

Acknowledgments

A perspicacious reader of an early draft of this book commented to me that the book read like it was written under the sign of loss. She was terribly right. This project was conceptualized and carried through during the midst of some shattering personal losses. In the space of a very short time, I lost a father, a sister, a nephew, and my only mentor, Professor Lynda Hart, to sudden and tragic deaths. I watched an already brittle family of stubborn and rickety Cuban melancholics, who seemed willful in refusing to recover from the shock of exile experienced so many years ago, finally disintegrate. My mother refers to those still standing—herself, my sister Carmen, and me—as the three stray cats. The dogged, embarrassing force of Oedipus bearing down on my family with its sinewy “mommy, daddy, me” calculus seemed to draw me like a sleepwalker to psychoanalytic theory as an undergraduate. I’ve been sleepwalking toward and away from it ever since. Latino studies arrived later on the scene for me, as a first-year graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. If this book has been written under the sign of loss in some way, my attempt to make sense of various kinds of losses—material, economic, psychic—relies on what I have learned from reading Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in concert and in tension with Latino studies and how the latter theorizes knowledge production in the context of university discourse. The reader may find in the pages that follow something particularly odd or simply wrong-headed in my claim that loss, a particular kind of loss that has to do with the human subject’s inscription in language, is one of the important resources for subjective realization that continues to be unequally distributed to ethnic-racialized subjects. The book, in its shrillest moments, wants to reclaim that loss for disenfranchised subjects in order to offer the most complex and nuanced understanding of the historically situated human subject while banking on the faith that this reclamation of loss will have some impact on how we conceptualize and craft future forms of social and legal redress as ethnic-racialized subjects.

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