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Displacement and the Somatics of Postcolonial Culture

Douglas Robinson

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Displacement of Time/ Intergenerational Trauma/ Paleosomatic Regulation

WE HAVE EXPLORED the dysregulatory effects of refugee trauma and the counterregulatory effects of colonization; it remains now to examine the paleoregulatory effects of *both* refugee trauma and various severely traumatizing colonial practices (genocide, enslavement, cultural subjugation) on later generations. Let's begin by looking back at the passage from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* that I quoted in §2.1.1:

“How does one create a memory for the human animal? How does one go about to impress anything on that partly dull, partly flighty human intelligence—that incarnation of forgetfulness—so as to make it stick?” As we might well imagine, the means used in solving this age-old problem have been far from delicate: in fact, there is perhaps nothing more terrible in man's earliest history than his mnemotechnics. “A thing is branded on the memory to make it stay there; only what goes on hurting will stick”—this is one of the oldest and, unfortunately, one of the most enduring psychological axioms. In fact, one might say that wherever on earth one still finds solemnity, gravity, secrecy, somber hues in the life of an individual or a nation, one also senses a residuum of that terror with which men must formerly have promised, pledged, vouched. It is the past—the longest, deepest, hardest of pasts—that seems to surge up whenever we turn serious.

Whenever man has thought it necessary to create a memory for himself, his effort has been attended with torture, blood sacrifice. The ghastliest sacrifices and pledges, including the sacrifice of the first-born; the most repulsive mutilations, such as castration; the cruelest rituals in every religious cult (and all religions are at bottom systems of cruelty)—all these have their origin in that instinct which divined pain to be the strongest aid to mnemonics. (II:3, 192–93)

“The residuum of that terror,” “the past . . . that seems to surge up”: these are among the first theorizations we have of what has come to be called the multigenerational transmission of trauma, historical trauma, or intergenerational trauma. Nietzsche’s idea is that trauma is stored and repeatedly retrieved for what I am going to be calling the paleosomatic regulation not only of individuals but of whole civilizations: “only what goes on hurting” *generation after generation* “will stick” to a nation, to a civilization, or to “man.” We saw in the Second Essay that this is a powerfully ideosomatic formulation—the mnemotechnics of pain involve the circulation of regulatory responses to pain through the somatic economy of the group—but Nietzsche does not theorize the somatics of the intergenerational transmission itself, the way in which traumatic pain conditions the memory not just of living people but of future generations as well. He just assumes it.

It is crucial for Nietzsche’s later influence on Sigmund Freud that his explanatory strategy here is grounded in the medical metaphors of disease and its symptomatology, epidemiology, and cures: he calls “the constantly spreading ethics of pity . . . the most sinister symptom of our sinister European civilization” (Preface:5, 154); he writes of the “cures” developed by “priestly aristocracies” for various disease-like evils and insists that “humanity is still suffering from the after-effects of those priestly cures” (I:6, 165–66); he calls the “descendants of every European and extra-European slavery” the “carriers of the leveling and retributive instincts” (I:11, 176). His most complex exfoliations of this medical metaphor tend to be brief but suggestive lists of interpretive categories that he does not then pursue: “We need a critique of all moral values; the intrinsic worth of these values must, first of all, be called in question. To this end we need to know the conditions from which those values have sprung and how they have developed and changed: morality as consequence, symptom, mask, *tartufferie*, sickness, misunderstanding; but, also, morality as cause, remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison” (Preface:6, 155).

When Freud picks up this idea of the multigenerational transmission of trauma, in his revisiting of his “historical” theory of the primal scene from *Totem and Taboo* in *Moses and Monotheism*, he takes over not only the medi-

cal metaphor but one telltale trope (“residuum of terror” > “mental residue”); but Freud is as unable to explain the transmission of trauma as Nietzsche is:¹

After the combination of brother clans, matriarchy, exogamy, and totemism had been established there began a development which may be described as a slow “return of the repressed.” The term “repressed” is here used not in its technical sense. Here I mean something past, vanished, and overcome in the life of a people, which I venture to treat as equivalent to repressed material in the mental life of the individual. In what psychological form the past existed during its period of darkness we cannot as yet tell. It is not easy to translate the concepts of individual psychology into mass psychology, and I do not think that much is to be gained by introducing the concept of a “collective” unconscious—the content of the unconscious is collective anyhow, a general possession of mankind. So in the meantime the use of analogies must help us out. The processes we study here in the life of a people are very similar to those we know from psychopathology, but still they are not quite the same. We must conclude that the mental residue of those primeval times has become a heritage which, with each new generation, needs only to be awakened, not to be reacquired. (*Moses* 169–70)

The “repressed” here is guilt over the murder of the father by the brothers, from *Totem and Taboo*—repressed, as Freud suggests, in a displaced or analogical sense, so that “something past, vanished, and overcome in the life of a people” returns, slowly, as the *collective* equivalent of the return of the repressed in “the mental life of the individual.” What the repressed and ever slowly returning “mental residue” is in a civilization, how it was stored through its “period of darkness,” or how it is “awakened” in each new generation, he has no idea; these are the questions that Heinz Kohut and other protosomatic attachment theorists have attempted to answer. He can only trope the processes in question in terms of the reemergence into the light of something that has been long relegated to the dark, the reawakening of something that has been put to sleep, or the rediscovery of the residue of some long-past chemical reaction.

How then does the multigenerational transmission of trauma work? This is a question that began to be asked again in the 1970s, first by Holocaust scholars, specifically in the context of the lingering effects of Holocaust trauma on the children of Holocaust survivors, and then by scholars of other traumatic histories as well, especially the genocide and various forced relocations and reeducations of Native Americans and the genocide and subjugation of Africans in the slave trade. And indeed after focusing for most of this book on refugee and (de)colonized populations in other countries, in this last

essay I turn to intergenerational trauma in two groups in my own country: the paleoregulatory effects of genocide and cultural subjugation on Native Americans, and of genocide, slavery, and cultural subjugation on African Americans. As in the two previous essays, I will be following these empirical studies with a look at literary representations—James Welch’s *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), and Percival Everett’s “The Appropriation of Cultures” (1996). Since there have not exactly been “theoretical spins” on intergenerational trauma, I will not provide a separate section for the post-colonial theory of historical trauma; but I will, in §3.2.4, build my conclusion around Dominic LaCapra’s poststructuralist theorization of what he calls “historical trauma” in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (1999).

3.1 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The empirical study of what is variously called intergenerational trauma, historical trauma, and the trans- or multigenerational transmission of trauma—especially as massively anthologized in Yael Danieli’s 1998 book *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*—typically encompasses the following:

1. studies of the original traumatizing experience(s), such as the American or Nazi Holocaust or other genocides, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, war and the POW experience, enslavement, forced relocation, repressive regimes, and domestic violence;
2. studies of the effects of trauma on its survivors;
3. studies of the effects of parenting by trauma survivors on their children (the “mechanism” of intergenerational transmission, and thus the primary problem that Nietzsche and Freud failed to address); and
4. studies of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomatology in populations who have not undergone trauma themselves and so can be assumed to have inherited some form of allostatic overload from some traumatized previous generation(s).

Some psychobiological studies of intergenerational trauma in humans and animals (Suomi and Levine, Yehuda et al., Krystal et al.) focus on (3) and (4), with background looks at (2); but the bulk of the work being done in the field seems prescriptively to require all four stages of the argument, for the perhaps obvious reason that it is impossible to establish with any empirical cer-

tainty that, say, disproportionately high rates of alcoholism, suicide, domestic violence, heart disease, and diabetes in Native American populations are the direct paleoregulatory endosomatic after-effects of the American Holocaust. By showing that trauma does radically counterregulate not only individuals but also the somatic economies that give their lives meaning and structure, that this counterregulation is demonstrably transferred virally from parents to children, and that populations who have not undergone severe trauma demonstrably suffer disproportionately high incidences of PTSD symptomatology, intergenerational trauma scholars build a strong circumstantial case for the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

In the first chapter of Danieli's *Handbook*, "Intergenerational Memory of the Holocaust," Nanette C. Auerhahn and Dori Laub begin with what they call "forms of traumatic memory" in trauma survivors [(2) in the previous paragraph's list], ten in number, from the least to the most "memorious":

- 2a. not knowing, caused by "massive psychic trauma [that] breaks through the stimulus barrier and defies the individual's ability to formulate experience" (23);
- 2b. screen memories, "the creation of an alternative, possibly false, self that screens over the absence of memory" (25);
- 2c. fugue states, "the intrusive *appearance* of split off, fragmented behaviors, cognitions, and affect, which are pieces of the traumatic memory or experience" (28, emphasis in original);
- 2d. the retention of decontextualized fragments of the trauma, in which "the individual has an image, sensation, or isolated thought, but does not know with what it is connected, what it means, or what to do with it" (29);
- 2e. transference phenomena, involving "the grafting of isolated fragments of the past on to current relationships and life situations that become colored by these 'memories'" (30);
- 2f. overpowering narratives, in which some scene from the traumatizing experience is atemporally relived, so that "He or she is in the experience once again; he or she is the same age again" (31);
- 2g. life themes, in which the overpowering narratives are used to organize personality and behavior ("identity and striving") thematically, which requires the establishment of "a degree of distance from the traumatic event" (32);
- 2h. witnessed narratives, "in which the observing ego remains present as a witness," so that "knowing takes the form of true memory" (33);
- 2i. trauma as "metaphor and vehicle for developmental conflict" (33); and

- 2j. “action knowledge, in which knowing becomes consciously consequential and thus determines subsequent action” (35).

Like most psychoanalytically oriented scholars of intergenerational trauma, Auerhahn and Laub tend to study these forms of traumatic memory in individuals: “although none of the various forms of traumatic memory are mutually exclusive,” they write, “and several may, to a greater or lesser degree, coexist in any particular individual at any given point in time, it is generally true that victims know mostly through retention of unintegrated memories or by reliving such memories in transference phenomena” (36). Somatic theory would situate these individual remembering and knowings in a larger circulatory economy of such knowings, which in fact—the somatic economy—would be the collective structuring context in which it becomes possible to distinguish between, say, decontextualized fragments (2d) and transference phenomena (2e). How, after all, is the individual to determine what is a false memory and what is a true one, what is a present affect and what is a transference affect grafted onto present relationships from the past? This sort of determination can only be made by the group—at a bare minimum by the analyst–patient dyad. Again like most psychoanalytically oriented scholars, Auerhahn and Laub tend to thematize these group determinations not as collective constructs but as empirical truths, objective facts—an epistemologically indefensible position that would seem to have more to do with the group fetishization (ideosomatic idealization) of scientism in the psychoanalytical community than it does with what can be reasonably established empirically.

If we take the list of (2a–j) ten forms of traumatic memory Auerhahn and Laub list not as a stable taxonomy of isolated memory *types* in individuals, then, but as a tentative formulation of group *constructions* of traumatic dysregulations of knowing and remembering—as circulatory organizations of deviations from ideosomatic regulations of reality and identity—then we can retheorize their list as a collective portrait of the paleosomatic regulation that will be retroactively constituted as the etiological ground zero of intergenerational trauma, the (dys)regulatory allostatic regime that will be thematized as handed down from generation to generation.

Auerhahn and Laub next turn to a discussion of the “modes” of the intergenerational transmission of trauma, the problem that Nietzsche and Freud left us, which they solve with Kohutian attachment theory:

We would like to briefly address the question of modes of transmission

of memory from one generation to the next. No doubt the pathways are multiple, complex, and mediated by numerous variables. Using a population of women who were sexually abused as children, Armsworth, Mouton, De Witt, Cooley, and Hodwerks (1993) and Stronck and Armsworth (1994) have researched the indirect effects of parents' childhood trauma on the second generation, specifically the manner in which parents' own traumatic past induces insecure attachment to their own mothers and disconnected, intrusive, and flawed parenting styles that result in insecure attachments in their own children. We have focused in much of our work (see especially Auerhahn & Laub (1994); Auerhahn & Prelinger (1983); Laub & Auerhahn (1984, 1993); and Peskin et al. (1997) on a second pathway of intergenerational effects, that of direct effects, or what is sometimes called *vicarious traumatization*—the fact that children both pick up on the defensive structures of traumatized parents and intuit the repressed, dissociated, and warded off trauma that lurks behind the aggressive and traumatic overtones that are found in adults' parenting styles. It is an irony of the PTSD literature that it is widely accepted that therapists working with victims of trauma will suffer vicarious traumatization (see such recent publications as Pearlman [1995]), yet the fact that a young child who cannot readily differentiate his or her boundaries from those of the parent on whom his or her life depends should pick up on the parent's warded off, dissociated, and traumatized self and be seriously impacted by identification is still in dispute (see Solkoff 1992). (37–38)

What the authors seem to mean by their direct/indirect binary there is that insecure dyadic mother–child attachments transfer traumatoregulatory orientations that only indirectly “transmit trauma to” (actually *reconstruct trauma in*) the child, while weak ego boundaries in infancy and early childhood directly facilitate the transfer (or perhaps leakage) of the “parent's warded off, dissociated, and traumatized self.” In somatic theory, however, this is a difference without a difference. There simply is no “self” that can be transferred without the regulatory orientations of the group: the dissociated and traumatized parental self is only available for somatomimetic reconstruction in the child because ideosomatic regulation circulates through both parent and child.

Like Nietzsche, Freud, and Kohut before them,² however, Auerhahn and Laub construct a model that is powerfully *protosomatic*; as Allan Schore (also relying heavily on Kohutian attachment theory) theorizes the somatic mimesis that makes the intergenerational transmission of trauma possible:

As episodes of relational trauma commence, the infant is processing information from the external and internal environment. The mother's face is the most patent visual stimulus in the child's world, and it is well known that direct gaze can mediate not only loving but powerful aggressive messages. In coding the mother's frightening behavior, Hesse and Main described "in non-play contexts, stiff-legged 'stalking' of infant on all fours in a hunting posture; exposure of canine tooth accompanied by hissing; deep growls directed at infant" (1999, p. 511). The image of the mother's aggressive face, as well as the chaotic alterations in the infant's bodily state that are associated with it, are indelibly imprinted into the infant's developing limbic circuits as a "flashbulb memory" and thereby stored in imagistic implicit-procedural memory in the visuospatial right hemisphere.

But within the traumatic interaction the infant is presented with another affectively overwhelming facial expression, a maternal expression of fear-terror. Main and Solomon (1986) noted that this occurs when the mother withdraws from the infant as though the infant were the source of the alarm, and they reported that dissociated, trancelike, and fearful behavior is observed in parents of type D infants. Studies show a specific link between frightening, intrusive maternal behavior and disorganized infant attachment (Schuengel, Bakersmanns-Kranenburg, and van IJzendoorn, 1999).

During these episodes, the infant is matching the rhythmic structures of these states, and this synchronization is registered in the firing patterns of the right corticolimbic brain regions that are in a critical period of growth. And thus not just the trauma but the infant's defensive response to the trauma, the regulatory strategy of dissociation, is inscribed into the infant's right-brain implicit-procedural memory system. In light of the fact that many of these mothers have suffered from unresolved trauma themselves (Famularo, Kinscherff, and Fenton 1992), this spatiotemporal imprinting of terror and dissociation is a primary mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of trauma. (125–26)

There, in "not just the trauma but the infant's defensive response to the trauma, the regulatory strategy of dissociation," is the somatic corrective that collapses the direct/indirect binary: the infant somatomimetically reconstructs not only the trauma (directly) but the parent's "defensive response to the trauma" (indirectly), builds both into an integrated paleoregulatory regime that is then passed down from generation to generation.

3.2 LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS: WELCH, MORRISON, EVERETT

I will, as I say, be taking a slightly different approach in this final essay: rather than moving more or less systematically through a series of empirical approaches and one or two literary representations to a series of postcolonial theoretical spins, I want to focus almost all of my attention this time on three different literary representations: James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Percival Everett's "The Appropriation of Cultures" (1996). My sense, in fact, is that novelists have explored the somatics of intergenerational trauma far more powerfully and insightfully than either the empirical scholars or the two poststructuralist theorists, Cathy Caruth and Dominic LaCapra, who have most systematically addressed it. In the remainder of this essay, then, I'll be looking first at Welch's attempt to pose the problem of intergenerational trauma without naming it or having the slightest idea what to do about it; then at Morrison's full-out exploration of the survival of the traumatic past into a repeatedly retraumatized present, in the return of the greedy revenant *Beloved*, with only the vaguest suggestion at a resomatizing solution to it; and finally at Everett's moral fable that explicitly offers resomatization as a utopian solution.

3.2.1 James Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney*

James Welch (1940–2003), son of a Blackfeet father and Gros Ventre mother, was one of the leading figures in the Native American Renaissance of the 1970s. He grew up and attended schools on the Blackfeet and joint Gros Ventre-Assiniboine Fort Belknap reservations in northern Montana, studied at the University of Montana under Richard Hugo, and in addition to teaching at the University of Washington and Cornell, served on the Parole Board of the Montana Prisons System in Missoula, where he lived until his death in 2003.

Welch wrote poetry (*Riding the Earthboy* 40 [1990]) and history (*Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* [1994]), but he is best-known for his novels: *Winter in the Blood* (1974), *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), *Fools Crow* (1986), *The Indian Lawyer* (1990), and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2000). Two of those novels, *Fools Crow* and *Charging Elk*, are set in the Indian Wars era of the late nineteenth century, the former ending with the infamous Marias River massacre in 1870, in which

173 women, children, and a few old men of the Blackfoot Confederacy were slaughtered by Major Eugene Baker's men in retaliation for the Indian murder of a white trader, the latter stranding Charging Elk, taken to London in 1887 as a part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, in Marseilles, France, where he cannot speak more than a couple of words of English or French. The other three are set in contemporary times and places, especially the reservation towns in Montana where Welch grew up.

The novel I want to read in this section, *The Death of Jim Loney*, is in one critical sense an anomaly in Welch's literary production; as Ernest Stromberg writes:

One of the most powerful explorations of the challenges to contemporary Native American identity takes place in James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney*. In his second novel, Welch casts a grim shadow across the representational space of contemporary American Indian fiction. Unlike his other three novels—*Winter in the Blood*, *Fools Crow*, and *The Indian Lawyer*—*The Death of Jim Loney* refuses to provide the ultimately affirmative vision of Native American cultural survival that many readers have come to associate with contemporary American Indian fiction. For instance, in his first novel, *Winter in the Blood*, the critical consensus is that by the story's end the nameless narrator finally achieves access to a place in a larger Blackfeet cultural history, an access which will help him to develop a more meaningful, less alienated life. With his third novel, *Fools Crow*, Welch spins a historical fiction of the Blackfeet people before subjugation to white authority. Densely layered with ethnographic detail, *Fools Crow* portrays a rich and dynamic culture. Although this work ends with a chilling account of the brutal Marias River massacre, the novel's overall narrative celebrates Blackfeet history and tradition in what critic Owens calls a "full act of cultural recovery" (156). And in his most recent novel, *The Indian Lawyer*, Welch provides a protagonist, Sylvester Yellow Calf, who, after nearly succumbing to the Faustian temptation of power in the inauthentic white world, is "found" at the end of the story dedicatedly working to protect Indian water rights. (32–33)

The eponymous Charging Elk, too, in the novel published after Stromberg wrote, manages to build out of destructive circumstance a mode of survival that offers collective hope. That leaves only *Jim Loney* as a narrative emblem of the complete collapse of cultural meaning and direction, and thus of failure and despair: half-Indian, half-white, Jim Loney had "never felt Indian" (102) but certainly never identified with white culture either (his white girlfriend

Rhea “had said he was lucky to have two sets of ancestors. In truth he had none” [102]), and after spending the entire novel trying to create a collective past for himself, to think an ancestry and a history into being, fails, and commits a complex kind of suicide.

3.2.1.1 THE CRITICS

There have been roughly two kinds of critical response to this failure. One, represented by Kathleen Sands and John Purdy, reads the imagery of the novel as grounding Loney’s death in Gros Ventre spirituality, and thus in what Stromberg calls a redemptive “authentic Indianness.” The other, represented by Jennifer Lemberg, reads Loney’s failure to construct a usable Indian past in terms of intergenerational trauma: in her reading, Loney does truly fail, and his suicide truly is cause for despair, but his failure becomes an indictment of the U.S. policies that decimated Indian populations and severely traumatized the survivors. What I want to suggest is that these readings are not mutually exclusive—that failure/success and authentic Indian/non-Indian are false dichotomies in the novel, and perhaps more broadly in and for the ideosomatic realities and identities that circulate through the novel and its readers as well.

As John Purdy lays out the former reading, it revolves around the “dark bird” Loney begins seeing early in the novel: “And he saw the smoke ring go out away from his face and he saw the bird in flight. Like the trembling, the bird was not new. It came every night now. It was a large bird and dark. It was neither graceful nor clumsy, and yet it was both. Sometimes the powerful wings beat the air with the monotony of grace; at other times, it seemed that the strokes were out of tune, as though the bird had lost its one natural ability and was destined to eventually lose the air” (Welch 20). Purdy explains:

Loney later states that he has never seen a bird like his before in the surrounding country. The dark bird, however, bears a number of similarities to Bha’a, one of the most powerful beings in the world of the Gros Ventre. Like Coyote, or Sinchlep of the Salish and Na’pi of the Blackfeet, he is the most powerful agent of the “Supreme Being,” and as such his influence is far-reaching. He is most commonly associated with summer thunderstorms, and in this connection a ceremony and a story have evolved around him. The Feather Pipe—one of the two most powerful pipes in Gros Ventre ceremonialism—is said to have been given by Bha’a to a boy who was unlike any of the other children in his village. Although there are

different versions of the story, they can be seen to relate to Loney. The boy who receives the pipe does not play with the other children but instead stays to himself; he is told in a dream that he is going to be given something so he moves his lodge away from the others in the village, and he is visited by Bha'a, who takes the boy's lodge and everything he owns but leaves him with the pipe (Flannery 446). Isolation, alienation, and vision are directly connected in the story to the power gift of Bha'a; the loss of material possessions and human companionship results in the gift of something immensely more valuable for individual and community alike: knowledge of new ceremonial actions and power derived from a relationship with a supernatural being. (69–70)

Loney, as his name suggests, is a loner. He has a girlfriend, Rhea, whom he loves, but as soon as he begins seeing the dark bird in visions, he begins to alienate himself from her as well (“they were lovers and he was blowing it. And he didn't know why” [22]); soon they are more or less broken up, and she is packing to move home to Dallas. He knows people in town, he grew up there, played high school basketball there, but has no friends, and often goes days without talking to anyone but his old dog, who early in the novel wanders off to die alone. “Isolation, alienation, and vision” are all defining attributes of Jim Loney. He receives nothing vaguely resembling a Feather Pipe in the novel, unless we count the shotgun his father gives him; but Purdy adds, following Sands, that Bha'a can give a man the power to become a great warrior and to stir up storms:

As Sands demonstrates, Loney becomes a warrior after he is given the shotgun—as he foresees in his vision—but he also becomes a maker of storms. When Loney walks to Rhea's later, she comments about the severity of the wind. Loney replies, “I think I might have something to do with it” (28). The possibility that he might be affecting the weather is never explored, at least overtly, but this slight and seemingly inconsequential statement says a great deal about Loney's vision of the bird, the image of which remains with him. As he stares into Rhea's fireplace, he sees it again, and either it, or his memory of it, arises to direct his actions throughout the remainder of the novel. The novel ends, as does Loney's life, with a reference to his vision; the sense of complicity lingers, as does the sense that any distinction between Loney's vision of the bird and Loney himself has disappeared: “And he fell, and as he was falling he felt a harsh wind where there was none and the last thing he saw were the beating wings of a dark bird as it climbed to a distant place.” (70)

Loney dies, in other words, not miserably, cold, alone, gunned down by a tribal cop; he dies a warrior's death, a death of great spiritual power that gathers him to his ancestors, whom he has been seeking throughout the novel in vain. As Welch told an interviewer, "He does orchestrate his own death. . . . He creates it, he creates a lot of events to put himself on top of that ledge in the end . . . he knows how his death will occur. And to me, that is a creative act and I think all creative acts are basically positive" (Bevis 176).

I think it would be difficult to deny that some such spiritual undercurrent is at work in the novel's imagery. The question, though, is what Welch is doing with it. If, as Purdy says, "the loss of material possessions and human companionship results in the gift of something immensely more valuable for individual and community alike: knowledge of new ceremonial actions and power derived from a relationship with a supernatural being," where do we see this power? Where is the knowledge of the new ceremonial actions? Loney dies, and the novel ends.³ If he is indeed gathered to his ancestors, that is something we have to infer from the vaguely adumbrated Gros Ventre imagery; certainly there is no indication that his death will change anything, improve anything, bring the Gros Ventres in the novel or any of its readers new hope or new knowledge or new direction.

In *The Sacred Hoop*, Paula Gunn Allen offers a mitigated version of this "authentic Indian" reading, based only on the perception that Jim Loney chooses his death, and so dies like a warrior:

Loney dies like a warrior, out of choice, not out of defeat. Though he could not plan or control his life, he could, finally, determine his death. Perhaps the most destructive aspect of alienation is that: the loss of power, of control over one's destiny, over one's memories, thoughts, relationships, past, and future. For in a world where no normative understandings apply, where one is perceived as futile and unwanted, where one's perceptions are denied by acquaintance and stranger alike, where pain is the single most familiar sensation, the loss of self is experienced continually and, finally, desperately. (145–46)

While still grounded in the notion that *The Death of Jim Loney* is definitively shaped by Indian ritual and myth, Allen's 1992 reading pushes us hard in the direction of the intergenerational trauma reading offered in 2006 by Jennifer Lemberg: Loney lives in "a world where no normative understandings apply" not because he *just is* alienated, where he alone "is perceived as futile and unwanted, where [only his] perceptions are denied by acquaintance and stranger alike, where pain is the single most familiar sensation" for this

random man in the world—and certainly not because alienation is any kind of general human condition—but because the historical traumas inflicted on Native Americans by expansionist white Americans over three and a half centuries have *depleted* the Indian world of normative understandings.

“The possibility that Loney has inherited a legacy of trauma,” Lemberg writes, “is difficult to dispute” (70)—meaning that, based on the work done by Eduardo and Bonnie Duran, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, and Lemyra M. DeBruyn applying intergenerational trauma theory to the American Holocaust, *as an Indian* Loney has indisputably inherited that legacy:

As the Durans and Brave Heart write, “European contact decimated the indigenous populations of this hemisphere,” through disease, alcohol, violence, and “policies systematically attacking the core of identity—language and the family system,” including the creation of the boarding schools and the outlawing of religious practices (“Trauma of History” 62–64). The latter half of the nineteenth century brought the reservation system, the destruction of the buffalo herds, and the forced cession of land under the Allotment Act (Flanner 22–23; Brave Heart and DeBruyn 64). Like that of other Plains tribes, the history of the Gros Ventres was shaped by these events, the population decreasing sharply around the turn of the century following the settling of the boundaries of the Fort Belknap Reservation (Flannery 24). A period of “revitalization” followed, though after the Indian Reorganization Act the “reservation entered a period of steady decline” (Fowler 98–102). Loretta Fowler notes that the middle of the century, when Loney would have been growing up, was a time of “outright despair,” for the Gros Ventres, as Termination Era policies led to economic hardship, a decrease in traditional practices, and an increase in migration away from the reservation. (99–102) (70–71)

Citing Loretta Fowler’s account of the return of many Gros Ventres to the reservation in the 1960s, and the revivification of both ritual practices and economic opportunities (1), and Robert M. Nelson’s argument to the effect that there were Gros Ventres Loney’s age and older who were active on the reservation (101), Lemberg notes that “in portraying Loney’s grief and isolation, Welch denies him access to these” (72). Loney has a family, but they are no help: his white father Ike lives locally but until late in the novel the two have not spoken in twenty-five years; his big sister Kate has moved to Washington, D.C., to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and dismisses the past as nonexistent and not worth thinking about (91); his mother left the family when Loney was an infant and never made an attempt to contact her children

again. The story his father put out was that his Gros Ventre wife Eletra had gone crazy and was probably dead, or in an insane asylum somewhere; in high school Loney discovers that his mother had gone to live with his schoolmate Yellow Eyes' father, on the reservation (118–19), but never tells anyone of his discovery, and never (until the end of the novel) asks anyone about her or attempts to look her up. Lemberg writes:

His mother's absence is the sharpest reminder of Loney's personal devastation. As Owens writes, she "exists in some undefined place—maybe a madhouse, maybe death—just outside the picture," and her haunting presence appears in Loney's dreams and visions (149). What Loney eventually learns of her story hints at larger meanings in her disappearance, as it is after marrying a white man that she goes from participating in traditional dances and training as a nurse to dissolution and death. Loney fantasizes about their reunion, consistent with the "compensatory fantasies" described by the clinicians, and his unresolved grief for her is an important part of the emotional crisis that leaves him immobilized at his kitchen table. (73)

"Loney's separation from his mother," Lemberg adds, "contributes to his feeling that he lacks an Indian identity" (73). He does not feel like an Indian, and is surprised to discover that others regard him as one, because he has an idealized image of Indians as a functional community where "the old ones [passed] down the wisdom of their years, of their family's years, of their tribe's years, and the young ones [soaked] up their history, their places in history, with a wisdom that went beyond age" (Welch 102). "Focused as he is on memory and the past," Lemberg writes, "Loney understands Indian identity to be based on precisely those things he lacks. Rhea remarks that Loney 'is lucky to have two sets of ancestors' so that he 'can be Indian one day and white the next,' but he does not experience his background as an opportunity to create a multiple or hybrid self (14). Instead, he struggles with it as a heavy burden of loss" (73–74).

Lemberg's explanation of Loney's quasisuicidal death is that "he suffers from what Fine calls 'the guilt of nonparticipation,' worsened by his lack of a connection to a living, thriving community" (74), a reading that draws on Ellen S. Fine's discussion of the crushing effects of trauma on the next generation, the children of the survivors:

They are haunted by the world that has vanished; a large gap exists in their history, and they desire to bridge this gap, to be informed about what

occurred, to know something about members of their family who perished. However, they feel frustrated by the impotence of incomprehension; the past eludes and excludes them. Repeatedly met with the silence of their parents and relatives—who transmit the wounds of genocide, and not the memory—they grow up in the “compact voice of the unspeakable,” as Nadine Fresco affirms. (Fine 43–44, quoted in Lemberg 72)

When Loney finally confronts and exculpates his father, then, he assigns all guilt for his empty life to himself, the guilty nonparticipant: “Loney knew who the guilty party was. It was he who was guilty, and in a way that made his father’s past sins seem childish, as though original sin were something akin to stealing candy bars” (Welch 146). Lemberg comments: “His guilt contributes to his desire to participate in an incident similar to those that he imagines have preceded his birth: seeing himself as ‘marked’ by his wrongdoing, he leaves his father’s trailer prepared to be hunted down and killed” (74), prepared to reenact “a painful scene from American cultural narratives of Indians being destined to perish” (75). As Louis Owens puts it, “Loney enacts the fate of the epic *Vanishing American*” (155, quoted in Lemberg 78n2). He “recreates what seems to be an ordinary trauma. He engages in what historian and trauma theorist Dominic LaCapra calls ‘acting out,’ a mode of dealing with trauma in which ‘the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present,⁴ rather than working through it, by engaging in the only kind of ‘cultural performance’ he sees himself as being capable of, his death” (75).

3.2.1.2 THE DARK CONSTRUCTIVIST BIRD

Lemberg’s discussion of the dark bird that Loney sees all through the novel, and that seems to lead him upward out of death at the very end, opens a fruitful interpretive avenue beyond the impasse at which the polarized readings of the novel leave us:

Earlier, when Loney is incapable of telling Rhea what troubles him, he instead tells her of the dark bird that appears in his visions. His description of the bird subtly replaces a description of his past. While the bird may indeed be a vision sent by his mother’s people, as he suspects, unskilled as Loney is in tribal modes of understanding, its meaning always eludes him. It becomes a signifier that reveals nothing, an emblem of a past he cannot remember, both his own personal history and that of the Indian tribe to which he belongs. In this reading, the dark bird is the symbol of Loney’s

absent memory, the loss that is always present to him: his missing mother and his inability to consider himself an Indian, which has rendered his existence meaningless. The absent memory that has haunted him throughout his life drives him to his own death, and the last things he sees before he dies are “the beating wings of a dark bird as it climbed up to a distant place” (179). The dark bird leads Loney onward, but, like his memory, it seems forever out of his reach. (75–76)

For Sands and Purdy, the dark bird is Bha’a, a powerful spirit unquestionably “sent by his mother’s people” to lead him back to them, to reincorporate him into the tribe in death; for Lemberg, this may be true, but even in death Loney does not know how to surrender to that reincorporation, does not know how to let the vision circulate the ideosomatics of belonging through him, and so remains an outsider.

The telltale phrase in that quotation from Lemberg that I want to focus on is “as he suspects”: Lemberg constructs the temporal sequence from Loney talking about his childhood to Loney talking about the dark bird as a conscious connection Loney draws not only between his *childhood* and the dark bird but specifically between the Gros Ventres and the dark bird. I suggest that this is problematic in useful ways. Here is what Welch gives us:

“But what is it that really troubles you? For pity’s sake, don’t you know I want to help you?”

“It’s not something . . . I don’t even know myself. It has to do with the past.” But Loney realized this wasn’t good enough. He had thought and said it too often to believe it anymore. “It has to do with certain things. I know it has to do with my mother and father, but there are other things. It has to do with an aunt I lived with when I was a kid. I loved her and she died. That’s okay. It was enough to love her. But I would like to know who she really was and how she died and why. I don’t know.”

Rhea felt her hands loosen on the steering wheel. She hadn’t realized how tense she had been. But Loney was talking finally and she held her breath, in her mind urging him on.

“I know this is kind of strange, but I see a bird—I don’t know what kind of bird it is—but I see it every night. Sometimes it flies slowly enough so that I can almost study it, but even then . . . it is a bird I’ve never seen in real life. I don’t know. It comes and I look at it and then it fades away.” (104)

That’s it. That is Lemberg’s evidence for her suspicion that Loney suspects that the dark bird was sent to him by “his mother’s people.” The motherly “she” of

which he is speaking before he breaks off and tells Rhea of the dark bird is not even his mother, whom he doesn't remember, but his father's girlfriend Sharon, a white woman he lived with for a few years after his father decamped. He does *mention* his mother, in the collocation "my mother and father," but he does not speak of her as having a "people." It would seem that "as he suspects" is actually Lemberg's way of incorporating the Sands/Purdy reading of the dark bird as Bha'a into her own, as something that Loney "suspects" but cannot grasp.

But Lemberg's interpretive overreach here points us, I suggest, to a telling failure in both readings: namely that nobody, not even Ernest Stromberg in his intelligent critique of the Sands/Purdy/Allen "authentic Indian" reading of the novel,⁵ problematizes the novel's narrative structure, the Bakhtinian rather than Russian Formalist narrative structure, author-narrator-character rather than *fabula* and *syuzhet*. All the critics seem to be focused on what Loney knows or doesn't know; no one asks what the narrator or the author knows. At the very simplest level, it seems reasonable to agree with Lemberg that Loney is completely at sea with the Gros Ventre Bha'a mythology—and to argue that case even more strongly than she does, that he doesn't even *suspect* that the dark bird might be sent by his mother's people—and still at the same time consider the possibility that the close-third-person narrator knows and drops bread crumbs throughout the novel that will lead us to the "spiritual" meaning of the dark bird; or that the narrator doesn't know either but the author does.

Think for example of Martin Amis's complex novelistic exploration of perpetrator trauma in *Time's Arrow*, where the character lives time in a forward direction, as we do, but the narrator lives time backwards, starting with the character's death and moving "forward" to his birth. This allows Amis to give us a narrator who has no idea of the concentration camp traumata that might have caused the endosomatic symptomatology he experiences inside the character's "revivified" and then (de)aging body, because from his narrative point of view they haven't happened yet: they're in the character's past but his future. As the narrator brings us closer to the concentration camp experience, where the character was a doctor performing medical experiments on internees, he begins to suspect that something bad is coming; but once he's there, he still fails to understand, because all he sees is the character taking in sick or tortured people or dead bodies and healing them, magically restoring them to relative health. From his sequentially backwards point of view, traumatizing torture becomes healing, leaving him essentially puzzled as to the origins of the character's endosomata from the period *after* the concentration camp in the character's life but *before* the concentration camp in the narration.

Amis, of course, clearly signals to his readers what he is doing by manipulating the clash between the unreliable narrator's backwards point of view and the traumatized character's forwards point of view—the narrator's puzzlement is ours too, until he brings us sequentially to the concentration camp and it all makes sense. We realize that the traumatic experience of inflicting grievous harm on fellow human beings destroyed the character's life ever after—even though he managed to escape Europe and hide out in the United States under an assumed name, and even to practice medicine. We reconstruct the reversed temporal sequence, restore cause and effect as an explanatory “fiction” to which the narrator does not have access, but to which the author deftly points us. The author and the reader communicate across the heads, as it were, of the unreliable narrator and the monstrous (but himself also traumatized) character.

If we assume that something like this is going on in *The Death of Jim Loney* as well, that Welch wants us to do the research Kathleen Sands did and discover that the dark bird is Bha'a, then the question becomes not only what does he allow the narrator and the character to know but *why* does he make it so difficult for everyone involved—character, narrator, and reader—to figure out what's going on. He could have tipped his hand much more clearly, as Amis does. He could have dropped hints of the Feather Pipe or other arcane narrative elements of the Gros Ventre myth; he could have had the narrator tell us outright that Loney had no idea what these images meant, because he was out of touch with the tribe and its stories, its ritual practices. He could have made the narrator patently unreliable, had the narrator offer patently and revealingly inadequate explanations of the dark bird imagery (“the dark bird that Loney kept seeing was not Bha'a, the powerful Gros Ventre spirit, it could not have been, because Loney knew nothing of his mother's people's ancient stories”), in order to signal to the reader that there is a hidden meaning to be worked out.

The fact that Welch doesn't do this is significant, I think. If in fact he does want us to identify the dark bird as Bha'a, he gives us no help in making the identification; he throws us entirely back on our own interpretive resources. In this sense he is doing to us the exact same thing he is doing to his character, Jim Loney, and, obviously, doing it to us *through* his doing it to Loney: asking a question that seems to have no answer; posing a problem that seems insoluble. The question is, of course, how to construct a usable past, a collective tradition, a temporal community that will structure our realities and identities meaningfully.⁶ That is the question Welch asks and answers in his first novel, *Winter in the Blood*, whose unnamed narrator and protagonist spends the first three parts of the novel searching for the past that his (unsuspected)

grandfather Yellow Calf gives him in the beginning of the fourth part. As Paul Eisenstein suggests, Welch uses a Hemingwayesque strategy of narrative omission to build suspense around this quest for meaning, withholding from the narrator and the character—and thus the reader as well—all sense of his tribe's spiritual tradition:

As his interview with Bill Bevis reveals, lean sentences—when crafted poetically—enable Welch to *imply* the spiritual world that is so much a part of a Native American worldview. But more than that, Welch wants to imply the historical/ancestral cause of the narrator's malaise, that is to say, how this thirty-two-year-old man's inability to connect is, at least in part, determined by the voice which characterizes his and other Native Americans's [*sic*] (and the dominant culture's) historical consciousness. What exactly this consciousness ought to consist of—the *kind of life* blueprint that might be formulated therein—is omitted for the first three-fourths of *Winter in the Blood*, paralleling an omission that, for Welch, has characterized the transmission of history for over a century. The dominant culture's writing of history may record events (i.e., land surrendered, treaties signed), it may even extol a handful of minority individuals for their achievements, but its discourse cannot include the recounting of events that threaten the image of itself it must maintain. That image, the product of power relations that construct it, at every step determines what does and does not get told; stories of cruelty committed in its name are either concealed or rewritten for absorption into America's monocultural narrative. Beholden to the self-image that narrative is bent on reproducing, such telling only continues the cruelty. The history produced may protect the interests of its writers, but to do so, those writers must distort or leave out altogether certain occurrences, thus burying (and doing violence to) the larger body of communication that conveys the way of life and way of seeing of those they have subjugated. For minority cultures like those of Native Americans to resist absorption, for them to maintain identity, this body of communication—heretofore lacking, heretofore omitted—must be articulated. (5)

What the movement from *Winter in the Blood* to *The Death of Jim Loney* suggests, then, is that Welch grew dissatisfied with the solution he offered to the problem in the earlier novel—that it was too easy, too pat: that putting a character in the novel who possesses the omitted knowledge and can impart it to the questing protagonist makes the quest seem like a simple matter of opening the right door and possessing the treasure hidden behind it.

More than that, I would argue, the movement from Welch's first to second novel suggests a paradigm shift in Welch's conception or construction of the *nature* of the quest. If the answer exists and must simply be found, as it seems in *Winter in the Blood*, the quest is essentially objectivist; if not only the answer but the right question must be painstakingly (and in fact unsuccessfully) *sought*, then the quest is constructivist, based not on our ability to discover and embrace the truth about the past but on our willingness to build a working past, and our recognition that this is not just a facile matter of fantasizing one but of actually *feeling* the redemptive power of the newly created past tradition or "truth."

In fact the striking thing about all the conflicting readings of *The Death of Jim Loney* is that they are uncritically predicated on the objectivist assumption that the answer to Loney's questions *exists* and must simply be sought out, uncovered. Sands and Purdy assume that the answer lies in Gros Ventre mythology, and once they have provided the key, the mystery is solved. Lemberg assumes that the answer lies in the traumatic destruction of an Indian past, and once she has provided the key to that, the mystery is solved. What all of the novel's critics inchoately recognize, however, it seems to me, is that the keys they provide do not solve the novel's mystery at all—that if the dark bird is Bha'a, as Lemberg says of Sands's and Purdy's reading, Loney can't read it; and that if Loney's problem is intergenerational trauma, as Lemberg insists, *we* can't read it. It still makes no sense to us—precisely because that is the historical *effect* of intergenerational trauma, to suck collective meaning out of the world, to deobjectify our realities and identities. If objectivity is a communal construct, a collective exosomatization of the world, then the systematic decimation and dysregulation of the community in the American Holocaust disables objectification. The quest for the objective truth about the collective past is a phantom pain in the amputated communal limb, an illusory turbulence in the proprioception of the body politic. The trick, then, would be to create a new community that might circulate a new exosomatization of the world, might reobjectify what it needs to know in order to construct a coherent meaning, structure, identity, and reality.

And this, I suggest, is something like Welch's project in *The Death of Jim Loney*. It is certainly the project he and his narrator assign Loney himself. The patent failure of that project, however, signals not the objective impossibility of ever completing it but rather the expansion of the project to encompass the novel's readers, who take over from Loney and the narrator the quest for an interpretive construct of the past that will allow them—us—to impart both hope and collective meaning to the ending. In that sense Lemberg might be

read as not so much overturning Sands and Purdy as collaborating with them in the construction of a collective reideosomatization of time's arrow from the pre-European past, through centuries of genocide and subjugation at the hands of white Americans, through the current confusion and alienation, into a transformed future. That this arrow's trajectory, indeed the arrow itself, is "only a fiction" is a failure in an objectivist purview, which requires the truth or nothing at all; in the post-Kantian constructivist purview of somatic theory, it is the only kind of realistic hope of success we have.

The methodological implication of this constructivist perspective is that the "diagnosis" of intergenerational trauma must by default be imposed on the primary endosomatic signs and symptoms as a kind of etiological myth: we begin with the disproportionately high prevalence of suicide, alcoholism, domestic violence, obesity, diabetes, and other disorders in a population whose ancestors are known to have suffered severe trauma, and *organize* those disorders narratively by reading them as transferentially caused by a history of trauma.

3.2.1.3 CATHARSIS

What makes this etiological diagnosis more than hypothetical or phantasmatic is its ideosomatization as fact by the group. A good example of this is the group therapy led by Maria Brave Heart-Jordan with her own tribe, the Lakota, grounded in collective mourning, social support for the painful affects arising out of the working-through of historical traumata, "codifications in self- and object representations as well as world representations, . . . validation and normalization of the trauma response and techniques such as visualization and pseudohypnotic suggestibility" (Duran et al., "Healing" 351). The "codifications in self- and object representations as well as world representations" there constitute a cognitive response aimed at reorganizing the group construction of reality and identity; the rest of those therapeutic strategies are counterregulatory interventions aimed at restructuring the circulatory group affects that undergird the cognitive response, make it feel real. In other words, what Brave Heart-Jordan is attempting to engineer is an ideosomatic counterregulation of Lakota culture through the recognition and healing of an allostatic "soul wound" that is collectively constructed as paleosomatically regulating the body politic. In this therapeutic process the intergenerational trauma model is both the definiens and the definiendum, both the channel by which reality is reobjectified and reregulated and the objective reality that is thus reconstituted, so that constitutive group belief in the narrative of inter-

generational trauma facilitates healing, which in turn confirms the objective truth of the narrative.

In fact, in summarizing the results of Brave Heart-Jordan's therapeutic experiment, Duran et al. invoke a contested Aristotelian term: having noted that "education about the historical trauma leads to increased awareness about trauma, its impact, and the grief-related affects," they report that "the process of sharing these affects with others of similar background and within a traditional Lakota context leads to a *cathartic* sense of relief" ("Healing" 351, emphasis added). It is no accident, perhaps, that a psychotherapeutic model should refer back to catharsis theory—the chain of influence from Jacob Bernays on catharsis through Nietzsche to Freud is well known—but note that Aristotle's theory is itself arguably protosomatic, in his insistence that tragedy strategically *awakens* in the audience the emotions of pity and terror precisely in order to effect a therapeutic purgation or purification of those emotions. As Charles Segal writes, this theory is grounded in the ancient Greek belief that "the sharing of tears and suffering creates a bond of common humanity between mortals" (149); what Aristotle adds to that tradition is a model for analyzing the ways in which tragic drama *instigates* and structures this sort of shared emotional healing process:

The ritual and emotional aspects of catharsis come together closely in the formal lament that ends many plays, for these lamentations in themselves, with their release in tears, constitute the cleansing discharge of emotion, and they are also part of a ritual act. Aristotle here, as often, is firmly within Greek cultural practice, in this case the free expression of emotion in weeping. . . .

Viewing Aristotle's catharsis theory in the light of such passages suggests that the emotions of pity and fear are 'cleansed,' that is, purified, made cleaner, in the sense that we feel them vicariously for others. Such emotional participation—that is, the arousal and catharsis of pity and fear and similar emotions—enlarges our sympathies and so our humanity. . . .

This expansion of our sensibilities in compassion for others, I would suggest, is also part of the tragic catharsis. (Segal 164–65)

In somatic terms what is happening here is that a dramatic construct, an invented story, acted out on stage, elicits an empathetic somatomimesis in the audience: they shudder at horror, physically shrink away from fearsome things, shed tears of pity for the sufferers on stage. The fact that these feelings circulate not only between actors and audience members but among the audience as well works iterosomatically to constitute the actions being performed

as “real,” and in particular the blood guilt and pollution that almost invariably forms the core of ancient Greek tragedy therefore also as a “real” threat to the community. The outpouring of shared emotion in the climax effects a group ritual-becoming-dramatic-becoming-therapeutic purification of the blood guilt—which is, Segal argues, the origin of drama out of ancient religious ritual—or a somatic dysregulation/reregulation cycle that ideosomatizes a threat to group stability only in order to effect an ideosomatic restabilization:

The ancient audience too, we should recall, is accustomed to group emotional participation in both public and private rituals, and so would also be accustomed to the resolution of intense emotion through the performance of ritual-like actions within the play. To this aspect of tragedy, as we shall see, the ritual meaning of Aristotle’s catharsis as ‘purification’ would be especially relevant. The presence of death, particularly physical contact with a corpse, as anthropologists like Mary Douglas point out, is a source of disorder and pollution. The rites of lament and burial that frequently end Greek tragedies effect closure by literally putting an end to this disorder. In epic and drama, from the *Iliad* on, such rituals help the audience to achieve a sense of ‘purification’ from the strong and dangerous emotions through ritual participation and to experience the restoration of order and communal solidarity that rituals produce. (150)

The American Holocaust, obviously, was not exactly a “source of disorder and pollution,” but if we read “disorder” broadly enough, to encompass the dysregulatory effects on the American Indian survivor groups of “total environmental and ‘lifeworld shock’ [and] genocidal military actions” (Duran et al., “Healing” 343), of forced removal from traditional homelands, and of the “systematic assault on Native cultures” (344), the cathartic effects of historical-trauma therapy undertaken by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart-Jordan with the Lakota is remarkably similar to the cathartic effects of ancient Greek tragedy as theorized by Aristotle. In both cases the telling or performance of a powerfully mythic/historical story elicits and circulates an empathetic affective response that collectively constitutes the story as true, as real, as historical, and then transforms therapeutically (“purifies” cathartically) the feelings of pity, fear, and grief through collective mourning, the collective working-through of traumatosomatic affect, the “codifications in self- and object representations as well as world representations, . . . validation and normalization of the trauma response and techniques such as visualization and collective mourning pseudohypnotic suggestibility.” That the dramatic spectacle (Aristotle’s *opsis*) is obviously visual, and that stage plays have long been under-

stood as wielding a kind of “pseudohypnotic suggestibility” in and for their audiences, further underscore the parallels here.

What I’m suggesting, then, is that *The Death of Jim Loney* offers not so much a static *image* of the protagonist’s inclusion in or exclusion from the Indian community as rather an *invitation* to the kind of collective cathartic dramatization of the past that we’ve been seeing at work in the plays Aristotle theorized. The collective involved in that dramatization and that potentially cathartic transformation of the audience includes Kathleen Sands and John Purdy in their persuasive insistence that Jim Loney is rescued in death by the dark spirit bird Bha’a, and Jennifer Lemberg in her equally persuasive insistence that Jim Loney is not and cannot be rescued by Bha’a because the community that might wield Bha’a as its redemptive spirit has been destroyed by white America, and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart in her cathartic work with the Lakota—and it includes me as well, perhaps, in my attempts to theorize all these scholars *as* the community that might wield Bha’a or any other symbol or vision or story as a redemptive spirit.

For Aristotle catharsis is, after all, an audience effect. It is found neither in the text nor in the criticism of the text, nor in the actors’ bodies, but in the circulation of shared affect through the bodies of the audience. In a sense it is a construct of the somatics of literature, imagined as drama: the reader of Welch’s novel projects a theatrical performance in which exosomatic actor-images body forth the confusions, the failures, and perhaps the mythical hopes that Welch circulates through his narrator and characters, and is aided in this projection by other readers like Sands, Purdy, and Lemberg. If the projection works, the novel can be experienced as cathartic.

Even more, however, it is a construct of the somatics of culture, for which the literary text is merely an occasion, a channel. What it channels to and through us is at least a paleoregulatory Indian culture of unnamed hopelessness and despair, based on our sympathetic endosomatization of Jim Loney’s destructive isolation from the community and confusion about the sources of his identity. What it channels through us, in other words, is not just isolation but a *culture* of isolation, a paleosomatic economy of isolation that circulates shared depersonalization or desomatization through us. This would be the somatics of intergenerational trauma, which Jennifer Lemberg theorizes as Jim Loney’s problem, but through the circulatory effects of the somatic economy of literary response becomes ours as well. In a sense it “becomes ours” only symbolically, by imaginative projection; unlike Jim Loney, we can put the book down and walk away from his isolation, confusion, despair, and death. Somatically speaking, however, this “symbolic” projection is far more powerful than we have thought, far more communally inclusive: as Lev Tolstoy

would say, Welch *infects* us with Jim Loney's despair, which is what we mean when we say that the novel is "depressing" or "bleak." (As Mick McAllister writes: "If you thought *Winter in the Blood* was depressing! *The Death of Jim Loney*, also set on a contemporary Montana reservation, is a kind of *Leaving Las Vegas* with a young Indian protagonist, Jim Loney. You can probably guess how it ends?") The paleosomatics of post-traumatic despair is a cultural prison that can trap those who only experience it "vicariously," by having it circulated through them by the community.

If we are persuaded by Kathleen Sands and John Purdy, however, and come to project a cathartic ending onto the novel, what happens then is not simply that we *think* about the novel differently, nor even that we *feel* about it differently, but that the novel becomes the occasion or channel for the circulation of a cathartic or therapeutic *culture*, a shared resomatization of paleoregulatory post-traumatic despair, confusion, and isolation.

3.2.2 Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Morrison's use of apocalypse to figure trauma is a method for engaging politics and history, not avoiding them. Trauma—the apocalypse of the psychoanalytic narrative, a formative and revelatory catastrophe—obliterates (removes from memory) old modes of life and understanding at the same time that it generates new ones. After the trauma, everything is changed, even as the trauma itself has been forgotten. And yet, the impact of the trauma is continually felt in the form of compulsive repetitions and somatic symptoms. The attempt to work through these effects and remember the traumatic event gives shape to a new narrative, a new history. And, as Morrison recognizes, trauma and symptom, remembering and forgetting, are not merely personal but also social and historical phenomena. Her representation of the familial and political forms taken by the forgetting and remembering of infanticide recalls Cathy Caruth's observations on the role of trauma in the construction of historical narratives. "History can be grasped," Caruth writes, "only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence." And yet, "history, like trauma, is never simply one's own. . . . [H]istory is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" ("Unclaimed Experience" 187, 192).

—James Berger, "Ghosts of Liberalism:
Morrison's *Beloved* and the Moynihan Report" (410–11)

In almost every way the intergenerational transmission of trauma is less of a mystery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* than it is in *The Death of Jim Loney*: not only are the intergenerationally traumatizing effects of slavery every-

where explicitly foregrounded in the novel, but the novel itself is named after a revenant who physically embodies the paleoregulatory effects of slave trauma, the survival of trauma beyond the death of its own generation. In fact *Beloved's* first (unpunctuated) monologue in Part II (248–52) begins with a paragraph about her undifferentiated longing for her mother (“I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop” [248]) but then is saturated with horrific images of the Middle Passage (“those able to die are in a pile I cannot find my man the one whose teeth I have loved a hot thing the little hill of dead people a hot thing the men without skin push them through with poles the woman is there with the face I want the face that is mine they fall into the sea which is the color of the bread” [249]), suggesting that she is “more” (314) than Denver’s sister, as Denver herself later guesses. Some critics, such as Deborah Horvitz (162–63), read this monologue as voiced by Sethe’s mother, who did come over on the Middle Passage; but while the speaker of this monologue dies (but says “I am not dead” [252]) and Sethe’s mother survives, the implication seems to be that *Beloved* is the revenant or paleoregulatory reincarnation not just of the daughter Sethe killed but of *all* slave trauma, the “*Sixty Million and more*” who died on the Middle Passage, to whom the novel is dedicated, and the untold millions who died in slavery as well.

Despite Morrison’s willingness to give intergenerational trauma a demanding human body in her novel, however, her treatment of it still remains a mystery. Who is *Beloved*, exactly? Why does she haunt 124 Bluestone Road, first as a “baby ghost,” then as a flesh-and-blood revenant? What does the haunting mean for the cognizing and possible healing of intergenerational trauma? What does her double exorcism mean, first (as the vindictive baby ghost) by Paul D, then (as the revenant *Beloved*) by the community women led by Ella? *Beloved's* apparition and disappearance have something to do with hearing the voices and feeling the bodies of the ancestors, obviously, but *Beloved* is also violent, capricious, tyrannical, narcissistic, an infant in a 19-year-old body, and Paul D and Ella seem to be quite right to want to be rid of her. It seems, in other words, to be equally healing for her to return and to be driven out. What do we do with that?

Nearly every critic who has published on *Beloved* has addressed these questions; all have slightly but often significantly different answers.⁷ James Berger, whose introductory remarks I gave above in the epigraph to this section, engages the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma (or in his terms “historical trauma”) most explicitly, but he is interested specifically in the novel as a whole read as Morrison’s response to parallel denials of historical trauma on the right and the left in the 1980s:

The discourse of race on the 1980s, then, was constrained by a double denial: Reaganist conservatives denied American racism, and descendants of the New Left denied any dysfunction within African American communities.

Toni Morrison's novels oppose both forms of denials. *Beloved* is a challenge to all American racial discourse of the 1980s—to Reaganist conservatism and to the New Left and black nationalism. The novel revives the liberal position of Frazier, Myrdal, and Moynihan, placing historical trauma—the continuing apocalypse within history—at the center of American race relations. (414)

Berger's reading of the novel is largely social-historical, an attempt to situate it in this debate on race and racism in the 1980s; he interprets the incidents in the novel briefly (415–16), mainly in order to show the urgency with which Morrison's critics read both the infanticide and the final exorcism as a healing process, part, he argues, of that idealizing denial of dysfunction in African-American communities, a dysfunction that Morrison in fact stresses, places center-stage, and seeks to understand as the product of historical trauma.

Most critical studies of the novel examine the dysfunctional familial dynamic more closely, almost invariably recognizing the ongoing power of historical or intergenerational trauma—it would be difficult to ignore completely in this novel—but without quite knowing what to do with it. One of the best readings of this dynamic, in my opinion, is Caroline Rody's "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: History, 'Rememory,' and 'A Clamor for a Kiss,'" and I'd like to explore her reading in some detail for a few pages here.

While Rody does not cite Cathy Caruth's 1991 article in her 1995 reading, her approach is based on something like Caruth's notion, cited by Berger in the epigraph, above, that "history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" ("Unclaimed" 192, *Unclaimed* 24):⁸ in a way her project is to retheorize the historical novel based on the model of *Beloved*, more generally perhaps on the model of magic realism as a generic channel of postcolonial resistance favored mostly by South American novelists (85). The problem as Rody presents it is not only that historical trauma leaves what Morrison's Ella calls "holes" in stories—"Ella wrapped a cloth strip around the baby's navel as she listened for the holes—the things the fugitives did not say; the questions they did not ask. Listened too for the unnamed, unmentioned people left behind" (Morrison 108)—or, as Rody puts it, that "*Beloved* is manifestly about the filling of historical gaps" (84). It is also that the collective forgetting and remembering of traumatic events send turbulences through the impulse to *write* history, or what Rody calls "historiographic desire":

For an African-American writer, slavery is a story known in the bones and yet not at all. “How could she bear witness to what she never lived?” asks Gayl Jones’s *Corregidora* (103), crystallizing the paradox of contemporary black rewritings of slavery. Writing that bears witness to an inherited tragedy approaches the past with an interest much more urgent than historical curiosity or even political revisionism. Inserting authorial consciousness into the very processes of history that accomplished the racial “othering” of the self, novels of slavery make their claims to knowledge and power face-to-face with destruction. We might think of such fictions as structures of historiographic desire, attempts to span a vast gap of time, loss, and ignorance to achieve an intimate bond, a bridge of restitution or healing, between the authorial present and the ancestral past. (88)

I would add only that the present consciousness that is linked up with “the very processes of history that accomplished the racial ‘othering’ of the self” is not only authorial but lectorial as well, and that the “intimate bond” or “bridge of restitution or healing” is a *circulation* of traumatic and therapeutic images through the somatic economy in which the novel includes its author and readers. And indeed Rody seems to want to go somewhere like a somatic economy as a model for this knowing “in the bones and yet not at all”: “When first conceiving her rewriting of Margaret Garner’s life, Morrison has said, ‘It was an era I didn’t want to get into—going back into and through grief’ (45). This ‘grief’ seems almost a palpable atmosphere; in the personal psychological return required to write *Beloved*, it was not history Morrison had to go ‘back into and through’ but an intensity of hovering emotion attributed neither to the ancestors nor to herself but filling the space between them” (90). “Palpable atmosphere,” “hovering emotion”: these are manifestly somatic experiences, and the notion that the emotion “fills the space” between the ancestors and Morrison herself seems like Rody groping toward a formulation of the somatic exchange. Without somatic theory, though, we are left with a series of tropes: “known in the bones,” “palpable atmosphere,” “hovering emotion,” “filling the space between them.” Known where? Palpable how? Hovering where? Filling what space? Reading *Beloved* as sensitively and complexly as she does, Rody has a powerful intuition about the interpersonal phenomena she is attempting to trope in Morrison’s novel, but the tropes mostly work in her reading like the blind men’s descriptions of the elephant in the Mullah Nasrudin parable—“like a tree trunk,” “like a saber,” “like a leather fan,” “like a snake,” “like a wall”: they don’t add up to an explanation.

This infinite intuitive approach to a vision of the somatic exchange is even more obviously at work in Rody’s discussion of Sethe’s notion of “remem-

ory”: “Rememory’ as trope postulates the interconnectedness of minds, past and present, and thus neatly conjoins the novel’s supernatural vision with its aspiration to communal epic, realizing the ‘collective memory’ of which Morrison speaks. For while the prefix ‘re’ (normally used for the act, not the property of consciousness) suggests that ‘rememory’ is an active, creative mental function, Sethe’s explanation describes a natural—or a supernatural—phenomenon. For Sethe as for her author, then, to ‘rememory’ is to use one’s imaginative power to realize a latent, abiding connection to the past” (93). “The interconnectedness of minds,” yes: but what are the connections? And what does she mean by “minds”? Are the minds in this characterization just another trope in a string of tropes: bones, atmospheres, emotions, spaces, and minds? Or should we assume that Rody is now describing the actual seat of the interconnectedness? And what about Rody’s suggestion that “Sethe’s explanation describes a natural—or a supernatural—phenomenon”? Obviously the traumatic revenant Beloved is the supernatural phenomenon, but the self-correction of “a natural—or a supernatural” suggests that Rody sees the supernatural events in the novel as a screen of some sort for a natural phenomenon—but what?

My greatest qualm about Rody’s formulation there, though, comes in her last sentence there: “For Sethe as for her author, then, to ‘rememory’ is to use one’s imaginative power to realize a latent, abiding connection to the past.” The words that bother me in that sentence are “imaginative,” “realize,” “latent,” “abiding,” and “connection.” Working backwards: again, what kind of connection? How and where does it abide? “Latent” is another vague trope for “in the bones”: what kind of latency? Does “realize” mean “make real” or “become aware of”? Since it’s an imaginative power that is used to “realize” that latent connection, I’m assuming Rody means “make real”; but since the connection is abiding, I’m also assuming that it isn’t *unreal* before the imaginative power is used to make it real, only latent. But what is the real/unreal/made-real phenomenon Rody is trying to describe through this semantic fog?

What bothers me even more than these individual words, though, is the suggestion that Morrison and Sethe are somehow doing the same thing in the novel, in “rememorying” slave traumata. For most of the novel, the “latent, abiding connection to the past” is a nightmare for Sethe that she uses her imaginative power *not* to realize. Sethe’s connection with her past is born not out of her rememorying but out of the natural—or supernatural—phenomenon of Beloved’s haunting, first as an angry ghost, then as a greedy 19-year-old revenant infant; and as she is terrorized by her rememories of Sweet Home, so too is she terrorized and nearly consumed by Beloved’s greed for her substance, her life, the milk of her stories. Beloved returns not because Sethe

imagines her; she returns and then *demand*s that Sethe rememory her. And while there is undoubtedly an emotional overlap between Sethe's terror of rememories and Morrison's reluctance to enter into the grief she mentions, it seems unnecessarily reductive to me to equate the two "rememoryings," by author and character, as the rather bland process of imaginatively realizing a "latent, abiding connection to the past."

Look, for example, at the actual passage from *Beloved* that Rody is commenting on here:

"I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened."

"Can other people see it?" asked Denver.

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over—over and done with—it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what."

Denver picked at her fingernails. "If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies."

Sethe looked right in Denver's face. "Nothing ever does," she said. (43–44)

This is a bogeyman story: "it's going to always be there waiting for you." The terror that feeds Sethe's attempts to block out the past also feeds her determination that no child of hers ever have to confront that past as a present, as "a rememory that belongs to somebody else." Denver, she says, is never to go to Sweet Home, because the traumata that Sethe and Paul D and Grandma Baby

and the other slaves experienced there are real, and will traumatize her too. It is the same terror that causes her to murder her unnamed two-year-old daughter to “keep her safe,” to protect her from Sweet Home and the traumatizing experience of slavery. How exactly, then, are the dangerously real shared rememories Sethe theorizes the same as the imaginative “realization” of a “latent, abiding connection to the past” undertaken in the novel by Morrison?

In somatic terms, it should be clear, rememories are paleoregulatory exosomata, traumatic memory images circulated so intensely through the group of (ex-)slaves that they seem to take on an independent reality of their own, and so seem to keep the traumatizing degradations and dehumanizations of slavery alive and frighteningly potent more than a decade after emancipation. For Sethe, clearly, the serial hauntings of 124 by the baby ghost and then the beloved revenant are the literal fulfillments of her dire warning to Denver: *Beloved* is the rememory of her murdered daughter, the flesh-and-blood rememory that cannot die because nothing ever does. She is not a memory *image* of the murdered child somehow “realized” by Sethe’s “imaginative power”; she is *real*. She is, to Denver, “a rememory that belongs to somebody else,” a living and breathing and ferociously hungry and seductive rememory that belongs to her mother Sethe. The latent but abiding memory image realized through imaginative power of which Rody writes is the *Beloved* not of Sethe but of Morrison—and, through participation in the viral somatic economy fleshed forth by the novel, of Morrison’s reader as well. That’s the difference: Sethe believes that exosomata are real, and (in consequence?) her exosomatized revenant daughter *is* real; Morrison knows the power of *belief* in the reality of exosomata, and so creates a fictional world in which that belief seems fully justified. In that sense *Beloved* is for Morrison a representation of the reality not of ghosts or revenants but of the belief in ghosts or revenants as real—a representation, to put that differently, not of the ontology of occult beings but rather of the ontologization of exosomata *as* occult beings.

This distinction between Sethe’s traumatized/traumatizing rememories of the past and Morrison’s fictionalization of those rememories would also seem to be the obvious answer to the charge leveled by James Berger that Morrison’s critics are trying to whitewash the dysfunctionality in African-American culture by reading the exorcism of *Beloved* as a healing: “Events in the United States today make it difficult to agree with readers who claim that the exorcism of *Beloved* represents a successful working through of America’s racial traumas. Indeed, in my view, such optimistic interpretations of *Beloved* participate in the repressions and denials of trauma that the novel opposes. For instance, Ashraf Rushdy holds as exemplary Sethe’s friend Ella’s repressive attitude toward the past, arguing that by ‘exorcising *Beloved*, by not allowing

the past to consume the present, [Ella] offers Sethe the opportunity to reclaim herself' (584)" (415). Surely there is an important epistemological distinction to be made here between "not allowing the past to *consume* the present" and repressing or forgetting the past? It seems to me that the two can intelligently be equated only if *Beloved* is the past, if *Beloved* is the *whole* traumatizing paleosomatic past of slavery, and if there is only one way to experience her/it, as a real flesh-and-blood "rememory that belongs to somebody else." By failing to distinguish between the two, Berger is able to assimilate Ella's group's exorcism of *Beloved* and the community's subsequent forgetting of *Beloved*—along with the critical celebration of that ending as a healing process—to the dual denials he is examining, of white racism on the right and of intergenerational trauma and its endosomatic dysfunctionality in the African-American community on the left. As soon as we recognize that there is a key difference between ontologizing an exosomatized past and putting the exosomata into a story as *fiction*, Berger's whole argument collapses. "What these and similar interpretations miss, in my view," he writes, "is that *Beloved's* story is not over, that the child will return—indeed, has returned" (416): yes, but to whom, and in what form? If the revenant has only one form (real flesh-and-blood) and only one allegorical referent (the repressed past), then her exorcism can only mean the (temporary) re-repression of the past, which is bound to fail because the repressed will continue to return, for example in the endosomatic symptomatologies of paleoregulatory cultural dysfunction. But note Berger's endnote to that last passage: "I agree entirely with Deborah Horvitz that 'the paradox of how to live in the present without canceling out an excruciatingly painful past remains unresolved at the end of the novel. At the same time, something healing has happened' (166). See also Caroline Rody, who describes how *Beloved* brings 'history to an unclosed closure and the haunt to our own houses' (113)" (419n15). *Beloved* brings "the haunt to our own houses" *as a fiction*. "The child will return—indeed, has returned"—*as a fiction*. This is how Morrison engages (without resolving) "the paradox of how to live in the present without canceling out an excruciatingly painful past": she cancels out the traumatized/traumatizing ontologization of an exosomatized past without canceling out the past or any of the pain it continues to inflict, indeed by *exacerbating* the pain it inflicts in order to free us from the paleosomatic regulation that is sustained by repression. By reworking a traumatic past as fiction, a fiction in which a traumatizing exosoma comes to flesh-and-blood life and then is "exploded" through a communal exorcism, Morrison makes us relive *and resomatize* that past. By reading the novel we become able to experience the "haunt" as a painful fiction: painful because so powerfully grounded in the traumatizing past that we have repressed, trau-

matizing both for the African Americans descended from the victims of slavery and for the European Americans descended from its perpetrators; but a painful *fiction* that serves to remind us that the exosomatic images (bogeymen, the walking dead) that terrorize us in its pages—as well as, perhaps, the paleoregulatory endosomatic symptomatology (poverty, crime, drug abuse) that plague many African-American communities—are *constructs*, somatic regimes that can with great communal effort be banished, exorcised.

3.2.3 Percival Everett, “The Appropriation of Cultures”

Let’s now look quickly at one recent fictional representation of this sort of communal resomatization of paleoregulatory trauma, Percival Everett’s 1996 story “The Appropriation of Cultures.” In the story Daniel Barkley is an independently wealthy black man who spends his evenings playing jazz with some older musicians near the University of South Carolina campus in Columbia:

Daniel played standards with the old guys, but what he loved to play was old-time slide tunes. One night, some white boys from a fraternity yelled forward to the stage at the black man holding the acoustic guitar and began to shout, “Play *Dixie* for us! Play *Dixie* for us!”

Daniel gave them a long look, studied their big-toothed grins and the beer-shiny eyes stuck into puffy, pale faces, hovering over golf shirts and chinos. He looked from them to the uncomfortable expressions on the faces of the old guys with whom he was playing and then to the embarrassed faces of the other college kids in the club.

And then he started to play. He felt his way slowly through the chords of the song once and listened to the deadened hush as it fell over the room. He used the slide to squeeze out the melody of the song he had grown up hating, the song the whites had always pulled out to remind themselves and those other people just where they were. Daniel sang the song. He sang it slowly. He sang it, feeling the lyrics, deciding that the lyrics were his, deciding that the song was his. *Old times there are not forgotten . . .* He sang the song and listened to the silence around him. He resisted the urge to let satire ring through his voice. He meant what he sang. *Look away, look away, look away, Dixieland.*

When he was finished, he looked up to see the roomful of eyes on him. One person clapped. Then another. And soon the tavern was filled with applause and hoots. He found the frat boys in the back and watched as they

stormed out, a couple of people near the door chuckling at them as they passed. (24)

The “uncomfortable expressions on the faces of the old guys” and “the embarrassed faces of the other college kids in the club” are Everett’s rather milder versions of Morrison’s *Beloved*, endosomatizations of paleoregulatory trauma, the lingering somatic effects of slave trauma and perpetrator trauma, respectively. Daniel has grown up hating *Dixie* specifically, Everett tells us, because it was “the song the whites had always pulled out to remind themselves and those other people just where they were,” a personal response to events occurring in his own lifetime; but the song has that somatic power to remind and to place and to hierarchize because it evokes paleoregulatory endosomata, because it continues to channel ancient wounds into the present. There is nothing overtly racist about the song itself, its melody or lyrics; it is the circulation of racist response to the song through the somatic economy in the American South that continues to charge it with the paleosomatic history of the enslavement and cultural subjugation of African Americans over several centuries. In a sense that history is over—the history of slavery in the American South ended in 1863, the history of the systematic legal oppression of African Americans ended in the 1960s and 1970s—but the singing of this song makes it clear that the history only really ended in the history-book sense, in terms of laws and dates. In the somatic economy of the South, in the paleoregulatory circulation of somatic responses to slavery and Jim Crow, it is an ongoing phenomenon.

Hence the significance of Daniel’s subversive appropriation of this one cultural channel of paleosomatic regulation: by playing *Dixie* in such a way as to make it his own, “feeling the lyrics, deciding that the lyrics were his, deciding that the song was his,” he launches a counterregulatory impulse out into the audience, an attempt to resomatize the song as an inclusive Southern anthem, white *and* black. In that sense, in fact, he is only mediately and strategically making the song *his*: he makes it his in order to make it ours; he circulates the revisionary exosoma of one black jazz musician “owning” the quintessential hymn of Southern plantation nostalgia through the crowd in order to infect the whites and the blacks in the club—including those up on stage with him—with this resomatized ownership, so that it becomes collective. That he is successful in this attempt is clear both from the applause—which also “circulates” slowly—and the disgusted exit of the racist frat boys. Daniel’s exosomatic transracial ownership of the song does infect the crowd, does transform their ideosomatic response to the history of whites subjugating blacks, so that,

when the small portion of the crowd that is not ideosomatically transformed by this new impulse “storms out,” the newly inclusive group chuckles at them. They are no longer an ideosomatic threat to the collective; their barely suppressed racism no longer causes embarrassment.

As the crowd congratulates Daniel, he tries to process what just happened:

Daniel didn't much care for the slaps on the back, but he didn't focus too much energy on that. He was busy trying to sort out his feelings about what he had just played. The irony of his playing the song straight and from the heart was made more ironic by the fact that as he played it, it came straight and from his heart, as he was claiming southern soil, or at least recognizing his blood in it. His was the land of cotton and hell no, it was not forgotten. At twenty-three his anger was fresh and typical, and so was his ease with it, the way it could be forgotten for chunks of time, until something like that night with the white frat boys or simply a flashing blue light in the rearview mirror brought it all back. He liked the song, wanted to play it again, knew that he would. (25)

The paleoregulatory anger is there, in other words, and his singing of the song is fueled by it; but by refusing to satirize it, by “playing the song straight and from the heart,” he finds in himself a *love* for the song, and through that love a love for the South, the land of cotton—despite the fact that he will not forget the traumatic past that the song has for so long helped channel into the present. Again, this is not about forgetting the past or canceling the past; it's about resomatizing the past, rechanneling the paleosomatics of past trauma so that it no longer traumatizes. Another way of putting this is that the anger remains, but it no longer paleoregulates behavior, or no longer paleoregulates behavior quite so rigidly or binarily—it no longer makes it impossible for Daniel to love things ideosomatically associated with the targets of his anger.

In the next few weeks, Daniel begins to extend his new resomatizing approach to the South's past to other areas as well: after a dream in which he “stopped Pickett's men on the Emmitsburg Road on their way to the field and said, ‘Give me back my flag’” (25), he buys a 1968 three-quarter-ton truck with “a full rear cab window decal of the Confederate flag” (26), and, when his friend Sarah asks what he needs a truck for, he replies, “I'm not buying the truck. Well, I am buying a truck, but only because I need the truck for the decal. I'm buying the decal” (27). Sara thinks he has flipped: “You need a job so you can be around people you don't care about, doing stuff you don't care about. You need a job to occupy that part of your brain. I suppose it's too late now, though.” Daniel replies: “You should have seen those redneck boys when

I took *Dixie* from them. They didn't know what to do. So, the goddamn flag is flying over the State Capitol. Don't take it down, just take it. That's what I say" (28). And when the racist couple delivers the truck to Daniel's place, and they are disturbed by the ideosomatic dissonance of a middle-class black man living in a nice house buying a redneck truck, he explains, "I was just lucky enough to find a truck with the black power flag already on it" (28), and points to the Confederate flag. "You mean," he says, when they look blankly at him, "you didn't know?" (28). When whites later aggressively ask him what he's doing with that flag, he tells them that he's "flying it proudly. . . . Just like you, brothers" (29). One guy seems inclined to fight him over that word, "brothers," but then a car full of young black men drive up and ask what's going on, and the white man backs off. Daniel sends his new resomatizing impulse into this new group as well, saying to the black teenagers, "'We fly the flag proudly, don't we, young brothers?' Daniel gave a bent arm, black power, closed-fist salute. 'Don't we?' he repeated. 'Don't we?'" (29). Daniel keeps playing *Dixie* at white bars, fast enough to dance to, slow enough to cry to, keeps driving his truck around town and resomatizing the Southern-pride symbols, and gradually the community begins to circulate the new resomatizations as well:

Soon, there were several, then many cars and trucks in Columbia, South Carolina, sporting Confederate flags and being driven by black people. Black businessmen and ministers wore rebel flag buttons on their lapels and clips on their ties. The marching band of South Carolina State College, a predominantly black land grant institution in Orangeburg, paraded with the flag during homecoming. Black people all over the state flew the Confederate flag. The symbol began to disappear from the fronts of big rigs and the back windows of jacked-up four-wheelers. And after the emblem was used to dress the yards and mark picnic sites of black family reunions the following Fourth of July, the piece of cloth was quietly dismissed from its station with the U.S. and state flags atop the State Capitol. There was no ceremony, no notice. One day, it was not there. (30)

And Everett concludes his story: "*Look away, look away, look away . . .*" (30).

"The Appropriation of Culture" is, of course, a utopian parable; it's easy enough to dismiss Everett's moral lesson as unrealistic, impractical, a mere wish-fulfillment fantasy. But it should be clear that his moral lesson *is* grounded in something like the somatic model I've been developing in this book, according to which a phenomenon like racism is both *social* (a "mere" interpersonal fiction) and *real* (a deeply felt orientation that seems so stable as to be virtually impossible to change). What makes Everett's fable seem unreal-

istic, I suggest, is bad theory: the impulse to treat racism as innate and therefore impossible to change, and the binarizing corollary according to which if racism *is* this malleable, it must be—or we must thematize Everett as assuming that it is—a mere performative mask, a role we can put on or take off at will.

Much the same critique was leveled, in fact, at Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*: if identity is performative, then being gay or straight or masculine or feminine isn't "real"; it's a mere role or game or fiction that can be donned or doffed from one moment to the next. It didn't help Butler in combating that false binary that she didn't have somatic theory to draw on to explain her sense that performative identities are "deep-seated play," a performative presentation of something you feel deeply: for where does that deep feeling come from?

When and where does my being a lesbian come into play, when and where does this playing a lesbian constitute something like what I am? To say that I "play" at being one is not to say that I am not one "really"; rather, how and where I play at being one is the way in which that "being" gets established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed. This is not a performance from which I can take radical distance, for this is deep-seated play, psychically entrenched play, *and this "I" does not play its lesbianism as a role*. Rather, it is through the repeated play of this sexuality that the "I" is insistently reconstituted as a lesbian "I"; paradoxically, it is precisely the *repetition* of that play that establishes as well the *instability* of the very category that it constitutes. For if the "I" is a site of repetition, that is, if the "I" only achieves the semblance of identity through a certain repetition of itself, then the I is always displaced by the very repetition that sustains it. ("Imitation" 18)

And so on: Butler goes on for another twelve lines, and in some sense for the rest of her essay, deconstructively worrying this notion of "repetition," a concept that can indeed be deconstructed forever because it is only an abstract concept, yanked out of the social and (I would argue) somatic context implied by Butler's word "circulated" there, or more generally that whole list of participles. Obviously, it seems to me, "being" can only be "established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed" by the group; and the group circulation of identity images only has the power to constitute identity as "reality" to the extent that what the group is circulating is *somatized* images.

By the same token, place, race, and trauma too are "established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed" ideosomatically and paleosomatically by the group. They are, to put that differently, "deep-seated play," in Butler's term, not in the sense that play is *fun* but in her specific insistence that "it is precisely the

repetition of that play that establishes as well the *instability* of the very category that it constitutes.” The somatic economy that circulates stabilizing images of home and place and is so disturbingly disrupted in the refugee experience, or that circulates counterregulatory colonizing impulses that remain unstable but astonishingly persistent in a decolonizing context, or that continues to circulate allostatic adjustments to long-past trauma and thus to keep the trauma present and alive and active, is “deep-seated play, psychically entrenched play,” ideosomatized play that *can* be replayed, reiterated, resomatized—but only through the kind of therapeutic *group* recirculation that Everett explores in “The Appropriation of Culture,” or that Morrison explores in the epilogue (unnamed final section) of *Beloved*. It is only as Daniel is able to infect other members of the community with his resomatizations of racist symbols, and they begin to circulate them too, rather than simply responding to them with bafflement, that Everett’s moral fable begins to nudge us toward a post-racist utopia.

3.2.4 Conclusion: Acting Out and Working Through

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominic LaCapra adapts the Freudian distinction between “acting out” and “working through” to the historical analysis of trauma:

I would make a correlation that will be significant in my later argument—a correlation that indicates the desirability of relating deconstructive and psychoanalytic concepts. I would argue, or at least suggest, that undecidability and unregulated *difference*, threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions, including that between present and past, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and in post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes—scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop. In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. Any duality (or double inscription) of time (past and present or future) is experientially collapsed or productive only of aporia and double binds. In this sense, the aporia and the double bind might be seen as marking a trauma that has not been worked through. Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through the trauma (as well as transference relations in general), one is able to distinguish

between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future. This does not imply that there is a pure opposition between past and present or that acting out—whether for the traumatized or for those empathetically relating to them—can be fully transcended toward a state of closure or full ego identity. But it does mean that processes of working through may counteract the force of acting out and the repetition compulsion. These processes of working through, including mourning and modes of critical thought and practice, involve the possibility of making distinctions or developing articulations that are recognized as problematic but still function as limits and as possibly desirable resistances to undecidability, particularly when the latter is tantamount to confusion and the obliteration or blurring of all distinctions (states that may indeed occur in trauma or in acting out post-traumatic conditions). (21–22)

Working through, of course, is the ideal model for the talking cure, here extended to historical and critical processes in general; what is striking about the literary representations of intergenerational trauma that we've been considering here is that the fictional works themselves set up a working-through for their readers but not for their characters, or even their narrators, all of whom continue to act out. What is most interesting about Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Percival Everett's "Appropriation of Cultures" in this sense is that the central characters in those works act out trauma *therapeutically*, and thus chart an interesting middle ground between the two binary poles LaCapra theorizes.⁹ Because Morrison and Everett give their characters "objective" (exosomatic) correlatives of intergenerational trauma to work or play with, to "act out" with—the revenant *Beloved* in Morrison's novel, the song *Dixie* and the Confederate flag in Everett's story—their acting out has something like the same therapeutic effect as a more conscious, analytical, "articulatory" working through would have had (perhaps an even more powerfully therapeutic effect, in fact). In *The Death of Jim Loney*, Jim is given no such exosomatic correlative and so cannot act out therapeutically—and fails in his self-appointed task of working through—leaving him the sole option of acting out endosomatically until he dies. The process of working through his intergenerational trauma is thus left to his critics.

From the standpoint of somatic theory, the weakness in LaCapra's approach to trauma is its individualism: just as the unattainable ideal product of working through is for him "full ego identity," so too are both acting out and working through processes definitively undergone by the individual. Even

empathy, which LaCapra precariously maneuvers into his model, remains an individualistic phenomenon: there are those who are traumatized, and those who empathize with trauma victims, and each person experiences the trauma individually. He recognizes that empathetic identification with trauma victims is itself traumatizing, suggesting something like the somatic economy that I've been theorizing here, in which shared affect is circulated regulatorily through the group; he even insists that what others might call "illusions" are in fact "regulative ideals" (4), suggesting that he is in fact very close to somatic theory; but he continues to binarize the individual and the group and to associate the former with health and the latter with trauma:

Unchecked identification implies a confusion of self and other which may bring an incorporation of the experience and voice of the victim and its reenactment or acting out. As in acting out in general, one possessed, however vicariously, by the past and reliving its traumatic scenes may be tragically incapable of acting responsibly or behaving in an ethical manner involving consideration for others as others. One need not blame the victim possessed by the past and unable to get beyond it to any viable extent in order to question the idea that it is desirable to identify with this victim, or to become a surrogate victim, and to write (or perform) in that incorporated voice. (28)

The important question here, I suggest—and I'm guessing that LaCapra would agree—is not whether the individual should merge with the group or remain ideally isolated from group experience, but where the working through comes from and how it is channeled: what is the locus of the therapeutic sorting out of pasts and presents, selves and others, that may make it possible for the traumatized to begin to "act responsibly or behave in an ethical manner." Another way of asking that question is to note that "unchecked identification" is not simply one of two binary poles—that there is an entire sorites series of "identification," several positions in which might be characterized as "unchecked"—and then to wonder who or what does the "checking": the individual, the group, or some complex configuration of the two. To put it in psychoanalytical terms, the critical question is whether the working through is an individualistic process undergone in and by the analysand and only guided and observed by the analyst, as Freud would have it, or a collective—(counter)transferential—process undergone by the analyst–analysand dyad, or any other group, as in Lacan's revisionary reading. It does seem to me that LaCapra leans toward the Freudian approach, while somatic theory draws from the Lacanian notion that the movement toward health involves not a

rationalist (analytic) splitting of self from other and past from present but a collective (*re*)organization of selves and others, pasts and presents, through the transferential and countertransferential circulation of shared affect.

To reframe this notion more generally, we might say that “identification” is the circulatory effect of the somatic exchange and “checking” is the regulatory impulse imposed on identification by the group. In this sense there would be no such thing as “unchecked identification”: only dysregulation of group controls (checking) or group empathy (identification), the former leading to the form of allostatic overload known as post-traumatic stress disorder, the latter leading to the form of allostatic overload that I discussed in *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature* as depersonalization or desomatization.

In that sense the three postcolonial experiences we’ve been exploring in this book, the refugee encounter, (de)colonization, and intergenerational trauma, might be seen as three different dysregulations of group “checking”: the first imposed on a culture more or less randomly, as a byproduct of natural or societal violence; the second imposed on a culture systematically, “civilizingly,” by an occupying foreign power; and the third imposed on a culture from within, endosomatically, as a result of the “dynastic” reproduction of long-past dysregulations.

But in fact the three dysregulations overlap. In the First Essay, for example, we saw the emergence of mythological nation-building among the Hutu refugees as a paleoregulatory recirculation not only of their collective traumatizations through internecine violence and forced relocation but also of their colonial counterregulation at the hands of the British. The counterregulations imposed on colonized cultures in the Second Essay were designed to disrupt or dysregulate the existing local somatic economies, and the cultures’ allostatic adjustment to those counterregulations became paleoregulatory as well, continuing to shape “decolonization” in the colonial image in generations born into political (but not cultural) independence. The forced relocations of Indians in the Americas and Africans to the Americas, and their cultural subjugation and genocide at the hands of the “civilizing” white colonizers, continue to dysregulate the present paleosomatically.

At the broadest level, this book is about the persistence of ideosomatic regulation *as* reality—as what members of groups are conditioned by the somatic exchange to experience as reality. When an existing ideosomatic regulation is disrupted, whether accidentally (as by a natural disaster) or through deliberate destructive violence or the concerted counterregulatory pressures of a colonization process, the resulting dysregulation itself tends to become the new ideosomatic regulation that is circulated paleosomatically through the group,

so that the group's allosomatic adjustment to dysregulation persists as "reality" for generations, often for hundreds of years.

At issue here methodologically, I suggest, is not simply the fact that we need something like somatic theory to explain these phenomena—the persistence of cultural regimes long past the era of their situational relevance, often "regimes" that are stored unconsciously or even physiologically, indeed often allostatic regimes born out of a collective response to trauma and chronic stress, and the power of these regimes to naturalize group constructs as realities and identities. It is also, and more important, that without somatic theory it would be difficult even to construct them as related phenomena in need of explanation—difficult to ask the questions that might problematize the many local and topical remedies that have been offered, like "refugees need to be integrated into the community," "postcolonial cultures need to break free of the legacy of colonialism," and "the descendants of trauma victims need to work through their ancestors' trauma therapeutically." What do these panaceas, and the postcolonial phenomena to which they are offered as solutions, have in common? Somatic theory is one way of rendering such questions askable. Whether the answers I have offered to those questions are viable, or even a useful step on the road to viable explanations, is up to you.

