

## INTRODUCTION

# All the Things You *Can't* Be by Now

Six months deep into one of his most difficult seminars, *Seminar XX*, Jacques Lacan wondered aloud to those in attendance on May 8, 1973, “It is truly odd that the fact that the structure of thought is based on language is not thrown into question in psychology.”<sup>1</sup> This is a simple formulation of a pointed but general critique of psychology that Lacan maintained throughout his teaching, beginning in the 1950s. From behind prison walls in the early 1960s, the famous Puerto Rican writer and activist Piri Thomas found himself wondering aloud in his classic autobiography after a somewhat different but, as we will see, related oddity attaching to psychology, “Maybe God is psychology, or psychology is God.”<sup>2</sup> I want to begin by immediately placing Lacan and Thomas in dialogue on the question of the status of psychology, since a general exploration of the question Lacan thinks odd in its not being asked—that the structure of thought is based on language and that language as structure has certain privative and generative effects on the speaking human organism<sup>3</sup>—along with Thomas’s spirited gambit—maybe God is psychology, or psychology, God—provides the general range of the desires detonating the problematics of this book.

I juxtapose Lacan and Thomas here in order to announce in the most general way my project’s attempt to articulate psychoanalysis with a politics of race and with contemporary notions of Latino subjectivity and experience in particular. With Lacan I ask after the role of ego and social psychology in stirring, as I will explain, a kind of exacting trouble for ethnic-racialized subjects in clinical, extraclinical, legal, and extralegal contexts in the United States beginning in the mid-twentieth century. I would add a third related question to Lacan’s and Thomas’s queries above: Why do all manner of philosophical, legal, and popular cultural engagements with ethnic-racialized subjectivity and experience in the United States in the context of racism, discrimination, multiculturalism, and diversity appear to cede what will qualify as the dominant interpretation of ethnic-racialized trauma, loss, visibility, and the forms of social and legal redress we seek to the interpretative framework of ego and social psychology?

First, let’s return to Thomas’s cautious pronouncement. For readers not

familiar with this classic autobiographical novel of Puerto Rican and Latino literature, I would like to recall some of the steps Piri, the narrator, has taken before landing in prison and articulating this strange missive. The events in the novel take place primarily in New York City in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, precisely the time that Y. Kramer has described as the “golden age” of psychoanalytic ego psychology.<sup>4</sup> The struggle that ensues for the protagonist regards his ethnic-racialized identity in the most general way. He initially identifies as Puerto Rican but is in his immediate social environment racialized as an African American because of the color of his skin. For the better part of the text, these two ethnic-racialized identities sit in tremendous tension. Piri himself does not know what he “is,” since he is constantly dispossessed of the agency that might allow him to name himself. Can he, the text repeatedly asks, reasonably claim an African American *and* a Puerto Rican identity in the United States of the 1950s? The novel illustrates how the racialization of Puerto Ricans was “entangled with the racialization of African-Americans” during this period, as Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloe S. Georas explain: “Given the large numbers of mulattos, blacks, and mestizos among the Puerto Rican migrants, many were initially ‘confused’ in the white social imaginary with African-Americans. The social construction of racial categories in the United States . . . was a fertile ground for the initial classification of Puerto Ricans as African-Americans despite their effort to maintain an autonomous identity.”<sup>5</sup> Piri identifies as Puerto Rican, but as the darkest-skinned member of his embattled, working-class Puerto Rican family, he occupies there a marginalized position given the family’s own disavowed politics of “pigmentocracy.” His claims to the nominatory term *Puerto Rican* are constantly threatened within the familial space. The novel tracks the vagaries of his experience and underscores the absolute incoherence, ultimately, that attends any definition of Piri as either Puerto Rican or African American, an incoherence that we might understand in a more contemporary context as attending all of the contorted attempts to define *Latino*: is *Latino* an ethnic or a racialized designation? Who can count as a *Latino*? Are Latinos “white” or “not white?” We will deal with these questions at length in chapters 3 and 4.

By the time psychology makes its godly prison appearance in Piri’s story, toward the close of the novel, the reader has traversed a blisteringly confused narrative rife with superegoic commands that direct Piri to assume an ethnic-racialized nominatory term *or else*. The novel never fully resolves Piri’s identificatory dilemmas. The novel’s reception at the time might be said to symp-

tomatically act out this lack of resolution, given how critics have generally read the novel either along the lines I've pursued here or as a novel more centrally about rehabilitation—the transformation through the prison apparatus of an urban street-gang criminal into an enlightened, dutiful citizen-subject. Psychology does briefly appear to provide some promise for Piri by proffering an answer to his existential angst. What knowledge psychology might provide for him along these lines is, as Piri tells the reader, going to hurt: *"It's not gonna be an easy thing to dig me, I thought. This psychology means that people's worst troubles are in their minds. That's cool."*<sup>6</sup>

For Lacan, ego psychology also seemed to promise something painful—a dreadful distortion of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and technique that only deepened the alienation of the analysand at the same time that it inflated the power and prestige of the analyst. Using Piri's language in the preceding passage, Lacan might have remarked that the analysand's worst troubles are in the minds and therapeutic strategies of the Jewish-refugee ego-psychology analysts, who, forced to contend with coercive assimilatory mandates in mid-twentieth-century U.S. culture, responded in kind—"North American" style—with clinical strategies directed at strengthening the ego and adapting the analysand to the demands of some predetermined notion of "reality." In 1953, Lacan writes, "In any case, it seems indisputable that the conception of psychoanalysis in the United States has been inflected toward the adaptation of the individual to the social environment, the search for behavior patterns, and all the objectification implied in the notion of 'human relations.' And the indigenous term, 'human engineering,' strongly implies a privileged position of exclusion with respect to the human object."<sup>7</sup> Lacan's remarks are a commentary of sorts on Piri's own struggle, giving a bit of texture to the mysterious superegoic commandments forcing Piri to choose an ethnic-racialized nominatory term in order to be considered a socially and culturally intelligible citizen-subject and convincing him that failing to do so would condemn him to radical subjective illegibility.

I choose to read Piri's existential dilemma in this novel in relation to Lacan's critique of ego psychology because of how Piri's questions, although not directed at ego psychology, strictly speaking, appear to nonetheless enlist ego psychology's preferred strategies for adjusting and adapting the troubled and conflicted ego to the demands of "reality." Psychology appears to Piri in prison like a vision that half promises to serve as the balm that might narcotize Piri against the painful subjective division he feels as a result of not being

able to lay claim to a nonconflictive ethnic-racialized nominatory term that could account for him in some exacting way and allow him to adjust to—and be rehabilitated for—the demands of “reality.”

Piri’s prescient remark—“Maybe God is psychology, or psychology is God”—accurately assesses the godliness of psychology at a particular time in U.S. history—a remark whose accuracy, we might add, still rings true today—especially with regard to the authority accruing to this field and its social scientists when remarking on ethnic-racialized psychological trauma. To wit, we saw the crucial role played by the social psychology experiments of Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the victorious 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which I discuss in chapter 3. These experiments proved to the justices of the Supreme Court that African American children were psychologically traumatized by segregation in public schools. Kenneth Clark himself remarked, “The involvement of social scientists in the *Brown* decision set social science and the law on a common path. There can be no turning from it now.”<sup>8</sup> At least ten years before the forging of a “common path” between psychology and the law, we know that Gunnar Myrdal’s 1944 work *An American Dilemma* had already “served to push future work and policy on matters of race in decidedly psychological directions,” in the words of Ellen Herman.<sup>9</sup> “Maybe God is psychology, or maybe psychology is God”—it would certainly seem this way. From within ethnic-racialized minoritarian discourses, we have found no way to dispense with certain assumptions in psychology—at the same time that we have steered steadfastly clear of psychoanalytic theory—any more than folks have found a way to exist without creating something in the image of “God.”

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This is the problem as the book sees it: critical race and ethnicity studies scholars have developed no language to talk about ethnic-racialized subjectivity and experience that is not entirely ego- and social psychological and that does not imagine a strong, whole, complete, and transparent ethnic-racialized subject and ego as the desired therapeutic, philosophical, and political outcome in a racist, white supremacist world. In the process we fail to see how the repeated themes of wholeness, completeness, and transparency with respect to ethnic-racialized subjectivity are what provide racist discourse with precisely the notion of subjectivity that it needs in order to function most effectively.

Although in recent years critics like Tim Dean and Lee Edelman have shown in very effective ways how Lacanian theory operates as a queer critique

of the complementarity between the sexes—a queer theory *avant la lettre*, as Dean puts it—virtually no attention has been paid to how Lacanian theory also lends itself to an antiracist critique.<sup>10</sup> What may be compelling for some readers, as I explain in chapter 2, is the fact that the queer critique and the antiracist critique do not constitute two different critical operations but are rather mutually informing and revelatory. Readers who attend closely to the letter of Lacan’s critique of ego psychology in many of the writings collected in *Écrits* will witness the antiracist charge of Lacan’s position revealed in how he critiques North American coercive assimilatory imperatives working on ethnic-racialized subjects—in his example, Jewish immigrant psychoanalysts who fled Nazi Europe—that demand of them a certain mandatory adjustment and adaptation to North American “reality.” In the midst of a very harsh critique of these Jewish psychoanalysts regarding the distortions they effected in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, he provides them with a guarded alibi of sorts: he locates the reasons for this distortion in the social and cultural forces acting on them as ethnic immigrants immersed in a culture of assimilation. In these moments, Lacan’s position significantly overlaps with some of the basic positions in the best critical multiculturalist, antiassimilationist work and should, I think, for this reason, make his work of interest to critical race and ethnicity studies scholars. These are the topics of chapter 2.

The antiracist charge in Lacanian theory can also be located in the theory itself. Lacan’s understanding of the subject in language, I would like to suggest, also provides an intervention into racist discourse. Lacan reworks the early-twentieth-century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s notion of language as a system of signs into a system of signifiers and then argues that language, as paradigmatic structure, has certain privative and generative effects on the human speaking subject. The human organism must at some point choose language in order to express her or his needs, but language always has a somewhat distorting effect that never quite captures the need that is expressed in its medium. This is because the human subject is dependent upon a system of differentially constituted signifiers, a system in which signifiers signify only in virtue of their difference from other signifiers, and so any determination made about the human subject in language will be incomplete and insufficient to exhaustively defining who or what the subject is. In her cogent explication of the Lacanian subject as a subject “in language and yet more than language,” Joan Copjec writes, “This subject, radically unknowable, radically incalculable, is the only guarantee we have against racism. This

is a guarantee that slips from us whenever we disregard the nontransparency of subject to signifier, whenever we make the subject coincide with the signifier rather than its misfire."<sup>11</sup> Racism depends on a reading of ethnic-racialized subjects that insists on their transparency; racism also banks on the faith and conceit that these subjects can be exhaustively and fully elucidated through a certain masterful operation of language. Lacan's language-based psychoanalytic theory provides the tools to radically disrupt these colonizing, dominating, and ultimately racist interpretative practices.

Ego and social psychology generally ignore the linguistic dimension of human subjectivity and assume that the human subject can be adapted and assimilated to its environment and, related to that, can be made whole and complete. In contrast, because of the effects of language as structure on the human organism, Lacan concludes that the human subject is irredeemably divided in language—what he terms the “barred subject”—and can never simply make good on that division. I argue that the assumptions of ego and social psychology are still very much with us today in clinical and extraclinical contexts when we think about ethnic-racialized subjectivity and experience.

6 In his early work in the 1950s—the seminars and writings my book focuses on—Lacan argues that the themes of completion and wholeness that figure as theoretical touchstones in ego and social psychology are symptomatic of the dream of mastery and domination, the dream of absolute power over other human subjects as well as over the environment that is integral to the period we are defining as the “ego’s era.”<sup>12</sup> This book posits that the undisturbed dream of ego mastery, wholeness, and completeness not only threatens to inform how ethnic-racialized subjects craft a politics of recognition and redistribution, to use Nancy Fraser’s terms,<sup>13</sup> as well as threatening to inform the types of social and legal redress we seek, but is also, I argue, precisely what provides racist discourse with one of its most generative internal principles: the undivided, obscenely full and complete ethnic-racialized subject, transparent to itself and to others.

I hope that this book might inspire some critical race and ethnicity studies scholars to engage with some of Lacan’s work. My analysis of ego psychology and social psychology in the United States may also encourage scholars in American studies to engage with Lacan’s early work. His critique of the distortions of Freudian theory in ego psychology as attributable to North American assimilatory imperatives and high-speed capitalist practices registers a timely critique of U.S. exceptionalism and hegemony in the post-World

War II years. For critics interested in studying the flows of transnational capital and globalization practices and the role of the United States as author of these flows and practices, the role played by ego psychology in the United States and how it became a dominant global therapeutics of the self should play a part in the story told of U.S. hegemony. My book makes the argument that the new American studies' attempt to challenge the geographical, fiscal, and psychological boundaries that become naturalized in attempts to define what is American and what it means to study an area called America will find, curiously enough, that the mid-twentieth-century debates between ego psychology and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory provide crucial material for deepening their interventions.

Thus far, I have articulated the most significant distinction between Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and ego and social psychology as having to do with the attention Lacanian theory devotes to the effects of language as structure on the speaking organism. To be clear, this is certainly not the only difference between them, but it is, for me, the more remarkable given the concerns of this project and the interventions it hopes to effect. Before I provide a bit more texture to this claim, I would like to offer a brief and selective overview of the emergence of ego psychology, canvassing its major critical operations and assumptions with respect to a theory of the subject. I leave a more detailed description of social psychology for my discussion of the Clarks' social psychology experiments in chapter 3.

To begin with, although ego psychology cannot simply be reduced down to the work of the group Lacan famously refers to as the "troika"—Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph Loewenstein<sup>14</sup>—Heinz Hartmann must be generally regarded as the leading figure of ego psychology. His *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation*, published in 1939, the year Freud died, has served as a major theoretical point of departure for ego psychology.<sup>15</sup> While it bears the word *psychology*, ego psychology does not emerge from within the general field of psychology but rather from a particular interpretation—Lacan uses the term *distortion*—of Freudian theory that fixes on Freud's construction of what is referred to as the "second topography" of id, ego, and superego that he introduces in his 1923 text *The Ego and the Id*. Hartmann saw himself as tracing out what he regarded as Freud's own wishes and aspirations for psychoanalysis, that it would eventually function as a general psychology "to refine, systemize, and increase our knowledge, thus advancing psychoanalysis as a general psychology."<sup>16</sup> In *Essays on Ego Psychology*, Hartmann wrote, "The

consistent study of the ego and its function promises to bring analysis closer to the aim Freud has set for it long ago—to become a general psychology in the broadest sense of the word.”<sup>17</sup> In the indispensable collection *The Hartmann Era*, Martin S. Bergmann rightly questions the veracity of this attribution to Freud of this particular aspiration.<sup>18</sup>

Generally, the ego psychologists concluded that the second topography served to replace Freud’s previous topography of unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. By way of this conclusion, they definitively located the ego as the center of consciousness and lent it powers of mastery and adaptation that appeared to excise the role of the unconscious. In this regard, Hartmann saw himself as redressing the wrongs that had been supposedly brought to bear on psychoanalytic theory with Freud’s introduction of the death instinct in his 1920 text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Bergmann elaborates:

By 1920 Freud is no longer a Darwinian, with the introduction of the concept of the repetition compulsion, which operates beyond the pleasure principle; the libido is in continuous struggle against its immortal adversary, the death instinct. The new theory fundamentally changed the model of the way the human mind functions. Hartmann’s task, as Lichtenstein understands it, was to undo the damage that was done to psychoanalysis by the introduction of the death instinct. It was the ego system that, according to Hartmann, took over the adaptive regulation.<sup>19</sup>

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Note the importance accorded the adaptive functions and the autonomous regality ascribed to the ego, as well as how adaptation and autonomy become the measure of mental health. In this context, adaptation itself served as the criterion for health. Yale Kramer explains, “Theoretically, the mentally healthiest individual is no longer the most sexually gratified one, but the one who is best adapted to the world in which he lives—the individual who, in theory, has reached an equilibrium between the gratification of his instinctual needs, his moral needs, and the demands of reality.”<sup>20</sup> One of the fundamental points in Lacanian theory is that the relationship between the human subject and her environment cannot be thought of in terms of adaptation. Thinking this relation in terms of adaptation is a symptomatic and compensatory response to the fact of radical inadequation and lack of complementarity or natural correspondence between the human subject and the social.

David Beres wrote that the function of psychoanalytic treatment in ego

psychology was mostly redefined “as the restoration of autonomy of ego functions” that had either been lost or compromised because of conflict or by repression.<sup>21</sup> Theorizing that there was an autonomous, conflict-free sphere in the ego, the ego psychologists argued that the ego should be strengthened so as to improve its chances of mastering conflict. In Lacan’s first seminars and writings in the early 1950s, he clearly laid out his very different understanding of the ego and its function and why the strategy of strengthening the ego seemed, in theory, so misguided. In *Seminar II*, Lacan claimed that “the resistances always have their seat in the ego, so analysis teaches.”<sup>22</sup> Two years earlier, he wrote, “This ego, whose strength our theorists now define by its capacity to bear frustration, is frustration in its very essence. Not frustration of one of the subject’s desires, but frustration of an object in which his desire is alienated; and the more developed this object becomes, the more profoundly the subject becomes alienated from his jouissance.”<sup>23</sup>

Returning for a moment to Piri’s dilemma in *Down These Mean Streets*, it is precisely this alienation of desire that the novel cannot seem to remark upon. Given that the text speaks too fully and squarely within the vernacular of ego and social psychology, proffering as it does the strategy of strengthening Piri’s ethnic-racialized ego as the only possible answer to his dilemma, it cannot even begin to address Piri’s profound alienation as a human speaking subject. Psychology wins itself a godly, legally sanctioned victory and Lacanian theory gets the definitive boot.

We might take this moment to discuss some of the additional infelicitous effects that attend any interpretative or therapeutic strategy that seeks above all else to strengthen the ego, especially with regard to ethnic-racialized subjects in the context of racism, neocolonialism, and vacuous forms of multiculturalism. As many who are familiar with Lacan’s mirror-stage essay know, the ego is constituted through identification with a counterpart that, importantly, appears as a point outside the ego. This captures the basic alienation and misrecognition that constitutes the ego and that corresponds to the Imaginary register. Since the relation between the ego and its counterpart constitutes an essentially narcissistic dynamic, aggressivity figures strongly. The Imaginary ego is caught in a false dialectic of either affirming or negating its sameness or difference from the other in a battle that presumably can only end in death, with the destruction of one or the other. The Imaginary register is organized around illusions of wholeness and synthesis, and to the extent

that ego psychology in theory imagines a way of making good on these illusory promises, it can be read as a psychology of the Imaginary, prompting the assessment by Paul Verhaeghe that ego psychology's insistence on the subject as a unity disqualifies it as a psychology and is more accurately named by the term "egology."<sup>24</sup>

The Imaginary fixity that characterizes the ego is opposed to subjective growth and change, and although psychoanalysis has very real effects on the ego it generally works on the subject, on stirring up desire in the subject, promoting a process of becoming. Homi Bhabha links the Imaginary fixity and rigidity that Lacan ascribes to the ego with the "fixity" that Bhabha identifies as a distinct feature of colonial discourse: "An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy, and daemonic repetition."<sup>25</sup> Ego psychology's ongoing hegemony in providing the basic outlines for how ethnic-racialized subjectivity and experience is interpreted and understood threatens to compel an Imaginary ego politics in ethnic-racialized minoritarian discourses that will not be able to offer a truly transformative vision of justice because instead of a subject, an ego is installed at the center of these politicized discourses.<sup>26</sup>

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Freud theorized the ego as developing out of the id. Melanie Klein theorized the ego as present from the very beginnings of life, defining its primary function as a defense against an annihilating, disintegrating anxiety. Lacan theorized the emergence of the ego in the moments of the child's identification with and *captation* by a point outside its self. Hartmann and his group instead theorized the ego as emerging separately from the id. Moreover, they theorized the ego, as Judith Feher Gurewich explains, "as distinct from the defense mechanisms that prevent it from assuming its function as the agent of the reality principle. . . . The ego is therefore capable of regaining its discerning abilities and recognizing external reality for what it is."<sup>27</sup> Hartmann and David Rapaport theorized the ego as finding the best solutions for its adaptation to "reality."<sup>28</sup> The idea that reality is to be taken as something given in the outer world and that can be taught or learned is shared by both ego psychology and Kleinian theory, but is a notion radically alien to Lacan's teaching. The understanding of reality in ego psychology is what helps lend ego psychologists so much power in the analytical setting, since, in the end, they will

serve as judge of what is real or not real; they function as masters of reality. In Lacan's scheme, reality is always seen through the window of fantasy, and so the analyst's reality is no better, no worse, no more real than the analysand's.

Understanding the nature and impact of ego psychology through Lacan's seminars and writings, one might get the erroneous impression that there were, apart from Lacan, no other critics of Hartmann's theories. Bergmann reminds us that this was not the case: "Criticism of Hartmann by his peers already appeared in 1961 in a paper by Glover. There were also those who believed that Hartmann and his followers had turned away from the unconscious, the most valuable part of psychoanalysis, as they preached conformity and adjustment."<sup>29</sup> A conceptual move that appears to attend this turning away from the unconscious is the new, intense focus on the analysis of children and infants during this time. I shall make more of this shift from the unconscious to "child analysis" when I discuss the Clarks' social psychology experiments in chapter 3. For now I want to conceptualize this shift as predicated on a certain pretension to mastery that lends psychoanalysis out to the strategies Michel Foucault calls "biopower"—the reproduction and control of biological life. The psychoanalyst André Green characterizes this shift in psychoanalysis as one that abandons the analysis of the "dream" for an analysis of the "child," and in this abandonment turns against the "true paradigm" of psychoanalysis: "The 'child' represents all this developmental point of view, the misunderstandings created by baby observation and what not. The 'dream' is the true paradigm of psychoanalysis."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, he makes clear how this shift to the "child" brings psychoanalysis into the purview of the disciplinary techniques of biopower: "There are two ways of considering the child. One way is to include the knowledge of the child into the knowledge of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis: you have different sorts—adults, children, psychotics, psychosomatics, delinquents, whatever. *But there is another way of including child psychoanalysis. It is to put it in a network of disciplines where you can find paediatrics, child psychiatry, pedagogy, child observation, and so on.* What happens then? It happens that the psychoanalytic point of view is drowned and we get child observation occupying the position of a fundamental 'science' in the general theory of the child and adult psychoanalysis."<sup>31</sup> When Lacan enumerates in 1953 what he thinks are the "current problems of psychoanalysis," his first entry is devoted to this shift toward the focus on the "child." He writes, "The impetus in this area has come from the analysis of children and from the favorable field offered to researchers' efforts and temptations by

the preverbal structurations approach.”<sup>32</sup> Although it is not acknowledged in Lee Edelman’s recent queer theoretical polemic *No Future*, on the status and image of the “child” as what “serves to regulate political discourse” in the United States, I think this shift from the “unconscious”/“dream” to the “child” effected so successfully by psychoanalytic ego psychology in the United States provides precisely the sort of historical texture and background informing the ascendancy of the “child.” We might even read the following assessment by Edelman as providing the very alibi for this shift: “That figural Child alone embodies the citizen as ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future share in the nation’s good, though always at the cost of limiting the rights ‘real’ citizens are allowed. For the social exists to preserve for this universalized subject, this fantasmatic Child, a notional freedom more highly valued than the actuality of freedom itself.”<sup>33</sup>

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There is no doubt that ego psychology dominated North American psychoanalysis after World War II, even though virtually no analysts in Europe or South America drew inspiration from Hartmann’s group’s work. In a more contemporary context, the hegemony of ego psychology in the United States is so unquestioned that, as Jacques-Alain Miller reports, perhaps somewhat exaggeratedly, of a communication he received from a Chicago analyst in the mid-1980s, it has become like “wallpaper” for North American analysts.<sup>34</sup> Yale Kramer characterizes the “golden age” of ego psychology in particularly affecting terms: “The golden age of psychoanalysis, from 1945 to 1965, which many of us can still recall, raised Freud to the status of cultural hero in America. Every analyst had a full caseload, and those with middle-European accents had two-year waiting lists whether they were good or not.”<sup>35</sup> Despite the prestige that attached to Hartmann and his work, interestingly, as Bergmann claims, Hartmann, unlike Lacan, Melanie Klein, and Heinz Kohut, did not have “disciples” but rather had “coworkers.”

If there is one overarching point we might insist upon to characterize Hartmann’s ego psychology, it regards a giddy optimism that is nowhere present in Freud’s own work. There is a spirited trust in the human subject’s capacity to develop, adjust, and grow, and where the occasion for a conflict between the ego and id or the subject and the environment might arise it can just as well be resolved into a conflict-free relation. At the other extreme, we might locate Lacan’s vigorous, tireless pessimism—one that draws on Freud’s own. Jacques-Alain Miller writes that after Lacan’s troubles with the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1953, Lacan “adopts a more Freudian

pessimism. To many, it was horrifying to see how sarcastic he was about the existence of human beings. If you are looking for a debasement of humanity, read Lacan.”<sup>36</sup> I will come clean at this point: this book draws from that same sort of pessimism, insofar as I find very little reason, things being as they are in the United States, for contemporary ethnic-racialized subjects to invest in any political, theoretical, academic program that appears to draw its narcotizing charge from optimism, least of all the kind of optimism that imagines that a conflict-free relation might be effected with one’s immediate social surround and environment in the absence of a radical transformation of the social structures in place. Working with the pessimism that Lacan might be said to generously lend my project, I want to characterize the pessimism that I think is needed along the lines of Foucault’s “pessimistic activism.” In an interview conducted shortly before his death, Foucault announced, “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism.”<sup>37</sup>

Although adjustment and conformity were interpreted by some as the central focus of ego psychology—that, in fact, the two went hand in hand—Hartmann himself did not equate them and did not necessarily see how adjustment necessarily gave way to conformity. Nonetheless, many analysts felt that Hartmann’s work threatened to undo the basic tension Freud had elaborated between the individual and culture that he most famously articulated in his 1930 text *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Bergmann points out that although the specific era associated with the Hartmann group has passed, psychoanalytic ego psychology as a whole has not lost its significance. Indeed, I argue in this book that the more basic assumptions in ego psychology regarding its general optimism and its focus on adaptation and adjustment are alive and well in social psychology and in subfields like ethnic psychology and Hispanic psychology, as well as in Latino psychiatry, as I discuss in chapter 7, and in, more generally speaking, most psychoanalytic and psychological approaches and analyses of subjectivities marked out as ethnic-racialized, not to mention in much of the nonclinical work in critical race and ethnicity studies. In these approaches there is no understanding of the divided subject, the barred subject in language, or the subject of the signifier, no understanding of the effects of language as structure on the speaking human organism.

What does it mean to say that language as structure has both privative and

generative effects on the speaking human organism? What are the consequences in our work as critical race and ethnicity studies scholars if we fail to consider the effects of language as structure on the human speaking organism as we imagine ourselves committed, in theory, to knowledge projects that intervene in systemic material and symbolic racist practices in the United States?

For Lacan, language is the paradigmatic structure. One could say that language is not *like* a structure but *is* rather “structure” itself and that language transforms human organisms into subjects. We need to keep in mind that Lacan does not understand language as simply reflecting reality. Reality is an effect of the order of signifiers. Related to this point, Lacan understands language as radically exterior to the body. For Lacan, language “is like an alien body that grafts itself onto the order of the body and of nature.”<sup>38</sup> Language is composed of rules governing the formation of statements that precede every human organism. Lacan writes, “The simple definition assumes that language is not to be confused with the various psychical and somatic functions that serve it in the speaking subject. The primary reason for this is that language, with its structure, exists prior to each subject’s entry into it at a certain moment in his mental development.”<sup>39</sup> What Lacan calls the Other as the locus of language always precedes the subject and is in fact the first cause of the subject. The Other, as the locus of language, is also referred to as the Symbolic, the order of signifiers that determines for us all of the distinctions that can be made and that organize reality for us. Although the subject is founded in language and the signifier founds the Symbolic, this does not mean, as Copjec explained above, that the subject is fully calculated in its inscription in language.

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Language is in and of itself meaningless; meaning emerges with speech, as speech takes up with language and the rules governing the formation of statements. Concepts do not precede their appearance in the material of language and to understand this we must initially disabuse ourselves, as Lacan writes, of “the illusion that the signifier serves the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to justify its existence in terms of any signification whatsoever.”<sup>40</sup> Although most people tend to think of language as particularly “human,” in Lacan one is pushed to understand its *inhumanness* or its *other-than-humanness*. Maire Jaanus rather pointedly explains that “the analytically defined ‘human’ is not the traditional knot of living flesh and eternal spirit, but a subject constituted by the force and structure of speech and

language. And language as such has nothing human about it. Signifiers are dead. ‘Humans’ incorporate this deadness.”<sup>41</sup> To be clear, the subject is an effect of the signifier, not a substance, not a preexisting essence that could precipitate itself outside the locus of the Other, the Symbolic, outside of language as structure.

As I briefly explained earlier, every human organism must at some point choose language in order to express his or her needs. Bruce Fink succinctly argues that the child *allows* “him or herself to be represented by words.”<sup>42</sup> In *Seminar 1*, Lacan illustrates this point when he teaches, “All human beings share in the universe of symbols. They are included in it and submit to it, much more than they constitute it. They are much more its supports than its agents.”<sup>43</sup> Since language is a system of signifiers in which each signifier means something only by virtue of its difference from another signifier, every demand we make in language will always have a distorting effect with respect to the need we try to express in its medium. There are, ultimately, no positive terms in language. When the human organism inscribes itself in language it becomes a subject of language, and as a result of this inscription every determination of the subject will be by necessity indeterminate. Lacan understands the inscription of the subject in language as constituting a loss, a loss of a hypothesized fullness prior to the impact of language that he will refer to as belonging to the order of the Real. This notion of fullness prior to language is also conceptually linked to Lacan’s theory of *jouissance*. The privative effects of language as structure on the speaking organism, therefore, have to do with this primordial loss. Once we become subjects of the signifier we can never simply make good on this loss; it is irremediable.

And what of the generative effects of language as structure on the speaking human organism? These have to do with how language generates human desire. Dean describes how “the agent of the cut that produces both subject and object is, of course, language. According to Lacan, symbolic networks dissect the human body, producing leftovers that cause desire. The ill fit between language and the body introduces wrinkles and gaps that generate desire. We might say that the unconscious and desire exist only as a consequence of this disharmony between the structures of language and those of the body.”<sup>44</sup>

The understanding of the subject as an effect of the signifier and the idea of this primordial loss that attends each human subject’s inscription in language continue not to figure in theories of ethnic-racialized subjectivity and experi-

ence within critical race and ethnicity studies knowledge projects like Latino and Chicano studies, for example. Why, we might ask, should we even be concerned with these failures of engagement? What, if anything, do we stand to lose or gain by taking or not taking these issues into consideration? The result for our scholarship is an undertheorized explanation of loss and trauma at the psychic, political, juridical, and economic levels, as well as an overly simplistic and commonsensical conceptualization of human subjectivity in which we bracket the effects of language on the speaking organism in order to win back some empty promise of fullness and completeness. In this latter compensatory, falsely reparative critical move, we, against our best intentions, provide precisely the image of ethnic-racialized subjectivity as whole, complete, and transparent, an image upon which racist discourse thrives and against which we imagine we are doing battle.

With respect to the question of what the human subject loses or stands to lose in a world marked by radical disparities in social and material resources, we must stay attuned to what Dean describes as two different—but I think related—kinds of losses so that we might craft in critical race and ethnicity studies knowledge projects the most historically and psychoanalytically textured and nuanced explications possible. Dean writes,

To recognize what Joan Copjec calls “the *unvermögender* Other,” the Other who doesn’t have what it takes, is to recognize that loss is constitutive of subjectivity rather than the consequence of an oppressive regulatory regime that has arranged the world to one’s disadvantage. Recognizing this distinction should not delegitimize the impact of social inequities. Instead, articulating psychoanalysis with politics depends upon differentiating between losses and deficits that represent unequal distribution of social resources, including visibility and dignity, on the one hand, and losses and deficits that are constitutive, that indicate an ineliminable zone of subjective abjection (object *a*) on the other.<sup>45</sup>

As we have already explained, the losses constitutive of subjectivity have to do with the effects of language as structure on the human speaking organism.

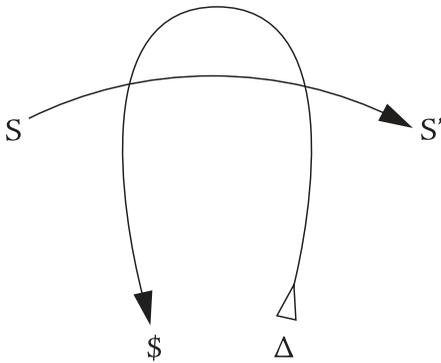
An astute reader might ask about the universalizing tendencies buttressing such a claim.<sup>46</sup> Does language as structure have the same privative and generative effects on all speaking subjects, regardless of, for example, the position they occupy in a racialized social hierarchy? Speaking of the different kinds of languages humans engage in around the world, Lacanians would agree that different languages cut the body up in different ways. Bruce Fink explains,

“Each language cuts the body up or ‘covers’ it in slightly different ways, and the body becomes written with signifiers; language is ‘encrusted upon the living,’ to borrow Bergson’s expression. The body is overwritten/overridden by language.”<sup>47</sup> But with respect to understanding the primordial loss that a speaking human organism experiences as a result of being inscribed in language, is the nature of the loss the same across cultures, languages, racialized groups, and so on? Does it matter that a human organism before its immersion in language might already be marked as a disprized human body, seemingly already positioned in a racist culture to be the beneficiary of certain built-in losses and miseries reserved for certain bodies and not others? To flesh out a potential response that will shed light on how these losses in Dean’s passage can be read in relation to each other in a way that attends to the particularity of the subject for whom the losses having to do with the unequal distribution of social and material resources are more likely to accrue, I’d like to turn to Lacan’s “elementary cell” of the graph of desire and a passage from Hortense Spillers’s 1996 essay “‘All the Things You Could Be by Now If Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother.’”

In his 1960 essay “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire,”<sup>48</sup> Lacan begins his elaboration of the graph of desire with the “elementary cell” (figure 1). The triangle figure in the lower right-hand corner represents the human organism before its inscription in language. Language in the diagram is represented by the vector running from left to right,  $S$  to  $S'$ . As Van Haute explains, the triangle in the lower right-hand corner refers to the “human being as simple being of needs, with vague, unstructured presentations (of hunger and thirst, light and dark, warm and cold, etc.) that are as such not yet taken up in the order of language and meaning.”<sup>49</sup>

As we noted earlier, language grafts itself onto the human body, which is why we see in the figure of the elementary cell the two vectors prior to their intersecting moving in different directions, dramatizing, again, the exteriority of language to the human body. We can understand the effects of language as structure on the human organism as reflected in the elementary cell at the point where the vector representing language ( $S$  to  $S'$ ) intersects the other vector that begins with the triangle in the lower right-hand corner. The result of the effects of language as structure on the human organism is the “barred subject,” the subject divided in language represented by the symbol in the lower left-hand corner.

Can we say so far that Lacan’s idea of the effects of language as structure on



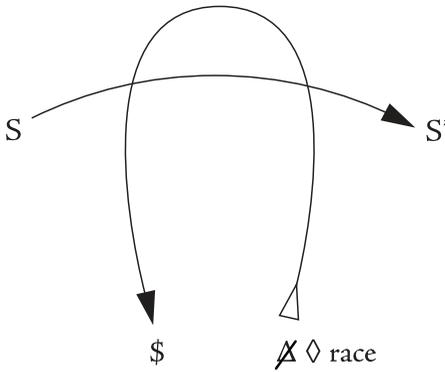
1 Reproduced from Phillippe Van Haute, *Against Adaptation: Lacan's "Subversion" of the Subject: A Close Reading*. New York: Other Press, 2002.

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the human organism is universalizing in a problematic way, that it fails to consider the particularity of the human organism prior to language's impact on the organism's body? Does this model for understanding the effects of language as structure on the speaking organism describe any and all subjects, regardless of cultural, racialized, ethnicized, and other so-called differences? For critical race and ethnicity studies scholars interested in evaluating the feasibility of Lacanian theory for an understanding of the full range of objects a human subject stands to lose in the world, these questions are crucial.

In a passage I spend quite a bit of time attending to in chapters 3 and 7, Hortense Spillers writes, "The individual in the collective traversed by 'race'—and there are no known exceptions, as far as I can tell—is covered by it before language and its differential laws take hold."<sup>50</sup> I understand Spillers as arguing that there is a *signifierness* to race prior to the organism's subjection to language as structure. By "differential laws" of language, I take Spillers to be referring to the fundamental processes of metaphor and metonymy that constitute the two axes according to which all linguistic phenomena must be interpreted. I have worked up a slight variation (figure 2) of Lacan's elementary cell to graphically illustrate Spillers's point.

My version introduces a bar through the triangle originally meant to represent the organism of needs. This creates a formula that reads in the lower right-hand corner, "barred organism in relation to race." The organism is barred here to reflect Spillers's idea that race, its signifierness, somehow precedes language and its differential laws. The organism is already marked up by a kind of meaning, is already divided, as it were, by a signifierness



2 Graph of desire.

associated with race prior to the organism's encounter with language as structure. Spillers's point might be read as running contrary to Lacan's basic position because she seems to be granting race a Real status, lending it meaning prior to the organism's subjection to language as structure. How can race, one might ask, have meaning independent of its determination through language and language's differential laws?

I am not interested here in arguing, in the end, how Spillers's reading crosschecks or doesn't with Lacan's theory. I bring up Spillers's point in the context of the argument at this point in the introduction to entertain the possibility that language's intersection with the organism of needs might already find an organism marked by a kind of *metaphoricity* that yields from meanings associated with notions of racialized difference. Indeed, in Spillers's essay, as we will see later in my book, race is virtually equated with metaphoricity itself. I want to maintain an open-endedness to the question of whether or not Lacan's understanding of the privative and generative effects of language as structure is a problematic universalizing narrative. At the very least, it appears that taking into account Spillers's remarks means understanding that the metaphoricity of race in cultures suffused with racialized meanings is already stirring up a kind of signifying trouble prior to the moment of subjective constitution and that the metaphoricity of race here requires a more deeply textured narrative of this inaugural loss since it may be that it is not registered in the same way for all human organisms.

To attempt to provide a clearer picture here, we should recall that the human organism suffers a hypothesized inaugural loss as a result of having to

articulate its needs in the form of demands through the distorting medium of language. How, then, we might ask, does the metaphoricity of race and, more pointedly, the function of racialized difference in a racialized social hierarchy insinuate itself in the various moments of an organism's articulation of its needs in language? Does the fact that "the individual in the collective traversed by 'race' . . . is covered by it before language and its differential laws take hold" mean that race traverses and informs the scene of need prior to or at the very moment of the human organism's articulation of need in the form of a demand in language? I do not have the answers to these questions. It does seem to me that to articulate psychoanalysis with politics, as Dean suggests above, in the spirit of a discourse that wants to remain as alive as possible to the nature and impact of the different kinds of psychical and material losses experienced by the human subject means to dwell ferociously in the rich difficulties opened up by precisely these sorts of questions. Regardless of how one might field these questions, I think it is still imperative that we bring Lacan's theory of the divided subject in language to bear on how we conceptualize ethnic-racialized subjectivity and experience, if simply for the fact that it has so rarely if ever figured and because its not figuring reflects larger forces and practices of the domination of ethnic-racialized subjects.

I began this introduction with Jacques Lacan and Piri Thomas with very specific motivations in mind: to understand the relationship between their similarly mysterious and critical pronouncements on psychology and to signal the project's focus on certain aspects of Lacanian theory and Latino subjectivity and experience in the twenty-first century. Here, I would like to remark on a significant point of overlap between Lacanian theory's subject of the signifier, the barred subject, and Latino studies' conceptualization of the border subject that reveals, for me, the kinds of compelling links between Latino studies and Lacanian theory that ideally should encourage Latino studies scholars to engage Lacanian theory and Lacanian scholars to engage Latino studies. There is something, to put it simply, to the temporality of the signifying chain as Lacanian psychoanalytic theory understands it that is homologous to the temporality of *Latino* as this term currently circulates in academic and popular cultural narratives of the transformation of the United States that we are calling the Latinization of the United States. The indeterminacy of *Latino*, like the signifying chain, is predicated on equal parts anticipation and retroaction. I will discuss this in much greater detail in chapter 4, but for now I would like for us to imagine that in the following passage, the

Lacanian analyst Colette Soler, in explicating the temporality of the signifying chain, is also describing the temporality of *Latino* that precipitates in the twenty-first century version of the hailing “Hey, you, Latino” when she writes,

What is the temporality of the signifying chain? It is a twofold temporality between anticipation and retroaction; it is what Lacan called reversible time. In other words, the temporality of speech is a time shared between anticipation, while you are speaking, of the moment of conclusion (the moment at which you grasped what you meant), and retroaction, for when you arrive at the anticipated end point, all previous speech takes on new meaning, that is to say, new meaning emerges retroactively. It is a time split between “*I don’t know yet*” and “*Oh yes, I already knew that.*”<sup>51</sup>

The temporality of *Latino* unfolds according to first an anticipation of knowledge about the ethnic-racialized subject and then a retroactive determination, posthailing, which insists on already having known that knowledge about the subject. The temporality of *Latino* hinges on two different but ultimately related discussions. To begin with—and this is quite basic—the incoherent and inconclusive racialization of Latinos and Hispanics throughout the twentieth (and twenty-first) century in legal and extralegal contexts remarks quite directly on the nature of the meaning—“*I don’t know yet*” and “*I already knew that*”—yielding from and accruing to this ethnic-racialized nominatory term, a term whose need it is ultimately to fully *know* ethnic-racialized subjects through the evidence collected for what will connote the signs of ethnicity and race. *Latino* operates a species of queer cut in the quasi-scientific discourses on race and ethnicity in the United States.

Throughout this project, I attempt to read for the overlaps whenever possible between the critical operations performed by *Latino* and *queer* with respect to ethnicity, race, sexuality, and sexual difference. Just as *queer* attempts to disturb binary categories like homosexuality/heterosexuality, female/male, masculinity/femininity, *Latino* similarly, due to its general inconclusivity with respect to remarking on categories of race and ethnicity, disturbs the logic by which ethnicity/race can be posed as a binary pair.<sup>52</sup> In short, *Latino* queers ethnicity and race. The hermeneutic similarity between *Latino* and *queer* also helps me make my second point. In contemporary Latino studies critique, *Latino* has been bonded to the future and to the past of the Americas, as I explain in chapter 4. Projects like the mammoth, multivolumed effort *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Tradition* read in concert with the ubiquitous

claims heard nowadays regarding “the inevitable Latinization of the United States” speak to a simultaneous backward- and forward-looking reading practice that drains the future into the past and burrows the past into the future. Insofar as *queer* too might be read as denoting temporality more so than ontology, *queer* then performs a similar homologous critical operation to *Latino*. The latter term—and the former term, too—is becoming increasingly responsible for compelling the new clock settings in the Americas.

This project’s attempt to bring Latino studies and Lacanian theory into dialogue owes its inspiration to other, perhaps less theoretically sound and articulated reasons, given that it is based upon a general—and to this day still mostly unresolved—transference onto both Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and a certain history of politicized resistance in Chicano movement politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1935, Mrs. May Benzenberg Mayer was brought to a kind of justice in New York when she was fined for having promised and not delivered to a female patient a course of “dream therapy” that would have potentially provided for her patient some relief from paralysis in a limb.<sup>53</sup> During this time, what Freud called “wild analysis” was cause for some concern, especially in the bohemian East Village of New York City, where many artists and activists were generally quite enthused with the liberating promise they attached to Freud’s psychoanalytic theory.<sup>54</sup> In this project I have often thought of Mrs. Mayer’s fraudulent act as I have seemed to promise to bring to Latino studies not a course of “dream therapy” exactly, but a loosening of a very tightly bounded mode of partially paralyzed thinking on the constitution of subjectivity that we might characterize as predominantly “historicist,” if we trust we can use Copjec’s definition of *historicist* (“we are calling historicist the reduction of society to its indwelling network of relations of power and knowledge”).<sup>55</sup> I am not suggesting that Latino studies’ historicist traditions of scholarship represent “paralyzed thinking”—that would be preposterous. However, I am suggesting that the refusal to consider what might get remaindered in historicist analyses—that even the most rigorous historicist approach might leave important information about the human speaking subject in whatever historical period or epoch unremarked upon—is reflective of a refusal to engage psychoanalytic theory, and it is this refusal that strikes me as a species of paralyzed thinking. It paralyzes the field of Latino studies by effectively inoculating it against any new future critical strains. The Chicana lesbian feminist theorist, historian, and novelist Emma Pérez, whom

I discuss in chapter 6, attempts to craft a kind of rich and difficult balance between Chicano historicist practices and psychoanalytic approaches to analyzing and understanding history and individual and collective trauma.

On the issue of imposters, Lacan surmises in *Seminar XI*, “It would not be too much to say that, in the putting in question of analysis, in so far as it is always in suspense, not only in the popular mind, but still more in the private feelings of each psycho-analyst, imposture looms overhead—as a contained, excluded, ambiguous presence against which the psycho-analyst barricades himself with a number of ceremonies, forms and rituals.”<sup>56</sup> Imposture looms over the head of my readers, I’m afraid to say: I am certainly not a trained psycho-analyst, but a reader trained in psychoanalytic theory and Latino studies who is operating under the same assumption that guides Spillers’s project in “‘All the Things You Could Be by Now,’” that the outlines of an emancipatory strategy for ethnic-racialized subjects may be glimpsed in the self-regarding scrutinizing practices of a psychoanalytic hermeneutic that must mine Lacanian theory in particular. I see my engagement with Lacanian theory as part of what some may consider the problematic tradition of the reception of Lacan in North America, given, among other things, that I am working primarily only with those seminars and pieces of writing that have been translated into English.<sup>57</sup>

Some readers may, no doubt, find my focus on the Lacan of the 1950s somewhat restricted and limited, since I don’t deal with the later Lacan and thus risk perpetuating, as Alenka Zupančič writes, the image of Lacan as the “‘philosopher of language’ who insists on the price that the subject must pay in order to gain access to the symbolic order. Thus we get the primordial act of renunciation, enjoyment as impossible, and the end of analysis as the moment when the analysand must assume symbolic castration and accept a fundamental or constitutive lack (or loss).”<sup>58</sup> The difference between the early and late Lacan has been explained according to the distinction between Lacan’s earlier focus on the subject of desire versus the later focus, already seen in *Seminar XI* in 1964, on the subject of the drive. Jacques-Alain Miller explains this shift as one in which desire is “devalued” by Lacan: “During a whole period of his theoretical elaboration, Lacan tries to prop up the life functions on desire. But once he distinguishes the drive from desire [in *Seminar XI*], a devaluation of desire occurs. . . . What then becomes essential, on the contrary, is the drive as an activity related to the lost object which produces jouissance, and secondly fantasy.”<sup>59</sup> The reason I risk overemphasizing the Lacan of lack and loss is

because of what I see as an underengagement with the universal condition of loss attributable to the effects of language as structure on the speaking organism within critical race and ethnicity studies, and this has consequences for how we think of the ethnic-racialized subject as a subject of desire, a topic I write about in chapter 2. Related to this reason, I focus on lack and loss because of how I understand racist discourse and racism, more generally, as reliant on generously extending a species of what Juliet Flower MacCannell characterizes as an “animal-like” *jouissance* to ethnic-racialized subjects, a kind of obscene fullness.<sup>60</sup> In other words, the fullness granted and the lack and loss that goes unconsidered work together to deny ethnic-racialized subjects their humanness and their status as subjects of desire.

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I understand that Lacan comes to theorize desire as a defense against satisfaction and that the subject of desire in fact interferes with the subject of the drive’s *jouissance*.<sup>61</sup> Again, ethnic-racialized subjects are often fantasized and hallucinated as possessed with a kind of *jouissance*—and are in fact symbolically and materially punished daily for this in myriad ways. We may then come to believe that we actually do, as ethnic-racialized subjects, possess this “animal-like” *jouissance*, that we have access to it in ways others do not, that we are tied to the order of the Real, prior to language, in ways others are not. Does this fact require us to think in more nuanced ways about how the end of an analysis—and what Lacan calls the “traversing of the fundamental fantasy” in order to gain a kind of second-order access to a *jouissance* after the letter—might play itself out differently in theory and practice for those subjects already thought to possess a kind of *jouissance* and where this possession is the condition upon which they are more likely to be *dispossessed* of certain social and material resources? Taking all of this into consideration, it is my hope that my focus on lack and loss with respect to a theory of the ethnic-racialized subject as a subject of the signifier might for the reader then call up generative metaphors of possibility, even excess and not metaphors of scarcity and lack and the placid gloom of renunciation.

After graduating from college, I worked from 1990 to 1992 in a variety of roles at a not-for-profit clinic, Camillus Health Concern, that provided free medical, social, and psychological services to homeless people in Miami—the first clinic of its kind in the United States. In one of my strangest roles, I worked as a translator in therapy sessions with Spanish-speaking patients and non-Spanish-speaking psychologists. I recall that I never seemed to translate word for word but rather attempted to insinuate myself, as imposter-qua-psycho-

therapist, in woefully problematic ways, no doubt, in order to forge what I thought would qualify as the best interpretive yield for the psychologist and the patient. “Wild analysis,” indeed.<sup>62</sup> Am I practicing a species of wild (Lacanian) analysis in this book? Perhaps. Is the wild nature of this address compounded by the fact that over the years I have not only seemed to situate Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in the place of the critical methodology-supposed-to-know but have managed to engage a similar type of transference-like relationship with Chicano movement politics, attributing to its politicized resistance to assimilation an intoxicating power and knowledge? Probably. The following passage by Jane Gallop might be read as an accurate assessment of precisely the kind of interpretive transference I continue to pursue through Lacanian theory and Chicano movement politics:

From reading Freud and Lacan, I had developed, already, a transference onto psychoanalysis in general. I believed psychoanalysis knew, and that if I were analyzed, or better yet if I became an analyst (my analysis was started under the guise of a training analysis), then I would get “it.” I thought that Lacan considers the goal of analysis to be the analysand’s assumption of his castration. To assume mine, it seemed to me, would mean understanding that I would never get transparent knowledge of myself from psychoanalysis or elsewhere, and thus never achieve (phallic) self-mastery.<sup>63</sup>

It is no coincidence that I often identify Lacan as a quasi-Chicano activist given the overlap I discern between his critique of coercive assimilatory imperatives in 1950s U.S. culture and the similar critique of assimilation crafted by early Chicano movement activists. My transference onto the general ethos of Chicano movement politics is painfully obvious in my somewhat hagiographic salute to Mexican American *pachuco/a* and zoot-suit culture’s quasi-Lacanian anti-identity politics of the 1940s and 1950s in chapter 5, and in my homage to the work of Emma Pérez in chapter 6.

In many places in this book I know I have run the risk of precipitating, along the lines of Gallop’s assessment above, a new kind of mastery vis-à-vis symbolic castration. My insistence on the delusional nature of the Imaginary ego and my critique, more generally, of the ego’s pretension to mastery only ends up repositioning the ego-as-the-center-that-is-not-the-center, without requiring the critic to disconnect from the need for mastery in order to uncover this lie and delusion. Although I have tried to remedy this problem, I know I have not always heeded the warning Lacan issues in *Seminar II*:

But do you think that we should be content with that, and say—the I of the unconscious subject is not me? That is not good enough, because nothing, for those of you who think spontaneously, if one can say that, implies the inverse. And normally you start thinking that this I is the real ego. You think that the ego is nothing but an incomplete, erroneous form of this I. In this way, you have accomplished the decentering essential to the Freudian discovery, but you have immediately reduced it. . . . you force the ego back into this I discovered by Freud—you restore the unity.<sup>64</sup>

In many ways, my loquacious, shrill insistence on subjective division and the irremediable loss reads to me during these very late stages of the project as oddly compensatory and restorative attempts on the part of the ego to master this very division and primordial loss. Somehow, garrulously confessing to the division and the loss can have the effect of embalming the ego, protecting it from any further change or movement.

As someone who has been closely involved with Latino students at my university as a past director of its Latino studies program and as a Latino activist in my community, I have also wondered, like the Latino literary critic and theorist Suzanne Oboler,<sup>65</sup> about what we both read as Latino students' confusion and ambivalence on college campuses today regarding what it means to be a Latino subject in the twenty-first-century United States and how an explication of this feeling and affect drawn solely from historicist analyses appears not to be enough. Rey Chow's theory of "coercive mimeticism"—a twenty-first-century mode of inhabiting ethnic-racialized identity where one's social and cultural intelligibility is predicated on one's coming to successfully resemble what is recognizably "ethnic-racialized"<sup>66</sup>—challenges us to come up with a more Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of how ethnic-racialized subjectivity is constituted in a social order suffused with racialized meanings so that we might stay alive to the full range of losses, those attributable to the unequal distribution of social and material resources as well as those attributable to the effects of language as structure on the speaking organism, and to how the meanings of those losses inflect and impinge upon each other. Chow's timely and gloomy diagnosis sheds considerable light on the confusion and ambivalence, not to mention the utter exhaustion, Oboler and I encounter among our Latino students.

In this book, I insist on a more Lacanian psychoanalytic approach to, in a quite general way, articulate psychoanalysis with politics for an ethnic-

racialized minoritarian discourse in the United States. An unambiguous hostility and dismissive attitude exists toward psychoanalytic theory and psychoanalysis, more generally, in North American society and universities. The hostility seems especially pronounced in critical race and ethnicity studies knowledge projects—and especially so, we might add, when it is that Lacanian psychoanalysis and theory is the object of discussion. Training in and exposure to psychoanalytic theory is becoming more and more a rarity in North American universities these days, reflecting the fact that, generally speaking, training in psychoanalytic theory has always taken place outside the university. As Douglas Kirsner explains, “Unlike psychology and psychiatry, psychoanalytic training does not take place in universities but in its own institutions which are supposed to serve not only training but also research functions. From the outset psychoanalysis has been organized around free-standing institutions, perhaps deriving from Freud’s own unhappy experiences with the University of Vienna.”<sup>67</sup>

I argue for a more Lacanian psychoanalytically literate approach, in particular, as opposed to a psychoanalytic object-relations approach, or an ego psychology approach, or a Kleinian approach, or a social psychological approach to theorizing ethnic-racialized subjectivity within Latino studies, and in critical race and ethnicity studies more generally, because of the significantly more complicated and less *psychologistic* picture it potentially promises. I use the term *psychologistic* to refer to what Karen Ro Malone and Stephen R. Friedlander call “psychologizing” modes of thinking, where consciousness is equated with subjectivity and where “the subject is usually conceptualized and researched in terms of material that consciousness provides: affect, awareness, will, perception, etc.”<sup>68</sup> Lacan thought this type of psychologistic analysis completely misguided, as it ignores the unconscious and the symbolic order. Fink writes, “Lacan teaches us to seek explanations in the symbolic order itself: the unconscious, he says, is the discourse of the Other, i.e., the unconscious consists of linguistic elements, phrases, expressions, commands, social and religious laws and conventions that are part of the culture at large as well as being part and parcel of every household.”<sup>69</sup> An antipsychologistic approach along these lines, attuned to how the unconscious is structured like a language, can therefore compel a culturally nuanced—not static and universalizing—analysis that should, in theory, remain alive to historical and epistemic shifts over time.

Fink has explained how in a 1966 text, “Science and Truth,”<sup>70</sup> Lacan coins

the phrase “the psychologization of the subject” in his critique of the sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s analysis of the behavior of so-called primitive people and Piaget’s analysis of children’s mental development. The phrase captures the hegemonic interpretation of the human subject in critical race and ethnicity studies today. Fink writes, “Neither thinker ever seems to attempt to understand the particular workings of the primitive or child’s system as it stands, to understand the complex series of synchronic relationships among terms, or the substitutions and displacements that take place in the diachronic unfolding of the system.”<sup>71</sup> I am certainly not intending with this example to compare ethnic-racialized subjects with “primitives” and “children.” I am, however, implying that in our failure as critical race and ethnicity studies scholars to understand the ethnic-racialized subject as a subject of the signifier and to understand, more broadly, the effects of language as structure on the human speaking subject, we inadvertently reproduce the kind of commonsensical and reductive approach that, in fact, ends up drawing an equivalence sign between the ethnic-racialized subject, Lévy-Bruhl’s notion of the primitive, and Piaget’s “children.” Lacan’s critique of the psychologization of the subject is closely tied to his more general critique of the “culturalist school” of psychology, which I liken in chapter 3 to the tradition of “social psychology” in the United States. In *Seminar II*, he asks after critical approaches that try to exhaust the meaning of the subject by solely or primarily attending to the social and cultural context in which the subject is immersed: “This so-called culturalism consists in emphasising in analysis those things which, in each case, depend on the cultural context in which the subject is immersed. . . . The question is to know whether this element should be given pre-eminent importance in the constitution of the subject.”<sup>72</sup> The ethnic-racialized subject has been primarily theorized as the perfectly calculated sum of “the cultural context in which the subject is immersed.” I read this psychologization of the ethnic-racialized subject as the refusal to interpret the subject as anything other than ego and according to no dimension other than the Imaginary register. My book maintains that there has been a thorough psychologization of the ethnic-racialized subject, a want-to-be-exhaustive explanation that ignores the indeterminacy of the subject that follows on the subject’s vacillation in language and that these psychologization practices are political in nature, reflecting as they do on broader issues of power and knowledge in the context of systemic racism and discrimination.

For all of these reasons, in the final two chapters of my book I recommend

we adopt Spillers's notion of "interior intersubjectivity,"<sup>73</sup> a species of practice that articulates psychoanalysis with politics and that refuses to cede the entire range of understandings that ethnic-racialized subjects might adopt with respect to what it means to be a subject marked out in culture as "ethnic-racialized" to the edifice of ego and social psychology and that might, in some way, interrupt the moribund lock-step movement between ethnic-racialized resemblance and ethnic-racialized social and cultural intelligibility. Her practice, which I interpret as a synthesis of the late Foucauldian notion "care of the self" and the late Lacanian ethical imperative that one at the end of analysis come to identify with one's symptom, takes the risk of ruining—in the form of "care"—the ethnic-racialized self-as-ego that has been installed, as I explain to the reader in chapters 1 and 3, in legal discourses as a result of psychology's insinuation and inscription in the legal apparatus since the end of the nineteenth century, and that circulates in extralegal, everyday contexts as common knowledge regarding what it means to be an ethnic-racialized subject in contemporary U.S. culture.

This book understands this caring ruination as imbued with the hope of precipitating new forms of ethnic-racialized subjectivities that, to borrow the words in the following passage from Foucault, are guided by the refusal of what we are currently made to be, of refusing the false amplitudes that yield from how our function in society has been reduced to our so-called difference: "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. . . . The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate us from the state and the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries."<sup>74</sup>