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## Displacement and the Somatics of Postcolonial Culture

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## PREFACE

In this salutary sense, a range of contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement—that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. There is even a growing conviction that the *affective* experience of social marginality—as it emerges in non-canonical cultural forms—transforms our cultural strategies.

—Homi K. Bhabha, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern”  
(172, emphasis added)

What is the economy of sentiment surrounding the nation form? [. . .] What do we know about propaganda? We know nothing . . . when it works we don’t know why it works. So what are the practices which produce affect for the nation? [. . .] What are the practices through which this set of feelings about this entirely abstract form are produced, and more importantly, reproduced?

—Arjun Appadurai, in conversation with Vikki Bell and Paul Gilroy in  
1997 (Bell, *Historical Memory* 37–38)

**IN HIS 1993** book *Moving the Centre*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o describes racism as “a conscious ideology of imperialism” (117) that “often wages its offensive in print between hardcovers, magazines and newspapers long before it is imprinted on the general consciousness as the basis of personal and institutional practices” (126). I want to bracket the question raised by that claim of whether there has *ever* been a time before racism was imprinted on the gen-

eral consciousness,<sup>1</sup> and go straight to the question that will help me clear the ground for a somatic approach to postcolonial identity, namely: who exactly *is* conscious in a conscious ideology, and of what, and just how conscious is *s/* he? Is a conscious ideology one that its holder affirms consciously, so that the definitive criterion for a conscious racist ideology, for example, would be that its holder would be willing or able to say “I am a racist”? Or, taking one step back from that extreme reading, would it be enough for the holder of a conscious racist ideology to be able to say “I hate black people,” or “I feel uneasy around black people,” without consciously labeling those feelings as racist? The problem with this approach to racism, obviously, is that then a person who has so successfully repressed his or her racism as to be able to say “I am not a racist” and believe it sincerely may still feel subliminally *inclined* to racist actions, to let a general racist “consciousness” serve as “the basis of personal and institutional practices,” so that we would still want to call him or her a racist. But if racism serves as such a basis *unconsciously*, as it often seems to, in what sense is it a racist *consciousness* that so serves?

Or does Ngũgĩ mean that *imperialists* are the conscious ones, that imperialists consciously wage a racist offensive in print in order to imprint racism on a not-quite-conscious ideology or “general consciousness,” so that that ideology will in turn become “the basis of personal and institutional practices”? In other words, does he mean that imperialists consciously (and perhaps repeatedly) *reinvent* racism as part of their strategy of oppression, which the masses then internalize in less conscious ways? This would constitute a kind of conspiracy theory of the origins—or at least the widespread dissemination—of racism. Ngũgĩ seems to be modeling that dissemination as a three-stage process: first, racism is consciously developed by imperialists as a useful idea (ideology as thought structure); second, it is inculcated textually, through books, magazines, and newspapers, in a mass “consciousness” that may or may not involve actual conscious awareness (ideology as belief structure); and third, that consciousness becomes the basis of social practices that support the imperialist project (ideology as behavioral structure). Just before that earlier passage, in fact, from “The Ideology of Racism,” he describes “the weapon of mental and spiritual subjugation” as “the ideological weapon” which “comes wrapped up in many forms: as religion, the arts, the media, culture, values, beliefs, even as feelings” (117), suggesting that someone, some group, namely imperialists, is *wielding* that ideological weapon, presumably as part of the second stage; in the latter passage, from “Racism in Literature,” he defines ideology as “the whole system of symbols, images, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes by which we explain the world and our place in it” (126), which sounds more like the third stage.

A good deal rides, in fact, on the ontopsychological status we assign racism and other ideological orientations and identities. If we treat them as biology, as “human nature,” or even as “mammalian nature,” as “hard-wired” into the autonomic nervous system, so that “we are all racists” becomes a universalizing/biologizing truth-claim, then we are stuck with them, or else stuck trying to discover the “racist gene” or to invent an “antiracism vaccine.” If we want to resist this notion of racism as indelible in us, as a form of primitive mammalian xenophobia that can only be tempered and controlled, never eradicated, it is going to be important for us to historicize it, to show that it came from somewhere, that it was *introduced* into human dispositions. And it does seem to me that Ngũgĩ has something like this binary in mind, something like this absolute choice between a radically unattractive universalizing mystification of racism and a far more attractive historicist unmasking of racism—more attractive specifically because if something can be historicized, it can be resisted.

But then how *are* orientations and inclinations introduced into human dispositions? I think Ngũgĩ is quite right to insist, for example, that racism works by “sapping the moral energies of the victims by moulding and remoulding their personalities and their perceptions to make them view the world in accordance with the needs and programmes of the exploiter and the oppressor” (126), but think it unlikely that this sort of project could ever function on a conscious level, as *thought*. Surely in order to get black Africans to accede to colonial or neocolonial oppression and exploitation, imperialists have had to sap their moral energies and mold and remold their personalities and perceptions *unconsciously*, below the radar of conscious awareness. Consciousness of what is being done to us is our first essential step in a program of resistance, and thus something to be assiduously *avoided* by those intent upon sapping black Africans’ moral energies. And in fact this notion of racism as a conscious ideology strains credulity even if we opt for the conspiracy-theory reading of Ngũgĩ’s model and imagine imperialists as the original and sole conscious wielders of racist ideology—imagine them sitting around a table agreeing, “let’s convince everybody that white skin signifies intelligence and culture and black skin signifies subhumanity, so that it seems *natural* for their work to fill our pockets, but let’s make sure that we’re the only ones wielding this ideology consciously, that everybody else, black and white alike, takes it for ‘universal human nature.’” Surely imperialists too are always already racist, and mostly unconsciously so—indeed mostly to be distinguished from the victims of their exploitation not in the degree to which their racism is conscious but rather in the degree to which they are sociopolitically positioned and economically and emotionally prepared to profit from it?

In fact, how conscious are people typically? How conscious is “the general consciousness”? How many of our personal and institutional practices are shaped by consciously held views, values, norms, beliefs, opinions? If ideology or “the general consciousness” includes “symbols, images, beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and attitudes,” how conscious is our possession or use of those things? How conscious are we typically of our beliefs or attitudes? How conscious are we of our feelings? When a symbol or an image works on us, from within or without, to what extent are even intellectuals conscious of that working? We can, by a great intellectual effort, *make* any of those things conscious; but it seems relatively uncontroversial to assert that normally they function in us beneath the level of conscious awareness.

And yet it is equally problematic to insist that ideologies wield us as their mechanical toys—that we are automata unconsciously motivated and directed by our ideological orientations. Death-of-the-subject deconstructions of human agency as just another fictitious construct of liberal bourgeois ideology are as passivizing and mystifying as universalistic biologisms: both make resistance unthinkable. Whether we are made mindlessly and will-lessly racist by God, biology, or some vaguely mentalist ideology, we are equally trapped—and in fact “ideology” then becomes just another mystified term for “God,” or “biology,” or “destiny,” or what have you. In order to imagine the possibility of resistance, we have to imagine a subject with agency—a fictitious subject with limited agency, perhaps, a socially constructed virtual “self” that has pragmatic rather than ontological value, but a subject nonetheless, with the ability to plan and take action—and we have to explain how this subject is able to function in the complex middle ground between absolute automatism and absolute autonomy.

## P.1 SOMATICS

The “somatics” in my title signals my attempt in the book to chart out that middle ground. I will be covering the rudiments of somatic theory in §1.1, and complicating the model throughout the book; but let me anticipate briefly here. The fundamental assumption in somatic theory is that normative orientations or inclinations are circulated through a population as *social feelings*, especially approval and disapproval, and that this collective circulation of feelings is the channel through which any group regulates itself—something I call “ideosomatic regulation,” the term “ideosomatic” indicating my belief that the regulatory “ideas” that circulate are grounded less in *words* or *thoughts* (ideologos: idea as stable word/mind), and more in *feelings* or *somatic responses*

(ideo-soma: idea as emotional body). (Actually, somatic response is body-becoming-mind—a homeostatic middle excluded by Cartesian mind-body dualism. See the Glossary for somatic terminology.) These somatic responses signal to us whether the group(s) to which we belong would approve or disapprove of the action we’re contemplating—and while they can be brought to conscious awareness, we are not usually aware of their operation. We typically call them “hunches” or “gut feelings,” rather inchoately distinguishing them on the one hand from whims (*unorganized* inclinations) and on the other from reasons (*analytical* inclinations).

A preliminary formulation, then: insofar as ideology is conscious thoughts, ideas, images, and beliefs, it is carried on the backs of ideosomatic impulses channeling collective approval or disapproval. The only way to sap a dark-skinned population’s moral energies and to mold and remold their personalities and perceptions, for example, is to circulate to and through the larger group containing that population (light- and dark-skinned alike) racist ideosomatic impulses channeling images and ideas of the dark-skinned group charged with collective disapproval: contented collaborationist natives as domestic pets, say, angry rebellious natives as vicious wild animals. I borrow these images from Ngũgĩ’s reading of Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa*: “What she is really saying,” he notes there, “is that her knowledge of wild animals gave her a clue to the African mind,” and “So to Karen Blixen, Kamante [her cook] is comparable to a civilized dog that has lived long with human beings, Europeans of course” (*Moving* 133). What makes Ngũgĩ’s demystification of Blixen’s racism so powerful, of course, is that his words are fueled by *feeling*, by carefully harnessed fury—the same kind of fury directed at and against rebellious African blacks like him by white imperialists and colonialists and their black collaborators, a regulatory fury that puts normative somatic pressure on the reader not just to accept the writer’s valuation but to conform his or her whole emotional orientation to the writer’s guidance. A writer or a speaker who channels powerful enough ideosomatic approval and disapproval (group regulatory guidance) into his or her words can indeed bring about large-scale personality and behavioral changes in readers or listeners—can make them (more) racist, in the colonial context, or in a decolonizing context less racist, or at least more guilty about their racism.

Implicit in this somatic approach is the assumption that the images Ngũgĩ identifies in Blixen’s memoirs are not intrinsically negative, in the abstract, in the null context; an image of a human being as a domestic pet or a wild animal will have a negative effect only if it is charged ideosomatically with negativity, through the bodily force of collective disapproval (or if it is constructed as so charged by its audience, which, as we’ll see, comes to the same

thing). It's not just the context in which the image is offered to the reader or listener that limits its meaning, in other words; rather, the words carrying the image are themselves charged with feeling, saturated (to use Bakhtin's formulation) with ideosomatic tonalizations and attitudinalizations, and transfer those emotional orientations to the reader or the listener. Just as it is possible to inflect "you're my pussy cat" or "he's my loyal dog" or "what a jackal he is" with approval or disapproval, with loving admiration or contemptuous disgust, so too is it possible for Ngũgĩ to resomatize Blixen's loving admiration for the Kikūyū, Kawirondo, and Wakambo who worked for her as patronizing racism—to "revoice" her racism, as Bakhtin would say, to reinflect it with his own disapproving tonalization, and to infect us as well with the resulting resomatization.

Bakhtin would also insist that these images have iterative histories behind them, iterosomatic histories by which countless somatizations of the images in actual discourse have charged them with a "positive" or "negative" tonalization that feels so stable as (almost) to constitute an objective semantics. "Pussy cat" and "loyal dog" have both been iterosomatized as predominantly "positive," though with an undercurrent of loving condescension; "jackal" is predominantly negative. It is possible to resomatize "pussy cat" or "loyal dog" negatively and "jackal" positively, but in doing so we can feel ourselves estranging a familiar somatic current. It is also possible to displace (abstract) the iterative history of this ideosomatic regulation out of these images and reify the cat and dog images as objectively or intrinsically (semantically) positive, the jackal image as semantically negative; but this dehistoricization/desomatization vitiates the abstraction and mystifies the process by which images and words come to mean anything at all.

Somatic theory attributes to the ideosomatics of racism (or of any other group orientation) the power to mold and remold personality because it takes individuality to be in large part a collective construct anyway, the product of ideosomatic regulation—what Nietzsche calls the internalization of mastery, or what Foucault calls discipline. We are, by and large, what the group says we are. And what the group "says," mostly, according to somatic theory, it says with its (dis)approving body language, but also with punitive physical pain (Nietzsche) and various physical and socioideological regimens (Foucault). To the extent that any one individual's experience of the world slips out of the group's control (and there is always some slippage, because ideosomatic regulation is a kluge), that individual may become the targets of intensified group regulation, which may generate shame and a redoubled effort to conform; but this stepped-up pressure may also generate rebellious impulses, which may ultimately impel the individual out of one group and into another. Thus

Ngũgĩ, for example, was impelled out of the group of elite collaborationist Anglophile Africans at the Alliance High School to which he had won a scholarship, and into the ideological camp of Marxism, African nationalism, and the Mau Mau struggle against British rule, a move marked by his name change from James Ngũgĩ to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and later also by his controversial decision to write only in Gikũyũ, no longer in English.

In somatic theory, any impulse that is perceived as nonconformist by the group is “ideosomatic,” any specifically rebellious impulse “counterideosomatic”: counterideosomaticity is a subset of ideosomaticity, which includes both *failures* and *refusals* to conform. But ideosomatic regulation can and often does break down as well, as social groups are thwarted in their ongoing attempts to regulate themselves homeostatically. The three essays in this book chart three different disruptions of ideosomatic regulation, and thus of the individual identities shaped and maintained by the group:

- (First Essay) *ideosomatic dysregulation*: the breakdown of ideosomatic regulation in the refugee experience, which destroys or scatters or contaminates the group;
- (Second Essay) *ideosomatic counterregulation*: the introduction into a group of a new and more powerful “corrective” ideosomatic regulation in the colonial experience, and again, at least in idealized theory, in decolonization; and
- (Third Essay) *paleosomatic regulation*: the survival of an old ideosomatic regulation into a new social context, in intergenerational trauma.

## P.2 HOMEOSTASIS/ALLOSTASIS

Somatic theory begins in the homeostatic regulation of the individual organism: an entire iterosomatic history of sociobiological evolution provides for the emergence of regulatory emotions as homeostatic mappings of appetites and other body states, of regulatory feelings as mental representations or mappings of emotions, appetites, and other body states, and of rational thoughts as mental representations of feelings, emotions, appetites, and other thoughts. This is the body-becoming-mind. An appetite like hunger is itself a homeostatic body map of specific shifting biological states in the stomach (muscle contraction), endocrine activity (lowered blood glucose, raised insulin levels), fatty acid metabolism (raised fatty acid levels), and heat management (lowered body temperature)—all, of course, designed to prompt the organism to eat and maintain homeostasis (stability) around a set-point conducive to the

organism's survival. But the emergence of an appetitive state does not lead mechanically to the satisfaction of the appetite; higher self-regulatory levels are activated as well, so that physiological hunger signals may be accompanied by emotions, which are felt, experienced as feelings, which in turn are thought (experienced as mental images and ideas). Based on the use of feelings to regulate emotional states, we may begin to feel eager as we move toward dinner, or annoyed if dinner is delayed; based on the emergence of thought to regulate feelings, we may institute a daily regimen, breakfast at 7 A.M., lunch at noon, dinner at 5 P.M. Not only that: the higher levels can trigger the lower levels, as when a feeling of sadness or loneliness triggers a hunger for comfort food, or a steaming-hot commercial image of dinner makes us realize that it's long past dinnertime and we're famished.

The study of homeostatic self-regulation in the individual organism begins to shift over into social theory when, say, repeated patterns of undersatisfied hunger in a family or a community trigger collective feelings of depression, resentment, or rage: in the colonial context you see the colonizer, fat and gouty with overeating, and build a mental comparison with your own family's and community's hungry bellies. What happens next is part of ideosomatic group self-regulation: you suppress your anger (convert it back into depression), because you want to be a good citizen, because you know that no good can come of rising up against superior power (i.e., the reigning colonial ideosomatic regulation is still functioning more or less smoothly in your group and inside each of its members); or you begin to build a new ideosomatic counter-regulation, work together in the group of the oppressed to retheorize hunger as a goad to political and even military action.

This would be group homeostatic self-regulation; but note that, to the extent that it arises in response to perceived social change, to a significant alteration in external conditions, it is technically group *allostatic* self-regulation. In the example from the previous paragraph, the overlord's overeating is itself an allostatic adaptation to wealth: it raises the homeostatic set-point around which his body regulates his food intake, so that it comes to feel physiologically necessary for him to continue (over)eating at that raised level. Your undereating is an allostatic adaptation to poverty: it has been lowering the homeostatic set-point for you and your family and community, so that if food suddenly became abundant, it might even be difficult to eat enough of it at first. This makes allostasis a far more pressing concept in the sociopolitical study of postcolonial and other at-risk identities than the more "normal" homeostasis, which reflects ideosomatic self-regulation in contexts of relative social stability.

Bruce S. McEwen, one of the leading medical theorists of allostasis, has coined the term “allostatic load” to describe “the long-term effect of the physiologic response to stress”: “Allostasis—the ability to achieve stability through change—is critical to survival. Through allostasis, the autonomic nervous system, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, and the cardiovascular, metabolic, and immune systems protect the body by responding to internal and external stress. The price of this accommodation to stress can be allostatic load, which is the wear and tear that results from chronic overactivity or underactivity of allostatic systems” (171). In conditions of acute stress, the organism adapts briefly and reversibly, turning an allostatic response first on and then off: in activation, the nerves and the adrenal medulla release catecholamines and the pituitary gland releases corticotropin, which prompts the adrenal cortex to release cortisol; in inactivation, cortisol and catecholamine secretion returns to baseline levels. In chronic stress, however, such as we typically find in the postcolonial contexts that we’ll be looking at here—long-term physical and cultural displacement—the entire organism adjusts homeostatically to a higher level of readiness, raising base-line set-points, which alone creates considerable allostatic load. That load is often further compounded by inefficient system response: after months or years or even generations of coping with chronic stress, the stress hormones may (a) never activate fully, leaving the organism overexposed to stress, or (b) never deactivate fully, leaving the organism overexposed to stress hormones, or (c) activate and deactivate repeatedly, abruptly, disjointedly, disrupting the homeostatic stabilizations that are essential for smooth functioning. When an entire population is subjected to this sort of allostatic overload, the ideosomatic regulation that maintains social order (stable identities, a shared reality) almost always breaks down, and various socioemotional and sociopolitical pathologies result.

But not invariably. The disruption of ideosomatic regulation is also an opportunity, one that is occasionally accompanied by stunning explosions of artistic and philosophical creativity—as it was in the first years of the Soviet Union, during and immediately after the lengthy, brutal, and socially disruptive Civil War, before the Stalinist Thermidor began to shut it down in the mid-1920s. Postcolonial theorists often theorize postcoloniality in terms of this utopian response to ideosomatic dysregulation and counterregulation—Deleuze and Guattari’s nomad thought and deterritorialization, for example, or Homi Bhabha’s hybrid cultures—and have been criticized for this sexy utopianism by other scholars more solidly grounded in the often disastrous economics, politics, and social psychology of postcoloniality; but I will be arguing in the book that we need utopian theories of postcolonial identities precisely

so that we don't simply succumb to the disastrous somatics of despair, don't simply thematize postcolonial populations as inevitably the passive victims of war, genocide, domination, and exploitation. I will also be arguing that the abstract binarisms of Saussurean thought that inform much poststructuralist theory (signifier–signified, speech–writing, synchronic–diachronic) have led many postcolonial theorists into discursive traps from which it becomes impossible to imagine a lived phenomenology of postcolonial identity. In the First Essay (§1.3.1) we will see Deleuze and Guattari theorizing the social machine as a protosomatic body-without-organs in order to steer clear of pure Saussurean discursivity; in the Second Essay (§2.2) I will also be pushing hard on the work of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak to bring out their own somatic thinking on postcolonial intersubjective affect.

One postcolonial theory that has attracted no utopian or other poststructuralist spins is intergenerational trauma, the theory that traumatized populations pass some form of allostatic overload on to their descendants—that allostatic overload is sustained not only through a single lifetime but at least from one generation to the next, and, some argue, through the collective lifetime of an entire culture, even for hundreds of years. This theory was first adumbrated by Friedrich Nietzsche in *A Genealogy of Morals*, where traumatic slave *experiences* survive for centuries as an allostatic/paleosomatic slave *morality*, and was picked and developed explicitly by Sigmund Freud, in *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, where his theorization of the history of religion entailed the intergenerational repression of an originary guilt, the guilt felt by the primal brothers at the murder of their father. The theory resurfaced in the 1970s, under the term “transgenerational transmission of trauma,” and has been gaining momentum under the term intergenerational trauma in the 1980s, 1990s, and the new millennium, first in the context of the symptomatologies experienced by the second- and third-generation descendants of Holocaust survivors, later in broader contexts as well, especially perhaps the American Holocaust, the genocide, resettlement, and reeducation of Native Americans and its effects on later generations, whose disproportionate rates of PTSD, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, alcoholism, and early death suggest some sort of lingering, buried response to trauma. What plagues most intergenerational trauma research to date, I will be suggesting, is the lack of an adequate explanation of *storage*, of how and where the allostatic overload is stored during whole lifetimes and across generational gaps; Ruth Leys, for example, suggests that it is stored as *memories*, “veridical memories or representations of the traumatic event,” as “literal replicas or repetitions of the trauma . . . that as such . . . stand outside representation” (229). It is important for her to represent those memories as

“outside representation” because, as many intergenerational trauma scholars have noted, one of the most telling features of traumatic memories is their *absence* (see Fine)—suggesting that trauma is transmitted from generation to generation submentally, in some lower stratum of allostatic self-regulation. My theory of paleosomatic regulation is an attempt to solve this conundrum.

### P.3 DISPLACEMENT

Displacement is a term used in many scholarly fields to indicate some sort of key shift in space or time: in the physical sciences, the displacement of air in an engine, of water by a ship’s hull, of the earth’s crust in various theories of global rebalancing; in the social sciences, time spent on the computer displaces face-to-face sociability and time spent watching television displaces reading. Criminal displacement theory argues that attempts to prevent crime by enhancing security measures actually only moves crime around, to a different place (geographical displacement), time (temporal displacement), target (target displacement), or type or method of crime (crime type or tactical displacement) (Felson and Clarke 25).

Sigmund Freud first theorized displacement (*Verschiebung*) as part of the dream-work, the displacement of elements in the dream-thought by entirely other elements in the dream-content, so that the dream becomes “differently centred from the dream-thoughts” (*Interpretation* 340). The displacement principle at work in that theory, that we unconsciously channel affect from feared to safe objects, has come to inform our understanding of numerous other key psychological phenomena as well, including transference and countertransference (the displacement of affect from a parent onto the analyst or the analysand), scapegoating (the displacement of affect from powerful or inaccessible objects to powerless objects, such as members of minority groups), and sublimation (the displacement of libido into socially useful outlets like art and work).

In structuralist and poststructuralist language theory, displacement began as a topical movement or shift of meanings and then in the mid-1950s was picked up by Jacques Lacan, drawing both on Freudian displacement and on Roman Jakobson’s theorization of metonymy, as the structural principle behind the Peircean “signifying chain” (*Écrits* 170), in which meaning is endlessly displaced along the syntagmatic chain of signifiers, and ultimately is to be found (or “insists”) only in that endless displacement (“the meaning ‘insists’ but . . . none of its elements ‘consists’ in the signification of which it is at the moment capable” [170]). By the early 1980s, something like this Laca-

nian concept had arguably become the organizing idea or strategy in post-structuralist thought: as Robert Young wrote in his introduction to his 1981 “post-structuralist reader” *Untying the Text*, “The name ‘post-structuralism’ is useful in so far as it is an umbrella word, significantly defining itself only in terms of a temporal, spatial relationship to structuralism. This need not imply the organicist fiction of a development, for it involves, rather, a displacement. It is more a question of an interrogation of structuralism’s concepts by turning one against another” (1). Two years later, in 1983, Mark Krupnik collected a group of disparate essays under the title *Displacement: Derrida and After*, noting in his introduction that “if displacement is always with us in post-structuralist theory, it has no official status within it. It is no sacred word, unlike ‘tension’ and ‘paradox’ in the New Criticism, or ‘intertextuality’ and ‘repetition’ nowadays” (4). Gayatri Spivak’s article in that collection, “Displacement and the Discourse of Woman,” is pure feminist critique of phallogocentrism—there is not a trace of subaltern studies in it yet (1983 was the year she delivered the lecture that eventually became “Can the Subaltern Speak?”—an argument I analyze at the end of the Second Essay [§2.2.2.3]). She reads Freud on displacement against the grain, identifying his use of the term *Entstellung* (“distortion”) as a surreptitious morphological translation of displacement (*ent* “away, aside” + *stellen* “to set or place”) in order to focus attention on his displacement not of dream-thoughts but of the female subject, “the moment when woman is displaced out of this primordial masculinity” (172).

Displacement entered the sociopolitical discourse that feeds postcolonial studies in the sense of the forced geographical removal of individuals from their home or home regions; the people thus removed become displaced persons, also known as forced migrants or refugees. This is the subject of the First Essay. The term was later extended metaphorically to cultural displacements without geographical removal, as when a foreign power invades, occupies, and colonizes one’s country and imposes a new ideosomatic regulation on one’s group, “displacing” the old cultural regime through education and other forms of social and institutional discipline—the subject of the Second Essay. In the Third Essay I will be expanding the term slightly to include the temporal displacement of a traumatic group allostasis past the era of its contextual relevance.

I will, in other words, be discussing displacement almost exclusively in its sociopolitical extension, as a sociopolitical phenomenon that disrupts people’s lives and identities. It would, however, be irresponsible for me to ignore the limitations and complications that a poststructuralist perspective would discover in the Freudian “displacements” in my project—the accusation, for

instance, that as a white middle-class American male English professor who has never been a refugee and has never been colonized I am arguably studying a displaced object, a “safe” (because distant, because politically correct, because not-me) object that disguises my own political complicity in the sociopolitical damage I study. I am thinking in particular of accusations like these that Terry Eagleton vents in his 1999 review of Spivak’s book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*:

This book takes a few well-deserved smacks at the wilder breed of post-colonialist critics, whose fascination for the Other is in part a demoralised yearning to be absolutely anyone but themselves. (“Gaudy Supermarket” 5)

But there are discreditable as well as creditable reasons for the speedy surfacing of post-colonialism, and Spivak remains for the most part silent about them. Its birth, for example, followed in the wake of the defeat, at least for the present, of both class-struggle in Western societies and revolutionary nationalism in the previously colonised world. American students who, through no fault of their own, would not recognise class-struggle if it perched on the tip of their skateboards, or who might not be so keen on the Third World if some of its inhabitants were killing their fathers and brothers in large numbers, can vicariously fulfil their generously radical impulses by displacing oppression elsewhere. This move leaves them plunged into fashionably Post-Modern gloom about the ‘monolithic’ benightedness of their own social orders. It is as if the depleted, disorientated subject of the consumerist West comes by an extraordinary historical irony to find an image of itself in the wretched of the earth. (5–6)

Deconstruction can indeed be a politically destabilising manoeuvre, but devotees like Gayatri Spivak ought to acknowledge its displacing effect, too. Like much cultural theory, it can allow one to speak darkly of subversion while leaving one’s actual politics only slightly to the left of Edward Kennedy’s. (6)

“Demoralised yearning to be absolutely anyone but themselves,” “vicariously fulfil their generously radical impulses by displacing oppression elsewhere,” “can allow one to speak darkly of subversion while leaving one’s actual politics only slightly to the left of Edward Kennedy’s”: these are displacements in Freud’s original sense of the term, liberal American students and post-colonial critics displacing their own uncomfortable complicity in their (our) country’s imperialist domination and exploitation of the rest of the world onto

safely foreign topics. Eagleton might have added that we white American non-Marxists also in the process distort (in Freud's displaced sense of *Entstellung*, as theorized by Spivak a decade and a half before her *Critique*) the safe foreign topics we study—but then according to him the same is true of Spivak herself, who, though a Third World feminist Marxist, for Eagleton is not nearly Marxist enough.

I not only plead *nolo contendere* to Eagleton's charges but intend to compound them by admitting that I here displace oppression still further: not just from America to the Third World, and not just from the plight of the Third World to theory, but from postcolonial theory to somatic theory. In fact, I went around and around on whether to use "postcolonial" at all in my title; I considered "postnational culture," "postcollective culture," even "post-culture," and only finally settled on "postcolonial culture" because it suggested not just the transformation of traditional sedentary cultures but also their disruption in and by and through hierarchizing regimes of sociopolitical power. Still, in that light I'm not sure that the refugee experience necessarily counts as postcolonial—masses of people are displaced (First Essay) not only by colonial wars and campaigns of ethnic cleansing but also by floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and other such decidedly nonpostcolonial phenomena—and the allostatic overloads that are passed down to later generations (Third Essay) can be caused by any number of traumatic events, not all of them tied to coloniality.

Still, despite my misgivings, I do think somatic theory has an important contribution to make to postcolonial studies. One of the biggest debates in the field almost from its beginnings in the late 1970s has been between those who understand postcoloniality politically, in terms of actions undertaken in the public domain, and those who understand it discursively, in terms of the fractalized thought-structures of French poststructuralist theory. Everything the "traditionalists" hold most dear—in Bart Moore-Gilbert's list, "the centred subject, the aesthetic sphere, foundational identities, the nation and nationalism, 'master'-narratives of liberation and emancipation, and authorial intention" (21)—seems to the poststructuralists hopelessly mired in an epistemologically discredited essentialist agenda that is complicit with colonialist thought; for the traditionalists, poststructuralist postcolonial theory is propagated by deracinated Third World intellectuals ensconced in prestigious U.S. universities and out of touch with the cultures they theorize, and consists of highly abstract but faux-politicized versions of First World linguistic philosophies that are complicit with global-capitalist/neocolonialist thought.<sup>2</sup>

I suggest that these two approaches to the study of postcolonial realities and identities are so radically and even ferociously polarized (see, for example,

Ahmad's *In Theory*) because they lack a theoretical framework for the analysis of the *interactions* between thought and action—between the private and public spheres, between psychoanalysis and sociology, between linguistic philosophy and politics. The poststructuralists—notably Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha—have worked very hard to politicize the differential strategies of poststructuralist thought, following Foucault in arguing that “the relations of discourse are of the nature of warfare” (Bhabha’s paraphrase, *Location* 145); but it is almost invariably difficult, reading Bhabha and Spivak and their many followers, to see how a politicized deconstruction of the discursive traces of postcolonial identities might meet the traditionalists halfway, or even one-tenth of the way, because they don’t know, and don’t seem at all inclined to wonder, how discursive structures are converted into the group orientations that condition action. Bhabha and Spivak are brilliant at recuperating verbal texts (literary, theological, administrative, and anthropological) for poststructuralist theory, but they have no theoretical shuttle that would ferry the “relations of discourse” they discover there back into the felt or lived phenomenologies of (post)colonial warfare and other realities and identities; and the “traditionalists” don’t seem to be particularly interested in building that kind of bridge or shuttle either. Terry Eagleton, for that matter, for all his ranting and posturing about liberal radicalism and fake Marxism—the review of Spivak’s book is notoriously vicious—doesn’t have a clue himself about the conversion of proletarian ideology into revolutionary action or proletarian action into revolutionary ideology. It just sort of happens, as if by magic. Ideology is mental and action is physical, and somehow the one keeps making the quantum leap into the other, through a black-box theoretical vacuum.

Somatic theory does model a shuttle of the necessary sort. It opens the black box through which discursive “inscriptions” are marked somatically for behavior and people, places, actions, and things are mapped physically-becoming-mentally into knowing and saying and believing. It explains how evaluative affect is not only circulated collectively through thoughts, words, actions, and orientations to places and things but stored as learned and more or less stable “structures” in the proprioceptive body of the group,<sup>3</sup> and how normative and counternormative pressures, impulses, and orientations do battle in that regulatory affective economy. Raymond Williams has theorized something like this somatic economy for a Marxism that Terry Eagleton has dismissed contemptuously as more liberalism, under the rubric “structures of feeling”<sup>4</sup>; and as we’ll see in the Second Essay, both Bhabha and Spivak find themselves groping in this direction as well, Spivak even using Williams’s phrase in her discussion of Kant’s analytic of the sublime in the book Eagle-

ton vilified, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (14). But neither theorist quite knows what to do with postcolonial affect—certainly neither knows how to use it to build a theoretical bridge between thought and action—because, I’ll be arguing, they lack somatic theory.

Ultimately I am interested here less in anything so vague and abstract as “postcoloniality” than in the disruption of ideosomatic regulation, something that I have in fact experienced first-hand, in spending half my adult life in foreign countries (especially perhaps the two years I’ve spent to date in post-Soviet Russia and the two years I’ve most recently spent in the Hong Kong New Territories). While the sociopolitical default setting of somatic theory is successful ideosomatic regulation, my interest in this book is in the failure of that regulation, in the theory’s problematic borderlands, which I suspect will shed more light on ideosomaticity than would an exhaustive mapping of its ideal functionality.

This is in fact the transformative effect that postcolonial studies has on somatic theory: studying the dysregulatory effects of the refugee experience, the reregulatory effects of (de)colonization, and the paleoregulatory effects of intergenerational trauma forces the somatic theorist to explore and explain the *failure* of the ideosomatic model of regulation that lies at the core of somatic theory. My efforts to apply somatic theory to postcolonial culture have had the salutary effect of expanding the scope of somatic theory: I have here developed the concepts of paleosomaticity and endo- and exosomaticity, of loco-, meta-, poly-, and xenonormativity (and panicked loconormativity), and allostatic overload precisely in order to increase the conceptual capacity of somatic theory to account for the myriad “postcolonial” breakdowns of the “normal” homeostatic functioning that lies at the core of somatic theory. How do we explain the traumata that result from such breakdowns, and the survival of individual and group adaptations to trauma for generations and even centuries after the initial traumatizing event or series of events? How do we explain the movement not just of peoples but of their cultural normativizations, and the clashes that result from the normativizing pressures placed on individuals and groups by different cultures sharing a geography? How do we explain the apparent stability of “home,” of familiar places and objects, even after they’ve been destroyed or lost forever?

#### **P.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

I focus here on three broad areas of cultural identity-(de)formation that you may or may not agree are roughly postcolonial in genesis, one in each essay:

forced migration, (de)colonization, and intergenerational trauma. These can be thought of as vaguely sequential, beginning with the traumata that scatter citizens out into the world as refugees, moving through the attempts (first by the colonial power, and then by the politicians and intellectuals of the newly independent former colony) to manage and banish the traumata of the recent past, and ending with the survival of migratory and colonial traumata unto the second and third and *n*th generations—beginning with ideosomatic dysregulation (breakdown), moving through ideosomatic counterregulation (new organization), and ending with paleosomatic regulation (persistence of the old breakdown in the midst of the new organization).

Within each of these three essays, then, I do three things: I read the data-driven (“empirical”) sociological and psychological studies of the phenomenon under consideration and suggest some ways in which somatic theory can organize and explain the data more powerfully; I apply the somatic theory developed in those early sections to a literary or cinematic representation or series of such representations of the phenomenon; and, finally, I apply somatic theory to a series of poststructuralist/postcolonialist theoretical spins on the phenomenon, pushing on the broken binary abstractions of structuralist linguistics that power poststructuralist theory in search of the vestiges of corporeal phenomenology that they don’t quite manage to suppress.

The First Essay, “Displacement of Persons/Forced Migration/Ideosomatic Dysregulation,” begins in §1.1.1 by outlining what I take to be the “primal scene” of refugee studies, the encounter between the “loconormative” therapist or researcher or aid worker and the “xenonormative” refugee, and complicates this scene in §1.1.2 by exploring the ways in which each side of this encounter dysregulates the other. §1.1.3 taxonomizes the refugee experience in terms of the dysregulatory effects of the event(s) in the home region that trigger(s) flight, of flight itself (including refugee camps), of early contact with the new host community, and of traumatic memories that continue to plague later interaction with the host community, supposedly after assimilation. §1.2 reads two texts by the Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat: “Children of the Sea” as a study of dysregulation at home and in flight, and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as a study of dysregulation in initial and continuing contact. The First Essay concludes in §1.3 with a discussion of the metaphorical uses to which migrants and refugees have been put in postcolonial theory, with examples from Deleuze and Guattari on “nomad thought,” and from Iain Chambers on migrancy.

The Second Essay, “Displacement of Cultures/Colonization and (De)Colonization/Ideosomatic Counterregulation,” begins in §2.1 with a reading of classic studies of the (de)colonizing process—C. L. R. James’s *The Black Jaco-*

*bins*, Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*—as a series of attempts to impose a new “corrective” ideosomatic counterregulation on an already existing one. §2.1.3.3 reads a cinematic representation of (de/re)colonization in the 2004 Spanish short film *Binta and the Great Idea*. The Second Essay concludes in §2.2 with a close reading of several essays by Bhabha and Spivak that tease out of their poststructuralist and Marxist theoretical strategies an emerging concern with postcolonial affect, including (in §2.2.2.4) Spivak's reading of Mahasweta Devi's novella “Douloti the Bountiful.”

The Third Essay, “Displacement of Time/Intergenerational Trauma/Paleosomatic Regulation,” reads the growing body of work on the phenomenon that is variously called the intergenerational, multigenerational, and transgenerational transmission of trauma. Following a quick prehistory of this theoretical orientation in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* and Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, I summarize the empirical research in §3.1 and then devote the bulk of the essay (§3.2) to readings of three literary texts, James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Percival Everett's “The Appropriation of Cultures” (1996). Through these readings I also expand and develop the theoretical model broached in §3.1; and I conclude the essay and the book in §3.2.4 with a reading of Dominic LaCapra's application of the Freudian acting-out/working-through binary to trauma studies.