defined (after John Dewey and others) as a "dramatic rehearsal . . . of various competing lines of action" (Caspary 177). In other words, as they play out this reorientation of self and other, they collectively explore potential models for their future relationships.

Moreover, as people playfully engage in participatory theatre-making programs, they may sometimes feel emboldened to engage in critical dialogue with one another about the paradoxes and injustices of the world around them. With inspiration from the fields of Critical Pedagogy, Peacebuilding, and Intercultural Dialogue, I have defined critical dialogue as an encounter among multiple parties in which they jointly probe their evolving society(ies), and their places within that(those) society(ies), from multiple positions. Critical dialogue, like fellowship, requires both intimacy and dissonance. Thus, relationships based in fellowship can provide a solid foundation for the dissonant work of critical dialogue. However, where fellowship necessitates the dissonance of turning towards one another, critical dialogue necessitates the dissonance of turning towards the cruelty and injustice of the world beyond the relationship. This effort to collectively name the injustice is inherently political. It anticipates a commitment to pursuing political, material, and institutional change. But the effort to collectively name injustice can elucidate the differences between the parties, increasing the difficulty of sustaining the relationship. Sometimes, this dissertation argues (particularly in Chapter 3), the processes

of play can help to ease this difficulty. The framework of play enables players to introduce concerns or vocabulary that they fear may be taboo or divisive by doing so in role.

However, this dissertation also attends to the ways that an attention to play can help elucidate the limitations of participatory theatre-making in intercultural contexts. Mimetic play can be a viable catalyst for critical dialogue, but it is not a particularly strong one; it facilitates the expression of contrasting opinions, and thus eases a group into the uncomfortable dissonance of critical dialogue, but it does so by allowing players to introduce controversial ideas in character, without personally and individually owning up to them. This makes a thorough interrogation of these ideas – and a thorough interrogation of our own relationship to power – elusive. We cannot engage in the full dissonance of critical dialogue unless we are able to fix our gaze on ourselves, and mimetic play inherently enables us to escape that gaze. Thus, as I argued in Chapters 3 and 4, groups who develop their capacity for critical dialogue through play also depend on a group leader or member who will bravely push the players out of their alternative reality, into a space of greater reflexivity.

The potential for participatory theatre projects to playfully catalyze transformative intercultural encounters is further limited by another quality of play: that it is time-bound. The fellowship that becomes possible during mimetic play doesn't necessarily feel attainable or replicable in other contexts. The choreographies of daily life seem to reassert themselves with vigor at the conclusion of each rehearsal – and then even moreso

at the conclusion of playful processes (like the 8-month Bibliodrama process that Smith and I facilitated).

Further research in this area might test these limits, to interrogate how intercultural groups might play differently in order to potentially overcome them. If a group like ours were to meet more often – not just once every two weeks, but twice a week, or every day, for a sustained period of time – might people develop a habit of performing their variability together that could sustain itself outside the time-space of organized, facilitated play? Might the players develop what Howard Thurman calls a "painstaking discipline" of engaging in fellowship together, and might that fellowship become robust enough to sustain itself outside the organized context (106)? This did not happen either in Bibliodrama or in Sankofa, but perhaps the former did not bring together participants regularly enough, and the latter did not bring participants together over enough time, to fully take up Thurman's challenge.

We also might learn from further research how and when facilitators can most effectively execute the "reflexive push" that can propel a group into critical dialogue. When he created Forum Theatre, Augusto Boal built such pushes directly into the methodology he employed. However, while the field of applied theatre broadly draws inspiration from Boal, most other forms participatory theatre-making (including the particular version of Bibliodrama that I practiced with Minister Smith) have not adopted such structures. Further ethnographic and practice-based research could help scholars and practitioners learn: at what point in the process can play most productively be suspended to nurture critical dialogue? What are the ethical questions and imperatives inherent in

interrupting a play-based process to promote a political agenda, or a political discussion? What need, if any, does an ensemble have to resume its playful process once it is suspended, and how can a facilitator best attend to that need?

Finally, further research might help the field better understand how various forms of participatory theatre-making might nurture playful intercultural encounters *differently*. This study included only one theatrical form. But of course, Bibliodrama can be practiced in many ways, and Bibliodrama itself is only one of many participatory theatre-making processes. How is intercultural Bibliodrama similar to, and different from, intercultural versions of Psychodrama, Sociodrama, Playback Theatre, Story Drama, Process Drama, Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Comic Improvisation, etc.? Two recent books in the field – *Performance in Place of War* by James Thompson, Jenny Hughes, and Michael Balfour, and *Acting Together*, edited by Cynthia Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker – both have a breadth that profile a number of different theatrical processes in conflict (and post-conflict) zones, but the projects are not all intercultural, and they are situated in such different conflicts that it is often difficult to make direct structural comparisons across the projects. More research might be done to elucidate how play works differently in different theatrical contexts.

Play

In a second sense, this dissertation has been about play.

This second facet of the dissertation is the inverse of the first. By illuminating how a rigorous study of participatory theatre-making practices can help scholars better understand the dynamics and potential of intercultural play, the dissertation contributes to a broad interdisciplinary field of study and hopes to help blaze a trail for future Polly O. scholars to make similar contributions. In this sense, the dissertation is built on a bold proposition: that an experience of mimetic play in a church basement, based on a somewhat-obscure, little-published-about form of participatory theatre-making, may be of relevance to a much wider circle of theorists and practitioners who approach intercultural encounters with diverse sets of goals, tools, contexts, and conceptual frameworks. As I wrote in the introduction, the field of play studies is populated with scholars of psychology, education, sociology, history, anthropology, folklore, and zoology, with only relatively small contributions from our own field(s) of theatre and performance studies. But scholars and practitioners of applied theatre may be able to offer this interdiscipline an opportunity to explore and nuance its theoretical understandings of play through ethnographic studies like this one, which hold a magnifying glass up to particular playful encounters and interrogate what they see.

In this sense, the study may speak loudest in its fourth and final chapter, when it leverages understandings of play that were formulated through a close study of participatory theatre-making practices in an effort to elucidate both the merits and the limits of how play was employed within an intercultural group in a non-theatrical program. It proposes that attending to applied theatre can help us better understand the intercultural potential of play as it is manifest in ritual, song, dance, and horseplay. This

does not mean that play is operating in exactly the same ways in these various contexts, but it does mean that observing and studying the extended role-play in Bibliodrama (for instance, the particularly intimate encounter between Perry as Rebecca and Charlotte as Isaac) provided a valuable framework for understanding the much briefer, quieter, and less-fully documented ritual of foot-washing on Sankofa. We can better understand the latter when we compare it to the former.

Moreover, when scholars interrogate and apply understandings of intercultural play from one context in the midst of another, the opportunity arises to nuance and develop the findings. For example, Caillois's idea that multiple realities coexist, and that play is not the performance of a sham reality but the opportunity to explore a different kind of reality, does not emerge from a study of applied theatre. Yet within the context of an applied theatre study, it can be (and has been) developed to suggest that role-play can empower players to embrace the dissonance that is typically choreographed out of their daily lives. Moreover, when that finding is then applied *outside* the context of applied theatre – for instance, when it is used to interrogate the ritual of crossing the Edmund Pettus bridge – the insight can be further nuanced to account for both experiences of fellowship and communitas. This process thus suggests that scholars of applied theatre are well-positioned to test, refine, and adapt the ideas about play that are being developed throughout the many corners of this interdiscipline. Participatory theatre projects can be among the many "laboratories" for interrogating and developing play theory.

In the course of shuttling between theatrical and non-theatrical contexts, I have proposed that the multiple realities of intercultural play can nurture both fellowship and

communitas, and that the latter may be less useful for fostering critical dialogue than the former, at least in the short term. I have also suggested that play can reify cultural segregation just as readily – potentially *more* readily – as it can present alternatives to such segregation. Moreover, even when a group is primed for critical dialogue through playful dissonance, catalyzing such dialogue can require a reflexive and seemingly-*un*playful push, which might come in the form of a text, an insensitive outsider, or a ritual. I have proposed that this is the case both within and beyond applied theatre contexts.

My research might be critiqued for assuming too much consistency between these arenas – for asserting a little too conveniently that the properties of play at work within the context of Bibliodrama are applicable to the Sankofa trip, and vice versa. I may have leaned too heavily on the assertions of Caillois and Sutton-Smith that various experiences of play are inherently linked, and may have been too zealous to assert such similarity where it seemed to present itself. Further research in this area might interrogate the limits of such comparisons. What, if anything, makes participatory theatre-making unique among various forms of play? When are our findings relevant in the broader field of play studies, and when might they *not* be relevant? Can our field come to articulate with greater precision what hesitancies and reservations we ought to have when presenting our findings to the wider field of play studies? Conversely, can we come to articulate where we ought to be most confident in doing so?

Evanston

In a third sense, this dissertation is about a particular locality – Evanston, IL – and about two groups of people within that locality that are striving to resist the ways that the momentum of history has assigned them separate and unequal places within their society. To a large extent, I have written this dissertation with, about, and for these two communities.

For two years, this dissertation project (and the fellowship from the University of Minnesota Graduate School that funded it) has provided me with an opportunity to devote the preponderance of my time and energy towards better understanding the history, the dynamics, and the broader socio-political context of the relationship between Beth Emet Synagogue and Second Baptist Church of Evanston. This is a luxury that neither institution can afford. While there are many in these institutions who care about the relationship, many who are knowledgeable about it, and several who are working tirelessly to strengthen it, they all have other important work to do. Their prioritization of this relationship often comes at the expense of their leisure time and their time with family, but it cannot come at the expense of their other professional work. Rev. Mark Dennis, Rev. Karen Mosby, and Rabbi Andrea London have congregations to run, worship services to lead, Bible study to teach, diverse meetings to attend, life-cycle events to conduct, and pastoral work to attend to. The Second Baptist Ministerial staff – including Rev. Velda Love, Minister Brian Smith, Minister Taurean Webb, Minister Ric Hudgens, and many others – have other jobs to balance, children to raise, coursework to complete for advanced degrees, and many other church programs to run. Beth Emet's

professional staff – including Cantor Arik Luck, Avi Stein, and several others (not mentioned in this dissertation) – are spread thin across many spheres of congregational programming, confined by a smaller budget and thus a smaller staff than the peer institutions to which Beth Emet most often compares itself. In this context, my affiliation with an outside institution with adequate funding has provided me with the opportunity to study this relationship with greater intensity than the people in the best position to nurture the relationship in the months and years ahead. Perhaps the most impactful thing that I can do in this dissertation, then, is to humbly offer them a reflection of their challenges and opportunities, as I have come to see them.

I have suggested in this dissertation that a full understanding of Evanston's inequalities must include an historical perspective that includes slavery and Jim Crow – phenomena from which contemporary Evanstonians are separated by both time and geographical distance, but phenomena that still influence life in Evanston today. It must also include a robust understanding of the subtler forms of discrimination that have even more directly effected local life, such as the racist policies of banks and real estate boards, the anti-Semitic biases that once limited the life prospects and the geographic mobility of Jews, and the gradual processes of assimilation and perspective change that eventually led some – but not all – disadvantaged minorities to accrue most – if not all – of the benefits of whiteness. The result of this complex history, I have argued, is a choreography of segregation and consonance in Evanston. It is a choreography in which intercultural interactions are rare, brief, polite, and superficial. It is a choreography in which dissonance is discouraged, sometimes even aggressively silenced (as in the City

Council meeting that I described in Chapter 1). It is a choreography that operates in concert with popular American discourses of post-racialism, which promote the notion that it is noble to "not see race" – discourses which I have argued (after Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and others) are misleading and dangerous.

Given this context, it is not entirely surprising that it has been difficult for Beth Emet and Second Baptist to sustain a robust relationship with a clear sense of purpose with one another. As I wrote in Chapter 1, even the communication that is necessary to *arrange* in-person meetings often fails, as the two communities have different patterns of communication and different institutional infrastructures that are difficult to sync up. Little wonder, then, that there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of the relationship, as I detailed at the beginning of Chapter 3. Some think that the purpose of the relationship should be to advance justice and fight racism in the locality that they share – and that there is little point of investing energy in the relationship if it is not in pursuit of such a goal. Some think that the purpose should be to build personal relationships, and thus to become better acquainted with each other's cultures and faith traditions – and that any social or political activism must grow organically out of those relationships. Often, I think, individual stakeholders vacillate between these two perspectives and struggle with the tension between them. It may be useful, at some point, for stakeholders of the two congregations to jointly, clearly articulate the terms and aspirations of the relationship. Doing so may offer both communities the reassurance that the relationship is worth the investment of energy and resources that it requires. However, it is of course difficult to do so without first establishing relationships of considerable trust, honesty, and personal

rapport among these stakeholders. If they are to undertake this challenge, the moment will have to be carefully chosen and bravely seized. Rev. Mark Dennis's recent decision to leave the leadership of Second Baptist complicates this process, as does Avi Stein's recent announcement that he would be leaving the staff of Beth Emet to pursue a medical career. The team at the helm is not static.

It is also important to acknowledge that this relationship will probably continue to exist amid tensions, misgivings, miscommunications, and mismatched priorities, at both the institutional and personal levels. The congregations have different formative histories, different assets, and different priorities. To anticipate a day when this relationship becomes smooth and easy is probably unrealistic. As Rev. Karen Mosby said frankly when I interviewed her in June 2013, to be in relationship requires sacrifice from both parties, and they have to be honest with themselves and with each other about that sacrifice in order to reap the rewards ("Personal Interview" n. pag.).

As they pursue a relationship of increasing honesty, clarity, and collaboration, I would encourage these communities to think about how opportunities for play – for the performance of variability – might be seized and strengthened within the initiatives that they advance. Most of these initiatives will probably not be participatory theatre programs. Nonetheless, I think that within the interfaith worship services they occasionally hold, the joint rituals that they conduct, the volunteer work that they undertake together, the political activism that they may pursue, and the dialogue events that they co-facilitate, they may find opportunities for play in which greater choreographic variability becomes possible.

In many of these initiatives, play might promote fellowship between the members of the two congregations. Opportunities for play may take the form of rituals, song, dance, competition, or various kinds of role-play, and they might help congregants to move beyond polite affirmations of one another, into an alternate reality where dissonance feels more welcome and where people can orient themselves to one another's "otherness." Where possible, Beth Emet and Second Baptist may want to experiment with the frequency and the longevity of these initiatives, aware that their past efforts – while valuable – have not managed to nurture the "painstaking discipline" that it takes to live a life of fellowship across class differences (Thurman 106). They should also be aware, as they promote playful encounters, when they are promoting fellowship through play, and when they are promoting communitas. Both may be valuable, but the experiences of communitas may be particularly difficult to follow with attempts at critical dialogue.

When the stakeholders of Second Baptist and Beth Emet want to nurture critical dialogue, they may want to think carefully about when and how a community-building process – which might usefully incorporate play – may require a reflexive push. They may want to study how Minister Brian Smith offered one such push in the midst of Bibliodrama (see Chapter 3), or how the Sankofa group was pushed productively by an anti-racist text, by an alienating religious leader, and by a ritual that catalyzed their love and concern for one another (see Chapter 4). I would encourage the stakeholders to experiment with the delicate *balance* between the playful cultivation of fellowship (such as the intimate encounter between Charlotte's Isaac and Perry's Rebecca in Chapter 2),

the playful exploration of critical dialogue (such as the feisty exchange between Linda's Hagar and John's Abraham in Chapter 3), and the deepening of that critical dialogue, which must include self-investigation, and which happens best through a reflexive and seemingly-*un*playful push.

One Final Story

I left Chicagoland at the end of June 2013, with the sense that my fieldwork was complete. But I returned to Evanston for the first time only a few months later, when Beth Emet hired me as an artist in residence for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. I led several theatre-based programs for the Beth Emet community over this holiday, and I helped Rabbi London to create a theatrical sermon about the Biblical story that Beth Emet always reads on the first day of the two-day holiday. This is the story of "the binding of Isaac," when Abraham nearly sacrifices his son Isaac as a display of his ultimate faith. As Rabbi London stood on the *bimah* (or pulpit), telling and commenting on the story, she and I determined that others would appear to enact the narrative. I played Isaac. I suggested that she invite Minister Brian Smith to join Beth Emet for the holiday, and that he play Abraham. As Beth Emet had just completed a year in which they had been particularly involved with Second Baptist, this seemed appropriate. Cantor Arik Luck played the angel who stops Abraham at the last possible moment. The role of Sarah – Abraham's wife – was played by another Beth Emet congregant, whom I will call Maureen.

Rabbi London and I spent several days working on the sermon together, but we only managed to pull together the full cast for a single rehearsal. After that one rehearsal – and the "performance" on Rosh Hashanah – our little cast disbanded. Thus, Maureen and Minister Smith only came together twice.

Months later, Minister Smith ran into Maureen at a local Walgreens. He recounted the experience to me when I saw him during one of my return trips to Evanston, in early 2014. Initially, he recognized her, but did not remember her name. As a prominent figure within a big church community, Smith is used to running into people whose names he doesn't quite remember, and it is usually safe for him to assume that they recognize him, and know *his* name, even if he does not remember theirs. His habit, therefore, is to greet them enthusiastically, even if he doesn't remember their names. "Hey, how you doing?" he recalled saying to Maureen, approaching her with his usual vibrant, enthusiastic energy. "When are we gonna get together again?"

Maureen did not recognize him, and was startled by his approach. When Smith described this encounter to me, he recounted the way her eyes widened, her body stiffed, and she began to walk away. For Smith, this was a familiar and painful moment: a moment in which he felt he was being viewed as a stereotype of a dangerous black man.

When I spoke to Maureen about it, she remembered the initial encounter differently, though her account also emphasizes the fact that she did not initially recognize him. She recalled standing in the prescription line when Smith caught her attention. "Sarah! Sarah!" she remembered him saying. But "Sarah" is not just the name of Maureen's character; it is also the name of Maureen's daughter, and this man seemed

to be roughly her daughter's age. Befuddled, she thought to herself that perhaps this was one of her daughter's old Evanston classmates, but she couldn't figure out why he would be calling *her* by her daughter's name.

Smith wanted to remind her of who he was and of the time they had shared as creative collaborators. The palpable boundary between white and black Evanston suddenly felt like it was growing stronger and wider, at the very moment when he had anticipated that it might have dissolved. But he couldn't call out to her by name, because he didn't remember it. In his memory of the encounter, she turned her back and started walking away, and as she did so, he realized he couldn't quickly or easily identify himself. It would take too many words, and would be too cumbersome. And so, as the space between them widened, he called out to her with a single word:

"Hineini."

It is a Hebrew word from the story that we had enacted together. For highly-engaged Jews, like Maureen, it is an iconic word that reverberates with poetic significance. It literally means "here I am," but it is interpreted as an attestation of full presence – presence of mind, body, and spirit. It is the word that Abraham uses to reply to God, when God calls out to him and instructs him to sacrifice his son.

Maureen stopped in her tracks. She slowly turned to face him, bewildered.

"It's me, *Abraham*," he said to her. "Remember?"

Maureen exhaled, her body relaxed, and she quickly closed the gap that had widened between them. She apologized as she approached him, acknowledging that she didn't recognize him out of context. For a brief moment, they came together in

recognition. They continued talking for several minutes, recalling the time they spent together and discussing the reactions of Beth Emet congregants who witnessed the scene during the Rosh Hashanah service.

I recall that moment here, at the conclusion of this study, as a final example of both the limits and the potential of intercultural play. On the one hand, this encounter demonstrates how limited and how context-specific this playful intervention into Evanston's choreographies was. Though Maureen described her initial encounter with Minister Smith to me as "deep" and intense," that experience was circumscribed by the fact that it took place on a fictional plane. "Brian and I had never met before," she explained to me. "We had only met as Sarah and Abraham." In other words, she didn't expect the world of play to interrupt the patterns of her "real life." Maureen had understood, based on Rabbi London's initial invitation to her, that she was volunteering to help with a sermon for Rosh Hashanah. It was probably safe to presume, from her perspective, that the others were there for the same purpose. London didn't frame this to her as an opportunity to build a relationship with a minister from Second Baptist. Maureen engaged Minister Smith with openness and warmth during the short time they spent together, but she carried no expectation that they would reconvene or that the encounter would fundamentally reorient her to the Second Baptist community. Even when empathetic people with common values reach out to one another through play, that interaction's power is limited by the duration of time they spend together, by the expectations they bring to it, and by the dominant choreographies that then spin them in different directions.

On the other hand, this encounter also reveals the power of play. For Minister Smith, who had recently completed eight months of Bibliodrama, participating in the theatrical sermon felt like an extension of that program, and his expectations were framed in that light. The rehearsal and performance thus offered him an opportunity to sustain and deepen his engagement – his fellowship – with the Beth Emet community. Spending time – even a short among of time – as Maureen's creative collaborator, and as her fictional husband, allowed him an opportunity to orient himself to her in a way that proved lasting, months later, when they encountered one another out of context.
When he called out to her from within their alternative reality, saying "Hineini – It's me, Abraham," he recreated a world in which they were not strangers in a drugstore, but artistic collaborators at Rosh Hashanah, or maybe even husband and wife, grappling with an epic dilemma. That alternative reality had been suspended, but it was still strong enough to be revived and to matter. The alternative reality mattered to her, too, even though she did not initially recognize him. Her recognition, her outreach, her apology to him, and her choice to linger with him affirms that the alternative reality mattered to her, too, even though she did not initially recognize him. As Perry and John both told me six months after the Bibliodrama program ended, the feelings of camaraderie and trust that were built in the space of play remained strong.

It is important not to make too much of this small moment of recognition and reconciliation in a suburban drugstore. The world didn't change that afternoon. Racial injustice persists, in Evanston and elsewhere. Meaningful, structural change cannot be built merely on residual feelings of warmth.

But it is also important not to make too little of this moment. It is a moment that demonstrates that people of different walks of life can play together, and through play, can establish a durable investment in one another. Sometimes, if pushed, they may even establish a clarity around a shared sense of purpose. Of course, the choreographies of their daily, quotidian lives may reassert themselves, and this playful reality may be displaced. When they encounter one another again, they may do so as strangers. But if the alternative reality is robust enough to be reawakened at the drop of a single key word, then it may also prove strong enough to help diverse communities discover a shared, lasting investment in one another and in a common mission.

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[i] This definition of applied theatre is my own; I have crafted it out of my dissatisfaction with the definitions of the discipline that exist in the current literature. Readers interested in other prominent definitions and descriptions should refer to: Nicholson 2; Prentki and Preston 9; Thompson, *Applied Theatre* 13-16; Snyder-Young 4). I have eschewed these existing definitions for three reasons. First, they tend to emphasize the context (outside traditional theatre buildings) and/or target population (non-traditional theatre audiences) of these projects rather than the initiatives themselves. Second, they tend towards the negative, defining applied theatre by what it is *not* ("conventional," commercial theatre with passive audiences). Third, they often resort to listing the diverse practices that the collective term includes, rather than defining the field itself. While my definition attempts to define applied theatre in terms of what it *does*, I recognize that it, too, is a bit fuzzy; I have embraced the broad ambiguity of terms like "dialogue," "change," and "growth" in an attempt to include the broad range of practices that are commonly considered to fit under this umbrella. This does not mean that I think all "change," all "growth," or all "dialogue" is necessarily *good*. The discourse of "growth," for instance, undergirds capitalist processes that I believe are often harmful to our society – and indeed, the broad umbrella of applied theatre includes "pro-growth" creative practices in business contexts that concern me. Applied theatre practices, including "dialogic" ones (the ones I emphasize in this dissertation), can reinforce values and social patterns that I find problematic. Later in the dissertation, particularly at the beginning of Chapter 3, I

articulate the multiple meanings of the word "dialogue," and further articulate how different approaches to dialogue are marked and constrained by different political assumptions.

[ii] To clarify: the quote here is from Susan Leigh Foster's book *Choreographing Empathy*, one of several publications by Foster that has influenced my use of the term (in addition to her articles "Choreographies of Protest" and "Choreographies of Gender"). I also credit Cindy García with inspiring my use of the term, though this particular quote is not hers. García introduced me to Foster's writing and has mentored me personally, and her article "'Don't leave me, Celia!': Salsera Homosociality and Pan-Latina Corporealities" (which I reference here but do not quote directly) further informs my use of this theoretical construct.

[iii] "Claire" and "Monica" are pseudonyms, a choice that I describe towards the end of this introduction.

[iv] It is not my intention to present a stark binary between the assets of Second Baptist and those of Beth Emet, but rather, to note differences that are subtle and thus sometimes overlooked. For instance, while I write that SBC's assets include "a strong sense of common faith" and that BE's include "a strong sense of a shared cultural tradition," I don't mean to suggest that Beth Emet does *not* have a strong sense of faith or that SBC does *not* have a sense of a shared cultural tradition. Rather, I want to note my own perception, as an ethnographer, that life at SBC is consciously and deliberately oriented towards God, and that God is understood as a source of strength at SBC, whereas life at BE is less God-conscious, and that when religion is defined in historical and cultural terms (more than theological ones), as I would argue it is at BE, that too can be a source of strength, albeit a different one. Similarly, when I characterize BE as having "a wide network of accomplished professionals who contribute various kinds of expertise in both volunteer and paid capacities (as lawyers, teachers, graphic designers, artists, musicians, etc.)," and I characterize SBC as having "a wide circle of highly-committed volunteers," I don't mean to suggest that SBC does not have professional congregants, or that those congregants do not contribute those skills to the church. I also don't mean to suggest that BE's volunteers are not "highly-committed." Rather, I am pointing to a subtle difference, in which BE *more often* turns to its congregants to contribute in their professional capacities (sometimes as volunteers, and sometimes as independent contractors), and in which SBC congregants seem to more often volunteer outside their professional capacities. Both of these are assets, but they are different.

[v] Of course, the cultural practice of enacting Biblical narratives has a very long history, going back centuries if not millennia. The practices of English cycle plays and European passion plays may be seen as historical forerunners of this cultural practice within the Christian tradition. In the Jewish tradition, some have looked to the role of the m'turgeman (or "translator") within Jewish Torah-reading ritual during the second Temple period (350 BCE – 70 CE) as an historical antecedent of this practice; the m'turgeman would translate the Hebrew text into the Aramaic vernacular before a live audience, and would likely interpret and riff on the text as he did so. However, the

practice of Bibliodrama is primarily understood in relationship to psychodrama and sociodrama.

[vi] *Midrash* is a singular Hebrew noun that can refer either to an individual story (i.e., "There is a *midrash* about Moses approaching the burning bush . . ." or to the collective body of *midrashic* literature, (i.e., "Jews rely on *midrash* in order to work out apparent inconsistencies in the text"). The plural form of the noun, *midrashim*, which I employ later in this paragraph, is used to refer to some specific narratives but not the whole body of *midrashic* literature.

[vii] Stein, who was leaving Beth Emet when I submitted this dissertation to pursue a medical career, was concerned about the potential that people might cite this document out of context, and that their decontextualized citations might hover over his future in the omnipresent digital archive of the internet. While he said he would be happy to discuss any of his statements, and any of his past choices, with anyone who might read this document, he assumed that those who read about him wouldn't necessarily seek him out for further dialogue.

[viii] Abu-Nimer and Rabinowitz offer these comments about dialogue in the context of assessing the dialogue programs that proliferated in Israel-Palestine, often with US support, throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

[ix] To clarify: critical dialogue *can* happen nonverbally, but unlike fellowship, critical dialogue cannot happen without *language*. The I-Thou relationship of Buber – which I am associating with "fellowship" – requires a fundamental turning of the parties toward one another, but it does not require language because it does not inherently require either party to articulate anything about the world in which they live. In contrast, critical dialogue can happen silently, but it always requires some form of language in order to articulate the systemic power imbalances of the wider world. For instance, Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" methodologies are based on an embodied approach to "naming" oppression and rehearsing revolution. In Boal's "Image Theatre" exercises, participants depict oppressions, and explore potential responses to such oppressions, by creating (mostly-silent) tableaux with their bodies (Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* 174-176).

[x] Roni was a frequent participant in Bibliodrama whom I introduced briefly in Chapter 2, and was also a participant on Sankofa, which I discuss at greater length in Chapter 4. During my nine months of fieldwork, I – like most others – (mis)read Roni's gender identity as male. Subsequently, Roni has come out as transgender, and has clarified a preference for they/them/their pronouns over he/him/his pronouns. I use Roni's preferred pronouns throughout the dissertation, even though doing so may obscure the fact that most people read Roni as male at the time.

[xi] I told the videographers and the other participants up front that this footage would have a dual purpose – it would allow the communities to edit together their own "video yearbook" of the experience, and I would also use it in my dissertation research.

[xii] Resurrection Sunday is more commonly known as Easter Sunday. During the Sankofa experience, Rev Love (the Christian authority on the trip) encouraged the interracial, interfaith group to refer to the holiday as Resurrection Sunday, based on the concern that

"Easter" has been commercialized, and brings to mind thoughts of bunnies, eggs, and chocolate, rather than the resurrection of Jesus. I refer to the holiday as Resurrection Sunday throughout this chapter out of deference to her, and out of a shared understanding that language shapes thought and action.

[xiii] The reader may recall that in Chapter 2, I wrote extensively about Second Baptist Minister Ric Hudgens, who is also a member of the same family (he is her father). In this chapter, whenever I use the name "Hudgens," I do so with reference to Rachel Hudgens, not to Ric Hudgens.

[xiv] Not all 3,200 activists walked all five days. Approximately 3,200 walked together for the first day, and more than 2,000 camped out the first night, but many left the march at the beginning of the second day. The judge's order that permitted the march and protected the marchers also limited the march to 300 people through Lowndes County, where the road was narrowest. On the final day of the march, the number of activists swelled to 50,000 (Lewis 357-360).

[xv] Dolan is writing about *similar* phenomena, but not about the *same* phenomena. She is not writing about *all* moments of communitas, but about moments of communitas that audience members experience *in the theatre*, which she calls "utopian performatives." Of course, the playful evocations of communitas that I write about in this chapter did not happen in the theatre, and thus they are arguably not "utopian performatives;" some might suggest that I am taking Dolan out of context. But I draw on Dolan because she has thoroughly and thoughtfully theorized the value of communitas in the service of progressive social change, and while the physical circumstances that I write about are different (i.e., not in a theatre), the social-political circumstances (i.e., evoking a vision of a more progressive, more equal, more just, more integrated world) are quite similar.

[xvi] As I noted when describing Roni in chapter 3, I use they/them/their pronouns for Roni because Roni self-identifies as transgender and prefers these nongendered pronouns.

[xvii] There are several versions of this essay in circulation, including one prominent version in *Independent School* and another in *Peace and Freedom*. Some versions feature a shorter list; some feature a longer list. We found this version through the website of Prof. Julie Lewis at De Anza College.