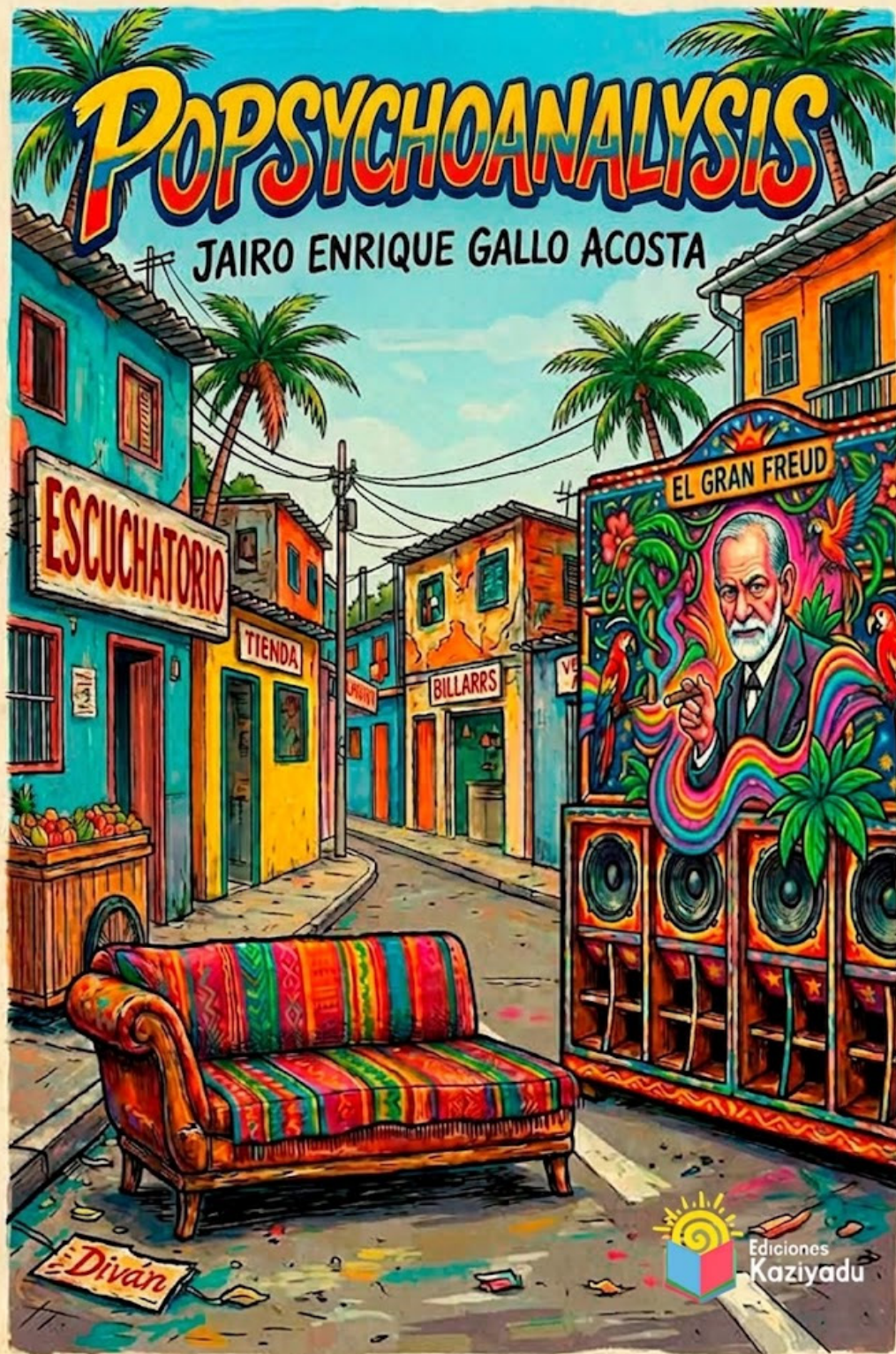


POPSYCHOANALYSIS

JAIRO ENRIQUE GALLO ACOSTA



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Pops psychoanalysis

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Jairo Enrique Gallo Acosta

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For a popular, cool, colorful, subaltern, subversive,
revolutionary psychoanalysis...

Prologue

Professor Jairo Gallo Acosta has long drawn our attention to a "variegated" and "cool" psychoanalysis: a psychoanalysis embodied in Latin American reality, capable of listening to the pains, impasses, contradictions, and inventions of its people. A psychoanalysis that does not function as a technology of subjective colonization, but rather can constitute itself as an ethical, critical, and politically engaged experience with the concrete forms of life produced in Latin America.

With this work, Popsychoanalysis, Jairo Gallo Acosta invites us once again to consider a psychoanalysis that is dancing, singing, and vibrant, like the Latin American peoples themselves who, despite centuries of exploitation, violence, and dispossession, continue to produce modes of existence, language, and social connection. It is a psychoanalysis that allows itself to be permeated by history, culture, and the concrete conflicts that mark the Latin American experience.

By shedding light on dance, sewing, music, and so-called social "waste," Jairo Gallo Acosta draws our attention to that which, even in the face of colonial and capitalist violence, has not been completely captured: the symbolic and cultural power of our peoples. A power that endures not because it is outside of history or social contradictions, but precisely because it is constituted within them.

For readers committed to a critical reflection on contemporary subjectivity, this book is especially important

because it offers not only clinical interpretations but also political, ethical, and cultural questions about the forms of suffering and resistance present in Latin America. Throughout its pages, we find a psychoanalysis marked by the rhythm, musicality, and ambiguities of the Colombian people, which articulates social critique, aesthetic experience, and subjective elaboration.

One of the central points highlighted by Jairo Gallo Acosta is the notion of “the popular,” not as an essential element of identity or an object of idealization, but as a constitutive element of the Latin American intellectual tradition. Although the author does not establish a direct dialogue with the so-called liberation sciences (psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, theology, and critical social sciences), it is possible to situate his proposal within the tradition of critical thought that has historically sought to understand the Latin American subject based on the concrete conditions of colonization, inequality, violence, and exclusion.

In this sense, Poppsychoanalysis approaches a perspective according to which the production of knowledge cannot be dissociated from practices of social, political, and cultural resistance. However, the book avoids turning the “popular” into a pure category or one reconciled with itself. Latin American cultural formations are also traversed by antagonisms, violence, modes of enjoyment, and contradictions produced by the very logic of colonialism and capitalism. The people do not appear here as a morally superior essence, but as a complex field of symbolic dispute, desire, and conflict.

The popular, therefore, is not conceived as something rigid or crystallized, but as a dynamic dimension, historically

shaped by political ideologies, rites, symbols, representations, songs, dances, and diverse forms of collectively constructing existence. Popular culture, in this sense, speaks and, in speaking, constitutes itself as language: a language in which the unconscious of a people is also inscribed.

If human relationships are mediated by language, it is precisely in this field that psychoanalysis finds its place. It therefore bears an ethical responsibility to listen to what emerges in the subject's discursive formations, without losing sight of the fact that the subject of the unconscious is equally shaped by history, culture, and collective determinations. This perspective prevents the psychoanalytic subject from being reduced to a universalizing abstraction disconnected from the material and historical conditions of existence.

This aspect opens up an important political dimension to the work. Following this logic, Jairo Gallo Acosta draws attention to the fact that the Latin American subject sings, dances, celebrates, and creates as ways of preserving their symbolic autonomy and their capacity to constitute themselves through their own language. When psychoanalysis ignores music, the body, dance, or the cultural elements that permeate daily life, it risks producing an abstract and impoverished clinical reduction of the subject. Paradoxically, the psychoanalyst ends up listening deafly to this subject.

This fluidity can also be perceived in salsa, a rhythm that originated in the Colombian Caribbean and was later consolidated in Harlem, in the United States. Salsa speaks of a people and a culture that resist, fight, and seek possibilities for existence in the face of precarity, violence, and social exclusion. In this sense, Jairo Gallo Acosta states:

Salsa is born from precariousness and marginalization (the *barrio*, migration, poverty, and violence). However, unlike other musical genres that wallow in the lament of powerlessness, salsa operates by taking tragedy and turning it into dance. Pain is sung about so that it doesn't become suffering, with a smile in the voice, in the best style of Héctor Lavoe or Ismael Rivera. It is joy in the face of existence's limits.

Music thus appears not as a denial of pain, but as a symbolic operation capable of preventing the subject from being entirely consumed by suffering and powerlessness. Salsa transforms tragedy into a collective endeavor, invoking the body, dance, and language as means of constructing social bonds.

As we can observe throughout the work, the Latin American people use dance, song, poetry, and collective rituals to construct their historical experience. This construction engages the body and the senses as a means of producing subjectivity and social connection. The way in which these individuals relate to one another and to the reality in which they live is characterized precisely by the

articulation between cultural, affective, political, and symbolic elements.

In addressing music, Jairo Gallo Acosta reminds us that the Latin American subject transforms their pain not only into lament, but also into song, dance, and poetry. Therein lies a profoundly political dimension, for singing and dancing become forms of resisting the subjective erasure produced by colonial and capitalist structures. The Latin American body, historically violated, exploited, and racialized, continues to produce language, rhythm, and social connection.

Psychoanalysis as conceived in Latin America, therefore, considers the subject within a multiplicity of possibilities. It is a subject not crystallized in universal and predefined models, but rather traversed by a constant process of becoming. In this sense, it is a subject capable of creating its own chain of signifiers, inaugurating unique discursive constructions and taking responsibility for what it produces in its life and in society.

However, this does not mean that popular culture is necessarily emancipatory. Latin American reality itself demonstrates that desire can also be captured by authoritarian, conservative, and violent forms of social organization. The popular subject is equally affected by the contradictions of capitalism, the traces of colonization, and the modes of enjoyment produced by domination. Perhaps it is precisely this tension that makes the Latin American field

so relevant to psychoanalysis: in it, forms of suffering and resistance appear permanently intertwined.

Another extremely powerful aspect of this work is the way Jairo Gallo Acosta invites us to think about popular culture not only as an aesthetic manifestation, but also as an ethical and political possibility for existence. This perspective is also evident when the author addresses fashion, clothing such as Andean skirts, and the processes of “dressing, adorning oneself, and resisting.” Dressing ceases to be something superficial and becomes a symbolic construction of the body and subjectivity.

Clothing, adornments, stitching, and fabrics thus become ways of re-inscribing historically excluded subjects within the social field. At this point, the book carries out an important theoretical operation: it shifts psychoanalysis from an excessively abstract place to bring it closer to the concrete lives of Latin American peoples.

In this sense, salsa, carnival, Andean skirts, marginalized bodies, and even so-called social “waste” emerge as expressions of subjectivities that insist on living. Here, there is an important connection to the Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition, especially when the author demonstrates that the subject does not constitute a finished, complete essence, but rather something that is formed precisely from lack, incompleteness, and antagonism.

Perhaps that is why Latin American popular culture appears in this book as a testament to individuals who, faced with the impossibility of a dignified life, need to invent

creative ways of existing. It is not about idealizing precarity or transforming social suffering into aesthetic beauty, but about recognizing that, even in the face of the historical ruins produced by colonization and peripheral capitalism, collective forms of expressing desire and living continue to emerge.

Therefore, Poppsychoanalysis is not just a book about psychoanalysis. It is also a book about culture, politics, art, resistance, and everyday life. Jairo Gallo Acosta demonstrates that it is impossible to understand the Latin American unconscious without considering the intersecting factors of colonization, racialization, popular religiosity, music, violence, and the multiple forms of social exclusion that constitute our historical reality.

Throughout these pages, we perceive that the author's central tenet lies in the human capacity to create possibilities for life even in the face of precarity. Therefore, an ethic of political resistance permeates the entire work. This resistance is not only expressed through direct confrontation, but also through the everyday invention of new ways of existing, desiring, loving, singing, dressing, and building community.

Perhaps that is precisely the great merit of this book: to remind us that something still exists in our communities that has not been completely colonized. A remnant that persists in producing desire, culture, and hope. However, this remnant is not outside the realm of historical contradictions; it arises precisely amidst the conflicts, antagonisms, and impasses that characterize the Latin American experience.

It is precisely at this point that psychoanalysis, when it commits to listening to Latin American reality, can cease

to be just a clinical theory and become an ethical and political praxis.

In times marked by the advance of neoliberal individualism, the commodification of life, and the constant attempt to transform individuals into disposable objects of contemporary capitalism, Poppsychoanalysis emerges as an intellectually sophisticated and politically forceful work. Jairo Gallo Acosta demonstrates, with theoretical rigor and clinical refinement, that psychoanalysis can still occupy a vital place when it engages with the culture, history, and concrete contradictions of Latin American peoples.

This book brings together Freud, Lacan, art, music, politics, popular culture, and social criticism without reducing thought to a sterile academic exercise. Its writing possesses the rare ability to transform theory into lived experience, bringing psychoanalytic reflection closer to the real conflicts that permeate everyday life.

Throughout these pages, we perceive not only a psychoanalyst, but also a Latin American intellectual attentive to the pains, impasses, desires, and inventions of his time. Poppsychoanalysis listens to what has often been silenced by institutions, colonial discourses, and traditional forms of knowledge production.

Perhaps that's why the book is so powerful: because it contains a psychoanalysis that isn't afraid to engage with the street, with music, with the body, with carnival, with precarity, and with everyday life. A psychoanalysis that understands that the unconscious doesn't exist outside of

history and that Latin American subjectivity cannot be fully understood through universalizing and abstract models.

Professor Jairo Gallo Acosta thus offers us an original and essential work. A book that not only broadens the horizons of contemporary psychoanalysis, but also reaffirms the intellectual potential of Latin America as a legitimate site for theoretical, clinical, and political production.

Perhaps it is precisely in the writings of Latin American writers, artists, and psychoanalysts that psychoanalysis still retains some of its critical and insurgent vocation, resisting its growing elitism, institutional neutralization, and conservative domestication.

Nadir Lara Junior

Curitiba, Brazil, May 2026

Presentation

A secular psychoanalysis, a people's psychoanalysis, a psychoanalysis

When we say “lay analysis,” we often refer to a question of jurisdiction: the tension between the jurisdiction of the state and the internal authorization of each psychoanalytic school, which determines who can perform analysis and whether a professional diploma is necessary to listen to the unconscious, without realizing that the word itself contains the answer before we even ask the question. Lay comes from the Greek laikós, “of the people,” derived from laós: people, multitude, assembled crowd. Before meaning “non-clerical,” before being opposed to the priest or the specialist, lay simply meant this: belonging to the people. So when Freud, in 1926, published “Die Frage der Laienanalyse” (The Question of Lay Analysis), the question of lay analysis, which in Spanish we tend to translate, with revealing modesty, as “profane analysis,” and defended there the right of someone who is not a doctor to practice psychoanalysis, he was literally defending a psychoanalysis of the people. Etymology is not a scholarly game; it is the memory of language preserving what usage is quick to forget.

It is important to place that gesture of 1926 within a broader context, because it was not an isolated episode but a position Freud had already established eight years earlier in

Budapest, two months before the Armistice: the poor have as much right as the rich to benefit from psychoanalysis. From this emerged the project of a “psychotherapy for the people” that was to maintain, without compromising, the rigor of “psychoanalysis proper.” It was not an abridged version, reserved for those who could not afford the full version, but the same approach, without class distinction, for anyone who needed it. This is the formula that gives title to one of my articles, and it is also, I dare say, the organizing principle that underpins this book, even though the book does not explicitly cite it and even though, as I have carefully verified by searching the text for the term, the word “layperson” is never used. It wasn't necessary for him to do so: Jairo Gallo Acosta arrives at the same position by another route, that of the pop(ular), and the reader will find in these pages, without the Greek etymological framework, the same underlying argument, formulated in another theoretical language: that the unconscious does not recognize territorial or economic jurisdiction, that there is no neighborhood, however precarious its institutional status, where the subject fails to produce a discourse that deserves to be heard with the same rigor as in any middle-class consulting room.

I read Poppsychoanalysis with a suspicion that, as I progressed, transformed into recognition: the suspicion that I was reading, from another cultural context and another hemisphere, a variant of the argument I myself have maintained for years in clinical practice since my beginnings in the Golden Block of Philadelphia, in an office set up in

what had been a funeral home, where the classic couch was replaced by a metal chair facing a window and with its back to me, because the face-to-face model was as impractical for my Latino patients as it was for me. Every time I share this experience in a professional setting, the same reflective incredulity arises, as if it were taken for granted that impoverished sectors cannot afford to have an unconscious. Gallo Acosta opens his book by quoting Freud in another register, that of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, where the smallest detail methodologically precedes the great event, to arrive, by that way, at a convergent conclusion: that psychoanalysis left the hospitals and couches for the street from its first institutional step, and that returning it there does not constitute a concession but a restitution of its original program.

It's worth pausing to consider the title before delving into the book itself, because the entire program is already condensed there. Poppsychoanalysis is not a gratuitous play on words: it brings together two meanings of "pop" that Gallo Acosta himself claims as a single operation. There is Warhol's pop, who, in the tradition of Marcel Duchamp's *readymade*, transformed an ordinary, mass-produced Campbell's soup can into a museum object and demonstrated that the most trivial consumer surface could sustain the same gaze previously reserved exclusively for high art; and there is the pop(ular), the people and what the people do with what they have at hand. The book argues, with Warhol on one side and the neighborhood on the other, that both meanings refer

to the same legitimizing operation: to constitute as an object of rigorous listening that which high culture and classical psychoanalysis, no less, had decided beforehand lacked the necessary conditions to be heard. This is where the word "secular" itself comes into play, complementing the author's neologism: if "pop" names the aesthetic operation of dignifying the everyday, "secular" names its technical and older counterpart, the right of the everyday to be treated without institutional mediation. Pop psychoanalysis and secular analysis, each in its own register, state the same proposition: that access to the unconscious of the people does not require prior authorization to be heard with the same status as any other.

The author, citing García Canclini, argues that what is popular is not what the people consume but what the people do with what they consume: a methodological distinction that organizes the entire clinical analysis that follows. The first chapter puts this to the test with music: this Other kind of enjoyment that musical experience provides, resistant to meaning, closer to ecstasy than to understanding, finds its exemplary case in salsa. Born in the Colombian Caribbean, salsa became a global phenomenon in New York's Latin Harlem: "El Barrio," with a capital B, the same name that in Philadelphia designates the neighborhood where I practiced, and which Gallo Acosta reads in Lacanian terms, as a point of convergence that brought together Cuban, Puerto Rican, and African American rhythms to constitute, through the force of drums and trombones, a

subject that American institutions refused to recognize as such. Salsa does not pre-exist, the author writes, but rather produces existence in the act of dancing it. It should be added that, a little further north and a little later, that same operation made it possible for someone like me to install not a couch but a metal chair strategically placed to recreate the Freudian consulting room scene in my dilapidated office in that same Barrio, with the conviction that Freud, had he known how to dance salsa, would have endorsed the argument.

Because there was a historical period—and this book insists that we must not forget history—when psychoanalysis did not question its popular appeal. In the interwar period, nearly twenty free clinics opened in Europe—in Vienna, Berlin, London, and Budapest—aimed at providing treatment to students, artisans, laborers, domestic workers, and schoolteachers, offering psychoanalysis free of charge, modeled after municipal educational institutions. Helen Deutsch spoke then of a “spirit of reform”; Max Eitington described Freud’s proposal as “half prophecy, half challenge.” And in 1945, in the basement of an Episcopal church in the same Harlem neighborhood where salsa was born, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham, novelist Richard Wright, and journalist Earl Brown founded the Lafargue Clinic, named after an Afro-Cuban physician, Marx’s son-in-law, author of **The Right to Be Lazy**, with the explicit purpose of establishing a psychoanalytic practice capable of dismantling the psychological effects of racial segregation. It

closed in 1959, pressured by McCarthyism. This book is heir to that institutional genealogy, of grassroots clinics, of analysts who saw themselves as agents of social transformation, even though it doesn't explicitly cite it: the most effective genealogies don't always require explicit reference to be transmitted.

The second chapter, dedicated to clothing, and the third, on death, the totemic feast, and the relationship between the sacred and the profane, share the same methodological approach: they begin with an object that classical theory would treat as anecdotal: the Andean skirt, the nameless body of an unidentified Colombian, to demonstrate that it is precisely there that the question of the subject is at stake. The skirt, writes Gallo Acosta, is not fabric but an act of investiture, covering, and resistance, a procedure of reinscribing in the social field a body that history had deemed excluded. It becomes almost self-evident, once formulated, that a study of clothing will inevitably lead to subjectivity: we dress, after all, to assume the body we inhabit as one wears a suit; we recognize ourselves in the mirror before acquiring language, and we continue to dress long after we have ceased to believe in what that language allows us to express.

The third chapter tackles the most difficult subject: death not as an abstract limit but as an institution, a banquet, a taboo, a legal device. The Freudian totemic feast, that foundational meal that establishes community through the

devouring of the father, is read here in relation to the profane register of Colombian life, where the sacred and the profane cease to be opposing categories and become a single substance in motion, as occurs in carnival. From there, without forced transition, the book moves to its most incisive clinical development: the NNs, the bodies left unidentified by Colombian violence, considered from the perspective of the passage from the Name-of-the-Father to the proper name. This is a clinical study of lack, and for anyone who has worked with the suspended mourning of a community, these dead who remain unmourned because no one yet knows how to name them, constitute a difficult development to read without registering the precise weight of what there continues to remain unnamed.

This brings me to the fourth chapter, the one that gives the book its most explicitly political edge, and which opens with a question I have also posed in another institutional context: Is psychoanalysis a white privilege? Gallo Acosta answers in the affirmative, and not only with respect to who can be analyzed but also to who can analyze: he describes a “golden triangle”—Bogotá, Medellín, Cali—where the ideal of Colombian psychoanalytic whiteness is forged, and a tacit hierarchy according to which proximity to Paris functions as a criterion for professional legitimation. To name this mechanism, he coins his own neologism, “epistederal disavowal,” an analytical category intended to consider how race, class, and gender enter, or do not enter, into clinical practice. The page could have been written, with

a different vocabulary and institutional geography, to describe American psychoanalysis, also confined to its own ghetto, that of the affluent, while in much of Latin America psychoanalysis was practiced, and in many places continues to be practiced, with patients from all social strata, in public hospital clinics, with fees on a sliding scale. Bogotá and Philadelphia, the Golden Triangle and the Golden Bloc, each with its own illusory gilding: two ghettos that ignore each other and that, read together, cease to seem like local accidents and reveal themselves as the same structure of exclusion repeated in two languages and two different institutional regimes.

The chapter also opens, without mincing words, to the question of identity as a fetish, and here the author invokes Freud's letter expressing his reservations about the Zionist project. He then reads, with Jacqueline Rose and Delphine Horvilleur, antisemitism and its identity-based responses as manifestations of the same economy of emptiness that is attempted to be filled through an ideal. The fundamental question—what does a subject, or a people, do when the Other denies them the right to exist?—runs through the entire book, from salsa to the unknown, and Gallo Acosta deserves credit, however uncomfortable and necessary, for not separating the consulting room from history.

Let's pause for a moment longer on this strategy that reveals a stance toward politics, because I had to consider it myself in the presence of a patient. I'll call her, as I did then,

Ramona: a Dominican woman, dark-skinned, who arrived one afternoon furious because some Black neighbors had moved in just a few steps from her house, either unaware, or aware with excessive clarity, that in her own country of origin, she herself had been systematically mistaken for Haitian, to the point of never being able to leave her home without an identity card proving otherwise. She hated in her neighbor what she feared being. Toni Morrison puts it precisely: we are one and the same race, the human race, so the need to construct an "other" confirms the normality of the one who constructs it, and losing one's racialized status is equivalent to losing the difference one treasures as symbolic capital. Winnicott, for his part, had the merit of admitting that the analyst also hates, and that this "objective" hatred, recognized and not acted upon, is the condition that allows one to tolerate without destroying. Pops psychoanalysis works on exactly that same aspect; it is the same symptom that I heard in the Philadelphia office, with a different accent and skin, and that Gallo Acosta hears in Bogotá: the rejection of otherness itself, as an expression of hatred of the other as a displaced form, almost always, of hatred of one's own structural exclusion.

The relevance of this book is not merely theoretical. I write this after a pandemic that, in the US, affected the Latino population with a statistically brutal disproportion: almost three times more infections per capita than among the white population, and considerably higher hospitalization and death rates. This sad reality only confirmed what we

already knew through other means: that health, mental or physical, continues to be distributed according to the same map of structural inequality. On that map, a book that argues that the working class has a right to the unconscious is not a rhetorical exercise. It is, once again, the same wager that Freud formulated in Budapest, renewed for a different geography and a different institutional regime: that clinical rigor does not allow for class distinctions, that analytic listening cannot be rationed.

It is also worth noting the institutional setting where this book originated: not a university press or a multinational publisher, but a small, independent publishing house in Bogotá. There is a coherence between the place of publication and what that place expresses, between the medium and the message—to use a phrase that has become somewhat worn, but which is not always true and is worth making explicit.

To conclude, I return to the word with which I began: Layperson. Freud defended lay analysis in 1926, appealing to a technical reason: that the exploration of the truth of the unconscious is not the exclusive property of the medical establishment. But the word he chose, without deliberately intending to, stated something more: that an analysis practiced by and for anyone is, in its Greek root, an analysis of the people rather than an analysis devoid of credentials. Poppsychoanalysis didn't need that etymological genealogy to arrive at the same conclusion: the popular, in Gallo

Acosta's formulation, is neither folklore nor aesthetic consolation, but the place where the unconscious continues to produce discourse, even though no institution authorizes it to do so. But the etymology, once laid out, suits it well, like a skirt, like a salsa rhythm: it fits because, without knowing it, it was tailor-made for it.

If Bogotá and Philadelphia, the neighborhood and El Barrio, the Lafargue Clinic and this book you hold in your hands share anything, it is the conviction—so fundamental it's disconcerting that it still needs reiterating—that working-class communities do not lack an unconscious. Like anyone else, they possess one that insists on producing discourse through whatever means it finds available: in a dream, in a slip of the tongue, in a drumbeat, in a hand-sewn skirt, in a name that violence stole from them and that some institution, someday, will have the obligation to restore.

Poppsychoanalysis is, without formulating it in these terms, a secular analysis in the oldest and truest sense of the word: a psychoanalysis of the people, produced by someone from the people, so that the people can listen to themselves.

Patricia Gherovici, Philadelphia, August 2026

Introduction

We are pop, or rather, what we do on a daily basis is pop(ular). There are precedents in the investigation of the popular and the everyday dating back to the very beginnings of psychoanalysis: Freud, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (192a), did something revolutionary for his time: he took psychoanalysis out of hospitals and couches and into the streets. In doing so, he transformed the trivial into something meaningful, demonstrating that we are strangers in our own house, that is, in our own minds.

Freud proposed that the researcher should not seek grand events; what is crucial lies in minute details. In everyday life, the object of study is found in these minute details. These divine details, where the most transcendental aspects of the unconscious are not found in grand narratives, but in the cracks of the everyday. The unconscious is always seeking a way to express itself; details are formations of the unconscious.

The French psychoanalyst Miller speaks of clinical subtleties; in Brazil, Contardo Calligaris emphasized the importance of biographical details that may not seem "important" but that define a person's destiny. The important thing is to find what doesn't fit the diagnosis, rather than the diagnosis itself.

Details, not only in the individual but also in society, are the subject's anchors to reality; they account for both the

singular and the collective fantasy. Furthermore, we do not relate to "reality" or to others as if we were monolithic blocks, but rather through fragments: the objects a in Lacanian theory.

For example, for Freud, dreams are the "royal road" to the unconscious, but this road isn't paved with grand announcements, but rather with seemingly insignificant details. In dream analysis, he applies the same rule of "divine details": what the dreamer considers most insignificant is often the point where censorship failed and allowed the truth to slip through.

This is the essence of the "evidential paradigm" in psychoanalysis: Freud doesn't look for the "grand crime scene," but rather the fingerprint the criminal unwittingly left behind. What is dismissed as insignificant is often the most revealing. In psychoanalysis, the patient's grand pronouncements often say nothing. The important information slips through in slips of the tongue, Freudian slips, and dream details. These are the "clues" of a psychic reality whose traces must be followed.

Just as Andy Warhol elevated consumer culture to the status of art, the idea here is to elevate popular culture to the status of a subject of research. Warhol demonstrated that a Campbell's soup can or a media personality possessed sufficient dignity to be hung in MoMA; therefore, our everyday practices—what we eat, or how we greet each other—have sufficient substance to be analyzed with scientific or academic rigor.

What we do every day is not passive. By investigating popular culture, we discover that people not only consume culture, but also produce it. Popular culture is not what people consume, but what people do with what they consume.

The Mexican writer Monsiváis demonstrated that aesthetics is a class struggle. "Culture is the set of ways in which people recognize themselves while surviving." For him, pop culture was the great "stage of the unconscious" where society projected its repressed desires, its historical traumas, and its fantasies of modernity. While some intellectuals view the popular, the everyday, and the commonplace with disdain and contempt, for Monsiváis it was the sacred text where the true history of society could be read, as it identified processes of resistance and desire.

The power of popular culture lies in the fact that there is always something that escapes the control of those in power. This "residue" that the system cannot label is, for the historian De Certeau, the equivalent of society's unconscious. Many believe that popular culture is only folklore or antiquity. Canclini says no: popular culture is what people do today with what they have at hand. This means that the "popular unconscious" is not an archive of old myths, but a living, current production. He also argues that when people consume—music, clothes, soccer—they are not only spending money, they are constructing identity and sending messages. Popular consumption is a way of saying, "This is who I am."

Popularity stems not from its essence, but from its political stance. It is that which "high culture" or official science—sometimes including traditional psychoanalysis—has dismissed as "folklore" or "superstition."

It is important to listen to and read that "popular" knowledge excluded from institutions; hence, psychoanalysis has an ethical duty to listen to this popular wisdom that psychiatry, psychology, and the sciences have ignored. Investigating popular culture in Colombia compels us to take psychoanalysis out of its elitist bubble. One cannot understand the unconscious of a Colombian subject without knowing their music, their religiosity, their relationship with violence, and their capacity for consumption.

Psychoanalytic practice involves psychoanalyzing popular culture, because the symptom is always a creative response to the culture that permeates our lives. And like the symptom in psychoanalysis, it is not something to be eliminated, but rather to be heard. Consequently, Martín-Barbero argues that popular sectors are not passive recipients of culture—as some classical Freudians believed regarding the "mass"—thus, both the symptom and popular culture respond as forms of denunciation, but also as creative ways of living.

Investigating popular culture from a psychoanalytic perspective is not a detached academic exercise: it is a political and clinical act. It is about restoring to the subject the capacity not to be spoken by their culture, but to begin speaking about their own culture, insofar as popular culture

is the arena where desires, enjoyments, and psychic reality are played out.

According to Žižek, popular culture offers us small doses of enjoyment; he explains that the popular allows us to "enjoy" our own subjection. There is a hidden pleasure in following the norm or in rebelling in ways the system has already foreseen. Žižek turns Marx's phrase on its head. Today, the popular subject is cynical: they know perfectly well that the system is unjust or that advertising lies to them, but they act as if they don't. It is the mechanism of denial ("I know, but still..."). The popular is the stage where we deploy this cynicism. This has led me to consider the place of the popular in my inquiries from psychoanalytic practice, from the books: *Polis and Psyche: Essays on Political Theory and Psychoanalysis* (2017); *Psychoanalysis and Subalternity: Art, Popular Culture, and Subversion* (2020), to my latest book: *For a Variegated Psychoanalysis. Navigating the Pandemic by Making Use of It* (2021); *Love, Emptiness, and the Feminine* (2023); *A Cool Psychoanalysis* (2025). In addition to numerous book chapters and articles published in various venues. This book is a continuation of those other writings, where psychoanalysis continues to serve me in accounting for the pop(ular), poppsychoanalysis, a new neologism.

1.

Music and Psychoanalysis

1.1. The other enjoyment of music: joy

In truth, if it weren't for the music, there would be more reasons to go crazy.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky,

Joy, like love, is feminine; it is a not-all. Faced with this incompleteness, we can take the path of impotent lamentation, or we can take the path of "doing something" with this impossibility. The latter would bring a kind of joy born from the negativity of the whole, so joy is only the possibility in the face of limitation, of the impossibility of total enjoyment. It is there that music can appear. Music is, perhaps, a sublime response to this impossibility of the "all." Unable to grasp a note, we are left to enjoy what emerges between the limits of the notes. By skirting the void, music gives rhythm to that edge. It transforms the "impossibility of total enjoyment" into a desire that is renewed in every measure.

Joy arises when we stop fighting against emptiness and begin to play with it. If total enjoyment is impossible, joy is the glimmer that remains at the edges of that limit. That's why we can't know everything about music; in fact, it seems the only thing we know is that we can't know about it—there's no single meaning that encompasses it

completely. Its joy lies precisely in this impossible deciphering, a meaning that allows us to revel in it.

There exists a phallic jouissance that seeks to order and complete everything through meaning. Within this jouissance, everything can be understood and explained. Music is not there to be explained by meaning but to be enjoyed through a different kind of jouissance. Phallic jouissance and this other jouissance obey two different logics, and music points more toward this other jouissance than to the phallic one.

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the other jouissance points to the subject's most singular aspect, whereas phallic jouissance points to a universalizing (all-encompassing) claim, closer to the mystical ecstasy felt in the body, yet about which little can be said—a jouissance that remains enigmatic, even to the one who experiences it. There is something beyond words that cannot be said, nor can it be recounted; it is the incalculable, the undecipherable.

François Regnault, a French philosopher, proposes that the enjoyment of music lies in "the pleasure of deciphering." Echoing Lacan's idea of joyful knowledge as opposed to sadness, music can evoke the joy that comes from not being complete or whole, a fall as Lacan describes it.

The opposite of sadness, gay knowledge, is a virtue. A virtue does not absolve anyone of original sin—as everyone knows. The virtue of manifesting what it consists of, what I designate as gay knowledge, is its example: it is

not a matter of understanding, of nibbling at meaning, but of shaving it off as much as possible without it binding to this virtue, enjoying the deciphering, which implies that gay knowledge ultimately produces nothing but the fall, the return to sin (Lacan, 1993, p.101).

If music evokes anything in us, it's that sense of disconnection from any fixed meaning, yet it still captivates us with its melodies and tones; indeed, joy emerges from this very lack of understanding. Regnault's idea is similar to Didier Weill's, for whom music would offer an answer to an unconscious, unformulated, and unformulated question. The joy of music lies in its transcendence of meaning; that is the essence of music, hence its power, its strength—something that makes us human.

1.2. Salsa doesn't exist, but it makes you exist when you dance.

There's a rhythm that originated in the Colombian Caribbean and became known worldwide in the streets of Latin Harlem in New York; that rhythm is salsa, the embodiment of that joy born from negativity. It's the art of making something vibrant out of impossibility, displacement, and pain.

Salsa originated in the Latino neighborhood of Harlem in New York (El Barrio), or rather, the term "salsa" was coined to encompass a myriad of Caribbean and Antillean rhythms, such as Cuban rhythms like son cubano, guaguancó, guajira, boogaloo, mambo, montuno, cha-cha-chá, guaracha, and descarga; the Puerto Rican genres of

plena and bomba; and the African American genres of jazz and blues, among others. This makes salsa a hybrid genre. The signifier "salsa" has been a Lacanian focal point, as it encompasses other signifiers and was the signifier produced by "Latino" subjects in the United States—those who didn't exist before but achieved visibility through musical rhythms. Singing and dancing were their ways of saying "we're here," without denying their struggles on the streets of that foreign country. Therefore, salsa is a subjective, street-based Latino production in the United States, which later spread throughout Latin America. Salsa like Latinos doesn't exist, but they still exist, they still play, and they still make people dance.

Spanish Harlem in the 1960s was a place of immigration, but also of exclusion, a place associated with poverty and crime, a "dirty" place that, for many, offered no future in the uprootedness. Salsa was the creation that emerged from transforming exclusion and displacement into music. Marginalization became rhythms and melodies for dancing in the neighborhood, on the street corner, so the force of the trombone was added to the convergence of jazz and Cuban son.

Salsa is a signifier, and like all signifiers in Lacanian theory, it means nothing in itself. Salsa was the joyful invention of Johnny Pacheco and Jerry Masucci in the late 1960s, a fusion of many Cuban and Puerto Rican rhythms in the Latino neighborhoods of New York. It is the combination (hence the name salsa) of Latino power, of the barrio, of how to survive the harsh conditions of life in this part of the

world. Salsa doesn't exist in itself, but therein lies its strength, since each person brings it into being from their own unique Caribbean, Latino, and also subjective perspective. Listening to its rhythmic diversity to the sound of drums, trumpets, timbales, and other instruments, salsa comes alive in every dancer; its lyrics are the expression of a way of life, a feeling that calls itself Latino and Caribbean. Salsa is powerful from its non-existence, since it does not refer to one rhythm but to multiple ones; it is not an essence, because in it there is always something to be done, like the subject of the Lacanian unconscious; its strength lies in what can never be more than what it can become.

Salsa doesn't exist, but in the same way that Latinos in New York became visible and came into being through Cuban and Puerto Rican rhythms, they managed to make salsa and their experiences on the streets of that city a signifier that encompassed other signifiers. Our Latin thing, even though it doesn't exist, keeps us going, making existence possible.

Music unfolds in a discourse; in this case, music is structured in a social Other in the best manner of Lacanian psychoanalysis: "the unconscious is structured like a language."

The musical genre of salsa could not have been born anywhere other than New York, and not just any place, but the heart of Latin New York. There, in that corner of Latin Harlem, "El Barrio," before words existed, there was the drum, the timbales, the congas, and the trumpets—a blend of

blues, jazz, Antillean and Caribbean music, and the instrument that, for some, gave salsa its very existence: the trombone. This musical instrument transforms the melody of a subversive rhythm that breaks with the established order, and through dance, it shows that Latinos live despite adverse circumstances. Salsa is born from precarity and marginalization (the *barrio*, migration, poverty, and violence). However, unlike other musical genres that wallow in the lament of powerlessness, salsa operates by taking tragedy and turning it into dance. They sing about pain so that it doesn't turn into suffering, with a smile in their voice, in the best style of Héctor Lavoe or Ismael Rivera. It is joy in the face of existence's limits.

The case of Héctor Lavoe is very telling of what we want to propose here. Known as “the singer of singers,” his figure embodies the vulnerability that the singer himself, far from hiding it, displays. In the song titled “El Cantante” (The Singer), he acknowledges that his joy is a service to others while he lives in solitude. However, he doesn't remain in “impotent lament.” By singing of his own tragedy, he can do something with his pain. It is joy arising not in spite of the limitation, but thanks to it. It is the recognition that, since everything is impossible, all that remains is to laugh at that impossibility. Héctor Lavoe lends his voice to name the Real. When improvising, the singer doesn't repeat the established script, but rather invents something new with his own pain: “The sonero is the one who dips his spoon into the broth of routine... he is the one who breaks the order to speak his truth, a truth that sometimes hurts but that, when

sung, is liberated.” (Pagano, 2018, p. 134). That invention is what could be called in Lacanian psychoanalysis the *sinthome*: that which keeps him alive and generates joy in the listener.

César Pagano (2018), in his book “ *The Empire of Salsa*, ” says that salsa is an “embrace of adversity.” This embrace reminds us that joy is not the absence of limits, but the dance that occurs right at their edge: Salsa is danceable melancholy... It is the lament that becomes a challenge. The Caribbean person doesn’t dance because they are happy; they dance so as not to die of sadness, they dance to exorcise lack (Pagano, 2018, p. 21).

The joy of salsa isn't all joy; being "danceable melancholy," it points to the impossibility of total enjoyment, giving rise to a supplementary pleasure, a "beyond." In the face of tragedy, rhythm emerges. We dance "so as not to die of sadness." It's not about lamenting the impossibility of filling the void, but about inhabiting that space, listening, dancing; it's not complaining about the difficulty of living, but about "exorcising" it through the body and the flavor.

Salsa is the musical reinterpretation of tragedy; "life gives you surprises," from the song "Pedro Navaja" by Rubén Blades and Willie Colón, is an acknowledgment of absolute contingency. There is no total order, no perfect plan. The joy here is irony: knowing that fate is capricious and, even so, continuing down the avenue. There, the rhythm that is danced is that of surprise.

The drums that were taken from slaves are the best weapons of cultural resistance, a resistance that refuses to be completely subjugated, to be erased. And that is what Latinos in New York did, Puerto Ricans above all, those who continue to be viewed through a colonial lens in the United States, those who transformed that immigrant place of exclusion, of second-class citizens, into a space for making music. And through these forms of resistance, salsa was invented, a signifier that links other signifiers and allows individuals to situate themselves within a discourse: "Salsa helped to warm and uplift the oppressed and persecuted population." (Pagano, 2018, p. 22). In other words, joy is the direct consequence of having been "denied" by the system.

Salsa is an example of what to do with sonic tension, how to transform this tension into rhythm—the timbales, trombones, trumpets, drums, etc.—transforming that tension into something that not only serves to dance and move, but also to position individuals in the world from a place of exclusion and uprootedness. Knowing how to work with this tension is what Freud always proposed in psychoanalysis: what to do with the unconscious psychic drive.

Salsa doesn't exist as a whole, just like the Other in psychoanalysis, but through the courage of each subject's act of living, we bring it into existence (as a not-quite-whole). That's how salsa is in its non-existence, but each dancer, each salsa lover, brings it into existence when they listen to it. Something similar would be involved in undergoing analysis, because it's a dancing of life, it's making something

out of the void of the real, something that can be the dance of life itself.

2.

Clothing lives

2.1. Invest, cover, resist

There is no one more frivolous than someone who considers fashion something trivial.

José Ortega y Gasset

Valerie Steel (2018) in her book “*Fashion Theory*” suggests that clothing is always a mask, something we put on to show ourselves to others; it is not just something we wear, but we are that something we wear:

Some argue that young people—Goths, for example—dress as monsters to cope with feelings of alienation. Debates tend to focus on whether young people are “sincere” in the identities they create for themselves, or whether these are mere “imposts.” Is the clothing they wear merely a superficial form of “Goth chic”? (Spooner, 2004, p. 168).

Clothing is no less real than the self that places us in the world; both clothing and the self are ways of positioning ourselves in relation to the Other.

However, this paradigm of reflection versus mask seems fallacious. The reasoning that fetishizes “authenticity” overlooks the small detail that clothing can never “reflect” an essential inner self, because that self does not exist. Even when we believe we are being “natural” and

“sincere” to the fullest extent, we are creating a character to the same degree that we would with a Dai Rees mask or if we dressed up as the aliens who have paraded on the runways of the young British designer Gareth Pugh (p. 318).

Clothes don't reveal someone's true personality, for one reason: there is no true inner personality, nothing deep within us that defines who we are. We are what we show ourselves to others and to the Other, and that's another lesson psychoanalysis teaches us: we are superficiality. That's why psychoanalysis isn't a profound psychology, but one of superficialities.

Psychoanalysis, since Freud, has taught us that we are superficial beings, formed by an ego constituted through identifications and strengthened by superegoic ideals. Since Lacan, the ego exists as a psychic instance that is imaginarily produced to give consistency to the body. If we examine the meaning of the word "consistency," we find that it refers to solidity, stability, and cohesion, which implies that the imaginary aspect of the ego is necessary for a subject to situate themselves in the world with stability, and so on. In turn, this psychic instance allows for the connection with the symbolic order (death), which in Lacanian theory constitutes a void that accounts for the ex-sistence of the real: life.



So, dressing up becomes an act of disguising our subjectivity; it's about giving substance to a body that skirts the void of the subject's reality, veiling it through the symbolic order. Or, to put it another way, clothing, by investing a subject, redesigns an existence, giving substance to the body through the opening indicated by the veil of the garment. That's what fashion is about: showing us that we are nothing without a body. Not everything can be covered, but if there's anything we can cover, it's the consistency of the imaginary; hence the function of the veil of the garment.

While we are nothing without a body, this body does not belong to us; the body belongs to the Other. We are the body that the Other points out to us. It is up to each subject to decide how to appropriate their body. Therefore, clothing—dressing—fulfills a primary function: to serve as an (imaginary) support for the subject and to position themselves in a (symbolic) world in order to account for the existence of life. Theoretically, dressing is not a trivial act because it is necessary for living. It is not simply putting on clothes, just as fashion is not something futile or banal. Rather, it is important to consider that bodily consistency is not determined solely by the imaginary and what the Other reflects back to us of our own image, because there is a symbolic and real dimension to consistency, something that is knotted and linked in the same knot.

For the above we will use some cases where fashion is part of the real of life and death has a place, instances linked to the body as death and life, just as with the

Borromean knot shown by the teaching of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Catalina Azuero is a designer who owned a fashion boutique in northern Bogotá. In 2018, her brother, who had lived on the streets for years, was found dead, a victim of the so-called "false positives," extrajudicial killings often perpetrated by the Colombian state's armed forces. This event profoundly impacted the Bogotá-born designer's life, leading her to change her name to Diamantina Arco Iris and relocate her boutique to the Santa Fe district of Bogotá, an area known for its large homeless population. There, she bought an old house and founded the Amor Real Foundation, which has four projects aimed at helping sex workers, the trans community, the homeless, and migrants.

With this same drive, she created the Rediseñamos Foundation, where she uses embroidery and haute couture as a tool to give those marginalized by society a new opportunity in life. The path has not been easy, but she remains strong and determined in her work (El Universal, 2021).

One of the things this designer does is collect blankets from homeless people. The foundation gives them money for them, offering them a new blanket made of a different material. The blankets received from these homeless individuals are then used to make coats that are sold to support the foundation.

This process of transforming a disposable blanket into a garment that serves as a fashion item is a matter of

exchange, as André Breton suggests: salvation is found through waste. Salvation of whom, we might ask? Of the subject. The subject is a remnant (of the Other's inconsistency) that can become waste (neoliberal capitalism shows us how any of us can become pure waste) or something that can constitute an existence, a life that forms a bond with another. At this point, art and fashion allow us to generate an aesthetic of waste, to sublimate it. When waste is elevated to the dignity of the Thing, it is sublimated; that is, it can form a bond with someone else.

To move from the waste where a subject can be situated, from nothingness to a remnant capable of creatively transforming itself to enable life. And this is also the case of the artist Jaime Ávila, who transforms the rags of these inhabitants into aesthetic garments that can position these subjects not as mere waste, but as subjects who can occupy a place as such.

Jaime Ávila showed us a street permanently inhabited by individuals who cover themselves in exuberant rags to mark their difference. In *Life is a Catwalk*, the street dwellers, with their attire, exercise the right to occupy a place in that transient territory and try to construct a precarious intimacy in a corner with their clothes; they try to construct a place where they can live being increasingly dirtier than the day before or where they can eat what they collect and live at night (Gutiérrez, 2007).

As its name suggests, *life* is a catwalk, a way of reconstructing an image where a life worth living can unfold.

It's important to remember that "catwalk" comes from the Italian "Passarella," meaning small bridge, a definition of fashion and art as possible avenues for life's parade. The Latin verb "passare" comes from "passus," meaning to put one foot forward. "Passus" is rooted in "pandere," which in turn means to stretch, open one's arms, extend oneself. So, if life is a catwalk, in this case, despite the homelessness, a life can still unfold.

In *Life Is a Catwalk* I reconstruct the deteriorated image of young drug addicts using the capitalist cliché of fashion magazines as a reference; they, born in the eighties, the time of the great boom of drug trafficking in Colombia and in contrast to the radioactive youth, demonstrated the failure of a system without a future; the title describes the sarcasm and cruelty, it committed the viewer as part of a powerful system that subdues any fragile man (Gutiérrez, 2007).

Fashion as art shows us a way of working with waste, ways of creating a void from an imaginary consistency to account for the reality of life. Lacan (2008), in Seminar XVI, "*From One Other to the Other*," tells us that: "Sublimation is proper to one who knows how to contour that to which the subject supposed to know is reduced" (p. 320). What this subject supposed to know is reduced to is the object a, the waste that accounts for the emptiness of the real through the symbolic dimension of the void. We are all remnants and can become pure waste; we need a place where this remnant can be situated as a subject with the possibility of a life, where we can do something with the symbolic dimension of death,

something other than simply dying. Art, like fashion, can be those places where a subject can give themselves an imaginary consistency in order to live. Even situated in that place of pure waste, there are always possibilities for a life, for investing ourselves in order to live.

Dressing is a political act; fashion is a way of expressing subjectivity and reveals how a subject positions themselves in the world. Wherever a body is clothed, it is invested with something; this is why clothing can be understood as a form of cultural writing, where subjects not only wear something, but are what they wear. Clothing is the veil of the imaginary, that which gives consistency to the body, as Lemoine-Luccioni (2003) tells us. Thus, in every era, we can understand subjectivity through what people wear, through those who dress, through what they are invested with. As Freud tells us in his text "*A Demonic Neurosis in the Seventeenth Century*":

We expect something similar regarding the neurotic illnesses of earlier centuries, and this will indeed happen, provided we are prepared to recognize them under labels different from those of our neuroses today. It should not surprise us that the neuroses of those early times appeared in demonological garb, since those of our apsychological age appear in hypochondriacal garb, disguised as organic diseases (Freud, 1992b, p. 73).

Dressing, adorning oneself, are paths, ways to access the subject's subjectivity, the place where they are located in reality, but also a way to access the unconscious; clothing is

structured with a language, dressing is part of daily life, hence it is also a social and political act:

Every change in the usual way of dressing, every small oversight (for example, an undone button) and every principle of nakedness want to express something that the owner of the suit does not wish to say directly and of which, being unaware of it, he would not know, in most cases, how to say anything (Freud, 1981, p. 877).

The dress reveals the nakedness of the body while simultaneously covering it; dressing shows us this aspect of the subject in relation to himself and others, hence its political and social character.

Clothing is the way the body shows its relationship with language. Dressing is a way of saying whether that relationship has failed or not; it is a way in which the subject represents subjection or foreignness with respect to the signifier (Bourband, 2009).

2.2. What is a garment in Freudian psychoanalytic theory?

The body itself is a garment from the moment we are born; without this garment, there would be no possibility of a human body. But this first body, this first bodily garment, must be invested. According to the Royal Spanish Academy dictionary, to invest is to confer a dignity or important position. This relates to granting, conferring, bestowing, or honoring something or someone. It is clothing that gives this body a character of investiture, that gives it a place in the world, and it is here that Freud sees something to highlight. In his new introductory lectures on psychoanalysis, in the

subchapter on femininity, he gives the act of weaving and braiding a place of creation: “It is believed that women have made few contributions to the discoveries and inventions of cultural history, but they are perhaps the inventors of a technique: that of braiding and weaving” (Freud, 1992c, p. 122). While Freud's explanation of this invention of the feminine (beyond women) is curious—equating beauty with weaving—the important thing here is the feminine invention itself: braiding, weaving, which has more to do with how the social is constituted, from a fabric.

Making threads into a border is what can be done not only by a body as a subject but also by a social body; weaving is making borders, it is a know-how with emptiness that makes it possible for bodies and subjects to be linked in that fabric, to constitute collectives, to interweave the social.

There are the seamstresses of the social bond, those who with their actions weave and repair what is broken, those who create a place for the excluded; the weaving welcomes, houses, and makes a place for the subject.

2.3. To dress in pollera: the pollera as a way of investing the excluded

Peruvian fashion designer Carla Quispe has reclaimed the Andean pollera, giving this garment a place in urban Peruvian contexts—a bold move in a culture that is exclusionary and racist toward anything associated with mestizo identity. Wearing a pollera signifies a specific place of wearability. Quispe has transformed this dress, “la pollera,” into a symbol of identity distinct from that of the

excluded mestizo, using it as a canvas to redefine its role in Peruvian culture.

Fashion designer Qarla Quispe in her Warmichi skirt workshop



Note. Adapted from 'Warmichic', fashion comes to skirts with this brand, by K. Gines, 2017, Trome. (image enhanced with Gemeni)

Quispe dignified an ancestral garment and gave it a place in the context of the Peruvian capital (Lima), making the pollera not only something worn by cholos in the highlands, but also something that could be worn in the capital itself. Contrary to the process of whitening or whiteness, as the Ecuadorian sociologist Bolívar Echeverría says: “Whiteness—not whiteness—is the pseudo-concrete identity consistency intended to fill the absence of real concreteness that characterizes the identity assigned to human beings by established modernity” (Echeverría, 2010, p. 10).



Museum of International Folk Art. (sf). Qarla Quispe Huamani
Polleras (Skirts) Lima, Peru, 2017 [Photography]. Department of
Cultural Affairs Media Center.

<https://media.newmexicoculture.org/photo-library/event/file/detail/3408/2839/2>

“*Acholate*” becomes a battle cry, helping people find their place instead of denying or excluding them. In a culture like Peru's and in other parts of Latin America, being cholo, villero, naco, or ñero is a place of disrepute, inferiority, and shame, since it's a place no one wants to occupy because it deviates from whiteness.

Through the use of skirts, Quispe seeks to reclaim the grandmothers who arrived in the capital of Lima and had to blend in with the Creole, the mestizo, to try to achieve that ideal of whiteness, but in an act of dignity, Quispe transforms the insult into self-praise, something similar to what the Mexican writer and journalist Monsiváis (2002)

tries to do in his book: “Días de guardar” with the Mexican Naco:

Naco is the insult that one class directs at another and that —a history of the fire years— the offended parties themselves accept and wield as an insult, being perfectly capable of doing so as self-praise, in the same way that German students call themselves “pigs” to sarcastically retaliate against bourgeois aggression (p.120).

Quispe transforms what she calls folk art into art, crossing the boundary that academies, institutes, and art schools have safeguarded to keep the two separate. It is there that the pollera (traditional Andean skirt) goes from being a common object to an artistic one, becoming a garment that adorns a body: that of the indigenous woman, transforming it from a discriminated-against body to a desired one.

In a Lacanian act of self-authorization, the polleras (traditional skirts) for Quispe positioned her as a designer and artist. She was able to transform her work into art not only for others but also for herself. The pollera here becomes an artistic object because it can embody that act of investing, giving it the dignity of an ancestral garment; it allows a woman to invest herself in other ways, and this is an act of resistance, of re-existence. Quispe can create garments to invest herself and others.

The pollera (traditional skirt) functions as a garment that eroticizes a cholo body. By embracing this identity, these women no longer have to deny their ancestry, nor do they have to aspire to be something they can never be, because

they have appropriated and dignified a cholo body. The garment becomes a prosthesis, a substitute for a history that can connect a subject. In this case, the imaginary aspect of the garment, which, by linking to the symbolic, can give rise to a subject in the face of the void of the real, involves a treatment of the body—of a cholo body that is excluded and denied in a racist culture, a cholo body that can be revealed through the veil of the pollera.

3.

Death and life

3.1. Death, the Feast, and the Law

It is evident to me that we will not solve the ultimate secrets of neuroses and psychoses without mythology and cultural history. Embryology goes hand in hand with comparative anatomy, and without the latter, the former is merely a whim of nature whose depths remain uncomprehended. It is a misfortune to have to work alongside the Creator Father. Hence my clashes with 'clinical terminology'." Jung's letter to Freud, December 25, 1909.

"All I am Totem and Taboo" Letter of August 11, 1911 to Ferenczi.

We could say that *Totem and Taboo* is a socio-clinical document. Beyond the pronouncements Lacan made about this text as that "crooked thing" in Seminar 17, "*The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*," that "tall tale," or that "neurotic product" in Seminar 18, "of a discourse that is not a semblance." Fortunately, Lacan himself corrected himself; he wouldn't do so often, but with Totem and Taboo he had to backtrack on things he sometimes said provocatively but mistakenly.

This is the same Lacan who, in Seminar 18, tells us that Freud invented a myth that would serve as the preamble to the very formulas of sexualization that he would develop in Seminars 19, "*Or Worse*," and 20, "*Encore*." We might

think that the myth elaborated in Totem and Taboo allows us to think not only of the whole but also of a not-all.

Despite these pronouncements, Lacan salvages the “truth” of myth, where there is no complete Other, and myth serves as that which corresponds to this “truth.” In this sense, Lacan points out in “ *The Individual Myth of the Neurotic*” that: “The phantasmatic argument presents itself as a small drama, a feat, which is precisely the manifestation of what I call the individual myth of the neurotic” (Lacan, 1993, p. 47).

Totem and Taboo (Freud, 1992d) is situated within the specific context of the emerging controversy with Jung. Although Freud also needed a myth for psychoanalysis, it is with Totem and Taboo that he reintroduces the function of the “father.” The death of the father not only enables enjoyment but also the possibility of its prohibition; where enjoyment cannot be total, the possibility of desire opens up, and it is through the death (murder) of this “father” that Freud finds the importance of upholding the myth of Totem and Taboo.

Death (murder) operates in conjunction with the Lacanian real; the function of the myth of Totem and Taboo is to designate the real as impossible, and this is crucial for psychoanalytic praxis, the articulation of myth and the impossible.

In Seminar 17, “ *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* ,” Lacan proposes a line of thought that moves from myth to structure. This does not imply that structure replaces myth,

but rather that myth is embedded within the structure itself. Furthermore, it allows us to consider the logics of sexuation, as already discussed, and topology, in order to account for a subject's discourse on the Real: the impossibility of the Real, the impossibility of incest, the impossibility of life. In Totem and Taboo, this is indicated by the death of the father. In Myth, the impossibility of structure manifests in the three Lacanian impossibilities: "the sexual relationship does not exist," "the (complete) other does not exist," and "woman does not exist."

Myth designates the impossible, and Totem and Taboo, besides being no exception, is the best example of this for psychoanalysis. There is a void there, and an attempt to do something with it, and that is what myth is about, in the best Lacanian style: trying to write the impossible, "that which never ceases not to be written" (Lacan, 1992).

Totem and Taboo, Freud asks: what is the meaning of the introduction to this festive jubilation, that is, the mourning for the death of the totemic animal? (p. 142). Freud's answer to the contradiction between mourning and celebration is none other than the "ambivalence of feelings" also found in obsessive neuroses, although it could also be said of every individual. Thus, the totemic banquet would be the mode of convergence between mourning and feasting: "The totemic banquet, perhaps the first feast of humanity, would be the repetition and commemorative celebration of that memorable and criminal deed with which so many things began: social organizations, ethical limitations, and religion" (p. 144).

For Freud, the totemic banquet involves a sacrificial rite, and this sacrifice on the altar has been the essential element in the rites of ancient religions, although one could also say the same of current ones, or at least in Christian Catholicism: “Now, Christian communion is fundamentally a new elimination of the father, a repetition of the crime that had to be expiated” (p. 156). Here arises one of those Lacanian pronouncements so often repeated in psychoanalytic circles: “One can do without it on the condition of knowing how to make use of it.” Here, “making use of it” can be used metaphorically or literally, which can also be interpreted by Freud in this text as: “What you have inherited from your parents, acquire it in order to possess it.”

Totem and Taboo shows us that no one can occupy the position of the fully fathered, that if any father can exist, it is the dead—murdered—father. Only in this way can one access a kind of enjoyment that allows desire to emerge through the articulation of this impossible place. The dead father is castrated, meaning that he is not who he truly is, just as his children, gathered at the ritual of the totemic banquet, will remember that they too are castrated.

That is why the brothers, if they wanted to live together, had no alternative but to erect—perhaps after overcoming serious quarrels—the prohibition of incest, with which they all at the same time renounced the women they longed for and for whose sake, above all, they had eliminated the father (Freud, 1992d, p.146).

The death—the murder—of the mythical father is nothing other than the limit, not only for that father himself,

but for all his children, and the banquet is the ritual that reminds us that that place cannot be occupied by any of them:

No one could obtain, nor had the right to obtain, that perfection of power of the father, which, nevertheless, everyone wanted to attain. Thus, over long periods, the resentment against the father, who had striven to accomplish the feat, could subside, and the longing for him could grow; and an ideal could be born whose content was the fullness of power and the unlimitedness of the primordial father once fought against, as well as the readiness to submit (Freud, S. *Totem and Taboo*, p.150).

3.2. The totemic banquet as a sacrificial feast

What is sacrificed? First of all, it's important to keep in mind that sacrifice comes from the Latin **sacrificiore**, which means to perform a sacred act, and it maintains the boundary between the living and the dead (Doufourmantelle, 2022, p. 17). Something to think about in an era where the profane and the sacred no longer make sense. Sacrifice is about boundaries. For the French psychoanalyst Dofourmantelle, sacrifice opens a space between the living and the dead (p. 17). The same thing Freud had already pointed out in **Totem and Taboo** when he tells us:

Now, sacrifice—the sacred action par excellence, **sacrificium**—originally meant something different from what it was understood to mean in later times: an offering to the deity to reconcile oneself with it or to gain its favor. (From its secondary sense of self-denial comes the profane

use of the word. [Cf. below, p. 151.]) It can be shown that in its beginning, sacrifice was nothing other than "an act of social fellowship between the deity and his worshippers," an act of sociality, a communion of believers with their god. (Robertson Smith, *ibid.*, p. 224). (Freud, 1992d, p. 135).

Freud transforms the totemic banquet into a sacrificial feast, clarifying that in modernity this festive character had been lost, along with the link to the divine, and worse still, to the community.

Sacrifice and festivity coincide in all peoples; every sacrifice entails a feast, and no feast can take place without sacrifice. The sacrificial feast was an opportunity for individuals, jubilant, to rise above their own interests and to highlight the mutual affinity among themselves and with the divine. The ethical power of the public sacrificial banquet rested on ancient representations concerning the meaning of eating and drinking together. Eating and drinking with another was at once a symbol and a corroboration of the social community (Freud, 1992d, p. 136).

Death, sacrifice, and feasting are rarely seen in a contemporary world that is increasingly less ritualistic; the few vestiges that remain must be sought out and rescued from events like the Barranquilla Carnival. In that city, every Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, women dressed in black can be seen wandering in the stifling Caribbean-tropical heat characteristic of that region of the country. Wearing straw hats and dark sunglasses, they weep, cry, and wail in grief for the death of their beloved Joselito Carnaval. The story of

Joselito has a long history. Sociologist Edgar Rey Sinning, in his book "Joselito Carnaval: An Analysis of the Barranquilla Carnival," comments that this figure is connected to the rites of the Roman Saturnalia, where a slave was made a temporary king only to be sacrificed at the end of the celebration.

Just as in some regions of Spain, there was a character who died in the town's main square. "It was a puppet that, when the festival began, would have parts removed; an arm, a leg, until it was left with nothing on the final day," adds Rey Sinning, which allows him to affirm that Joselito Carnaval "is about dying to continue living; it is an emblematic character for the festival from a symbolic perspective." This is nothing other than what Freud pointed out when he told us: "The dead man became even stronger than he was in life; all this, just as we continue to see it today in human destinies" (Freud, 1992d, p. 145).

Death here is not the end of life but its possibility; only with death can the limits of a life to be lived be established; for life to be celebrated, death must be kept in mind.

3.3. The antagonism of the sacred and the profane: the subject

"One should not live if one does not want to die, nor become if one does not want to cease to be" (p.47)

Roger Callois.

There is an inherent antagonism between the subject and culture, and Freud addresses this in *Totem and Taboo* : “The meaning of taboo is made explicit to us in two opposing directions. On the one hand, it tells us ‘sacred,’ ‘sanctified,’ and, on the other, ‘ominous,’ ‘dangerous,’ ‘forbidden,’ ‘impure’” (Freud, 1992d, p. 27). Taboo marks a limit; neither is everything permissible nor is anything permissible. The Lacanian concept of “not everything” would apply here, but to reach this latter point in Lacanian theory, we would have to return not only to Freud but also to anthropology and sociology, which had already indicated decades ago that every cultural constitution must be based on this limit, and that this limit is fundamental for the subject to constitute a world and situate themselves within it.

Freud continues to tell us in *Totem and Taboo* that: “Taboo, by addressing ‘the most intense appetites of human beings,’ always provokes a constraint, but, at the same time, a temptation to violate it” (Freud, 1992d, p. 42). It is not this confrontation, this cultural antagonism, that enables the emergence of the subject, that subject of the unconscious that Freud discovered and that Lacan theorized as divided. First as Totem, then as religion, taboo appears as indicating a boundary that is violated, and the subject cannot know where life begins and where death ends.

Hence the epigraph of Callois in his text “Man and the Sacred”: antagonism is necessary to live and die. This explains the importance not only of Freud’s “ *Totem and Taboo* ” but of everything sacred, which, in turn, brings with it the profane. Religion is also important because it firmly

points out that religion itself is a confrontation between the sacred and the profane, operating as a means of expelling the profane in order to retain the sacred. Callois tells us: “Religion is a way of administering the sacred; it contains an incomprehensible and undoubtedly dangerous energy, but also ‘eminently effective’” (p. 15).

Without antagonism there is no way to build culture, since the very power to break down limits lies in their recognition:

Submission implies the possibility of arrogance and rebellion; from stability, movement is born; the vain preservation of riches and strength is opposed by their fruitful consumption, which undoubtedly destroys them, but which in this way ensures their resurrection. If the grain does not die ... (p. 148).

Could this be what prompted Freud to develop his entire conceptualization of drives, specifically the life and death drives? Callois suggests that:

Totems, therefore, belong to the maternal lineage; old uncles watch over them, save them from all attack, contain their nephews in their reckless impulses and in the risky ventures by which they yearn to confirm their courage and acquire prestige (...) totems are the guardians of the rules and limitations that the gods urge them to break (p.149).

For Callois, this antagonism allows for collective existence, but this depends on how the sacred and the profane are conceived. The problem is that, in modernity, one might think—without Callois explicitly stating it—that

capitalism increasingly fails to tolerate the sacred, and religion, in its place, is less able to sustain that sacred space and time necessary for culture and the collective, because these are personal and individualistic religions characteristic of the current ideals of neoliberal capitalism.

Soon religion attaches itself to the individual and not to the collective: it is universalist, but also, correlatively, personalist. It tends to isolate the individual, placing him alone before a god whom he knows less through his rites than through an intimate outpouring of creature to creator. The sacred becomes intimate and only interests the soul. The importance of mysticism increases and that of worship decreases (p. 152).

Without this antagonism between the sacred and the profane, the subject cannot emerge, since the order of the world becomes blurred, and consequently, an individual increasingly appears and is constituted, detached from the subject, an indivisible subject, solidified in the identifications of an unlimited enjoyment of "anything is possible." Fortunately, the subject, the one Freud helped to locate through the listening of a practice called psychoanalysis, which was founded thanks to women categorized as hysterics. As Caillois tells us, the sacred persists, even in the suffering bodies of these women, and this persistence was heard by Freud.

However, the sacred remains insofar as this liberation is incomplete, that is, whenever a value imposes itself as a reason for life to a community and even to an individual,

because then it quickly reveals itself as a source of energy and focus of contagion (Callois, p.157).

Those “hysterical” women of the 19th century demonstrated the persistent limitations of the ancient taboo, the consequences that were brewing in that modern capitalism of the 19th century, the consequences of losing that ambivalence that the sacred and the profane bring us. These women were, in fact, that persistent force manifesting itself in other ways (hysteria), a force that had always insisted on revealing itself, even though we have neither eyes nor ears to see and hear. Callois shows us how Saint Teresa in the 16th century, through her religious ecstasy (there was no other way to express it), conveyed the ambivalence, the antagonism between the sacred and the profane:

One must read the pages in which Saint Teresa describes her ecstasies. If one tries to set aside the overly Christian expressions, one will see how well the saint's confidences illustrate this paradox, how contact with the sacred establishes a painful debate between an intoxicating hope of being definitively plunged into an empty fullness and that kind of gravity with which the profane hinders all movement toward the sacred, a gravity that Teresa herself attributes to the instinct of self-preservation. By holding in existence the being that dies because it does not die, this gravity appears as the exact replica of the ascendancy exerted by the sacred over the profane, always ready to renounce its happiness for a glorious destiny (p. 159).

Finally, here is a poem by the saint:

I live without living in myself

I live without living in myself,
And in that way I hope,
that I die because I do not die.

I live outside of myself now.
after I die of love;
because I live in the Lord,
who wanted me for himself;
when I gave my heart
I put this sign on it:
that I die because I do not die.

This divine prison
of the love with which I live
He has made God my captive,
and free my heart;
and causes in me such passion
to see God my prisoner,
that I die because I do not die.

Oh, how long this life is!
How harsh these exiles are!
this prison, these iron bars
where the soul is immersed!
Just wait for the exit
It causes me such fierce pain,
that I die because I do not die.

Oh, what a bitter life
Where does the Lord not rejoice!
Because if love is sweet,
Long-term hope is not.
May God take this burden from me,
heavier than steel,
that I die because I do not die.

Only with trust
I live knowing that I will die,
Because in dying, living
My hope reassures me.

Death where life is attained,
Don't be long, I'll be waiting for you.
that I die because I do not die.

Look how strong love is,
life, don't be a bother to me;
Look, all you have left is,
to win you over, to lose you.
Come now, sweet death,
may death come lightly,
that I die because I do not die.

That life above
is true life;
until this life dies,
There is no joy in being alive.
Death, do not elude me;
live by dying first,
that I die because I do not die.

Life, what can I give it?
to my God, who lives in me,
if not losing you
to better enjoy Him?
I want to reach him even as I die,
For I love my Beloved so much,
that I die because I do not die.

3.4. Psychoanalysis as an erotic praxis: a matter of life and death

There are several paradoxes and contradictions that psychoanalysis brings to light throughout the development of its concepts, and one of them is related to the law: incest as a fundamental law prohibits an object while simultaneously making it desirable. The law is not everything, Lacan would say; instead of prohibiting everything, it indicates that not everything can be prohibited. The law and *jouissance* are related; transgression is necessary to access *jouissance*. Freud reminds us of this in *Totem and Taboo*, where the death of the father reinforced the prohibition and transformed it into law. That death (murder-transgression) strengthens the prohibition.

What can be done is not prohibited; prohibition is organized violence. This is where Bataille's theories become necessary. For him, "transgression exceeds, without destroying, a profane world, of which it is a complement" (p.

71). Without transgression, the law would have no purpose. For Bataille, society is not only prohibition but also transgression. Transgression, for Bataille, is controlled violence. "In fact, that is not at all what happens." Organized transgression forms a whole with the forbidden that defines social life" (Bataille, 1997, p. 69). Bataille argues that violence erupts into the social order in the manner of a ritualized festival, following Caillois. The transgression of the forbidden is subject to rules, just like the prohibition itself. Thus, the transgression of the prohibition is an "organized disorder." Periods of order and festival alternate; once the festival and excess have passed, the previously enforced prohibitions are reinstated, order is restored—it is as if this order needed the disorder of the festivals: "once the obstacle is removed, the scorned prohibition survives the transgression" (Bataille, 1997, p. 53).

The festival has a social function; it even maintains and reproduces transgression-prohibition, death-life; antithetical pairs are necessary to sustain itself.

The death of one is correlative to the birth of another. Life is always the product of a decomposition of life. First and foremost, it is indebted to death, which gives it a "then," and to corruption, which follows death and puts back into circulation the substances necessary for the incessant coming into the world of new beings (Bataille, 1997, p. 59).

For Bataille, the Christian religion was the furthest removed from primitive religiosity. With the arrival of Christianity, this law, which was based on prohibition and its

transgression, became increasingly monolithic. It's important to remember that both prohibition and transgression were part of the sacred; with Christianity, they were separated, placing prohibition on the side of good and evil, as sin, on the side of transgression.

With the advent of capitalism, these opposites are presented to us together, packaged as commodities; sacred and profane become one and the same, a single commodity. The celebration becomes a perpetual continuum; therefore, there is neither celebration nor prohibition, nor sacred and profane. Everything is confused in an unlimited, festive-prohibitive immobility. If the rotation of prohibition and transgression is prevented, the recreation of the social order does not occur, and we fall into a destructive inertia. Transgression occurs not only to recreate but also to include the excluded within a (symbolic) order. By suspending that order, the excluded can be included and relocated. Thus, order is re-established.

The sacred world is, in this sense, a negation of the profane world, but it is also determined by what it negates. The sacred world is also, in part, a result of labor, since its origin and reason for being are not the immediate existence of things as nature created them, but the birth of a new order of things (Bataille, 1997, p. 121).

Eroticism allows for the oscillation between transgression and prohibition. For Bataille, eroticism is related to death, which in turn makes life possible: "Eroticism is given by a sexuality lived as transgression, as

celebration, as a rupture with social codes and with the self” (p. 112).

There is something there that escapes prohibition; it is thanks to this that enjoyment and desire can appear. It is not the law that places a total limit on enjoyment, but rather it fosters it. The prohibitions imposed on enjoyment are always transgressed, but they are never completely overcome. For psychoanalysis, enjoyment and desire are necessary for a subject; they are the antithetical Lacanian pairs that, following the Freudian path, can ground psychoanalytic theory and its practice. Here, love enters as that which can link enjoyment and love, not as reconciliation, but as that which allows enjoyment to yield to desire, as Lacan (2006, p. 194) proposes in Seminar 10, "*Anxiety*."

This approach bridges the gap between Bataille and Lacan, allowing us to consider eroticism and love as that which transforms enjoyment and death into something that inspires desire and life. Instead of denying the antagonistic contradiction between enjoyment and desire, love embraces it, since failing to do so would lead to deadly violence. In eroticism, life and death are two sides of the same coin. On one hand, there is this flirtation with death (little deaths), but also the side that strives to make life a celebration.

For Bataille, what links life and death is eroticism; eroticism is “the affirmation of life even in death” (1997, p. 15). Eroticism is linked to the creation of prohibitions. It is a paradox, since it is simultaneously limit and transgression,

and transgression is founded on the limit. Love would not be desire founded on jouissance, nor life founded on death. Both eroticism and love are this irreducible contradiction, an erotic and amorous materialism, according to Bataille and Lacan.

Eroticism links death and life in that constitutive discontinuity, in that abyss between subject and the Other. The erotic seeks how to connect us to the Other through others. Eroticism, situated between life and death, also applies to the orgasmic moment. Orgasm is also known as "the little death," and this little death marks a limit as well as a loss, where completeness with the other is only an instant that reminds us that we are not complete, and therefore, neither is that great Other.

3.5. Psychoanalysis as an erotic praxis: a matter of life and death

Both eroticism and love are becoming increasingly rare in the 21st century. It seems that the last historically traceable manifestations of these states are the hysterical episodes of the 19th century, which in turn are heirs to the mystical episodes of the 16th and 17th centuries. It's important to remember that hysterical episodes were ways of speaking, not solely due to an organic issue, but rather something of a different order. Life at that time was closer to mystical ecstasy than to an organic pathology; they were ways of living while dying, like the little deaths of mystical ecstasy, what in modern times were called orgasmic *petit morts* (losses of consciousness).

Psychoanalytic practice is not only erotic but also loving; the former because it does not disregard questions of life and death, and the latter because it makes love its driving force (the cure). Freud, in one of his famous Wednesday meetings, on January 30, 1907, before conceiving of transference as the driving force of the cure, declared that: “The patient is compelled to renounce his resistances out of love for us,” a phrase he would later complement with “Our treatments are treatments through love.” (Kauffman, 1996). Years later, Lacan would affirm in Seminar XX “Encore”: “The only thing we do in the analytic discourse is talk about love [...] the only more or less serious thing that can be done: a love letter” (Lacan, 2010, pp. 101–102).

As already stated, love is not merely a matter of passion; it goes beyond affection or emotion because it is a matter of life and death—that is, eroticism. We must restore the erotic character to this practice. Was this not precisely what the French psychoanalyst Jean Allouch proposed in his book, “Psychoanalysis: An Erotology of Passage,” where he argues for the importance of returning to erotology in psychoanalytic practice, to Eros, to which we can add: to sexuality and death.

To understand the above, one must begin by recognizing that the subject is a transgression, and that the object *a* is the remainder that causes this incorporated subject, embodied in a symbolic world. This is already an erotic and subversive matter; this emergence of the subject runs counter to all of nature. For Bataille, Freud, and Lacan, the erotic is that which originates in nature, but is not nature

itself, and it founds culture. Bataille (1981), in his book "*The Tears of Eros*," speaks of work as that which makes us human, and he takes up an idea from Marx, stating: "Man is essentially the working animal. But he also knows how to transform work into play" (p. 60).

History, although it sets a course, is not completely determining; there will always be some possibility in that making-being, something to be created, and that something is the object a. Life pushes us to make that object a an erotic remnant so that life can be desired and not a simple procedure towards death; it is to play from that remnant that constitutes us as subjects, to make the object something to play and live while we have death as our horizon; it is to make life something erotic.

3.6. It has neither too much nor too little: reality

"Death is a life lived. Life is a death that is coming."

Jorge Luis Borges

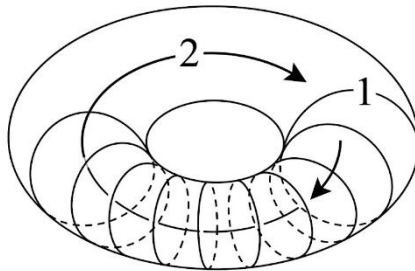
To Lacan's phrase in Seminar 10, "The Real lacks nothing" (2013, p. 202), one could also add "nor does it have too much." The symbolization of the Real allows us to account for a lack introduced by the Symbolic; before the Symbolic, there can be no lack or absence of anything. It is thanks to the Symbolic that a signifier can account for the impossible, an idea that Lacan (1992) explores in Seminar 17, "The Other Side of Psychoanalysis." This impossible thing is that which nothing or no one can locate in that place

of the Real, whether as the Other or as the father of the primal horde.

Not as a mere obstacle against which we bang our heads, but as the logical limit of that which, from the symbolic order, is stated as impossible. From this arises the real. We recognize very well here, in effect, beyond the myth of Oedipus, an operator, a structural operator, called the real father – with the property, I would say, that, as a paradigm, it is also the promotion, at the heart of the Freudian system, of the father of the real, who places at the center of Freud's enunciation a term of the impossible (Lacan, 1992, p.131).

The death of the father as Other is necessary, but far more necessary is his mourning as a ritual, something that reminds us that there is not only a dead man there, but that something is missing—hence the importance of the void—and that nothing can fill it, which is why no one can find their place there, in that emptiness the void signifies. A void allows a subject to see identifications, knots, as well as veils and sutures, but above all, it allows them to find entrances and exits.

Death is what creates a void in the emptiness of life; therefore, life is about how we navigate that path from the finitude that death points out to us. We can only truly understand life when we traverse the boundaries of death, because it shows us a path, and walking it is the only thing that can make us live. Thus, the symbolic nature of death creates a void in the emptiness of the reality of life.



The encounter with the real (emptiness) from the symbolic (hole) reveals an imaginary absence – and mourning as a ritual in its creative repetition can show that something was lost there and will never be recovered.

First of all, language, even that of the master, can only be demand, a demand that fails. It is not its own success; it is through its repetition that something else is engendered, which I have called loss—the loss through which surplus enjoyment takes shape. This repetitive creation, this inauguration of a dimension that orders everything by which the analytic experience can be judged, can also stem from an original impotence—to put it that way (Lacan, 1992, p. 131).

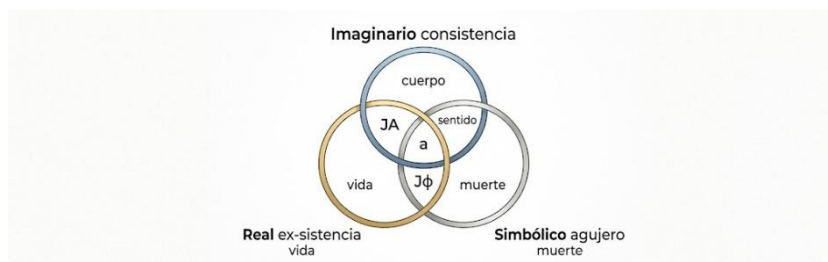
The object and the subject are the consequence of the failure of the demand to attain the real (to position oneself there as the father—the Other), and this is something that Lacan (2017) had already been developing since Seminar 3, " *The Psychoses* ," with the paternal metaphor, and which he continues in Seminar 4, " *The Object Relation* ," from the distinction between frustration, privation, and castration. In

that seminar, frustration appears as imaginary, castration as symbolic, and privation is directed toward an object of reality (which at that time Lacan does not differentiate from the real). What is important in these three forms of objectlessness is that in frustration the object is the breast, in privation the symbolic phallus, and in castration the imaginary phallus. In castration, the phallus is an imaginary object, so the symbolic action is to make that object something limited, a "not-all," as it would later be called. This allows the subject to be inscribed from a symbolic debt, something always yet to be done from a filiation. The question is whether the phallus designates the lack of the Other; if so, what is at stake in identification is having or being the phallus. In Seminar 6, “*Desire and Its Interpretation*,” Lacan continues to explore castration in relation to loss and mourning: “namely, what the signifier sacrifices of itself, the pound of flesh pledged in its bond with the signifier. Because something comes to occupy this place, that something becomes an object in desire” (Lacan, 2014, p. 361). In the unpublished seminar on Identification, Lacan posits that the object of castration is the object *a*.

What does this mean? What do we find there again? To reiterate from above: The function of this object is linked to the relationship through which the subject is constituted in its relation to the place of the Other {Autre}, capital A, which is the place where the reality of the signifier is ordered. It is at the point where all signification fails {fait défaut}, is abolished, at the nodal point called the desire of the Other, at the point called phallic, insofar as it signifies the abolition as such of all signification, that the lowercase

object a, object of castration, comes to take its place (Lacan, 1961-1962).

In Seminar 17, “ *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ” he tells us: “Castration is the real operation introduced by the impact of the signifier, whatever it may be, on the sexual relationship. And it is obvious that it determines the father as that impossible real we have spoken of” (p. 136). Castration proceeds from language, the introduction of the symbolic, which later, through the effects of the imaginary, is seen as a loss that can be recovered, for example, with the question of the mythical father, the one who, if he can enjoy everything, that father who never existed, but who makes himself exist through his death in order to revive him in the ritual, allowing a bond with others and setting the limit so that no one else occupies that place of enjoying everything. But this does not prevent the imaginary illusion of recovering that father, of resurrecting him, from persisting, and that is the subject's drama: his very constitution allows for this possible recovery through jouissance, but in turn brings the recognition of this impossibility through desire. Psychoanalytic praxis, a concept used by Lacan (2003) in seminar 11 “ *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* ” where he conceptualizes it as the possibility of treating the real through the symbolic, that is, treating the void through the symbolic by making that real a hole.



What can create a symbolic opening to address the emptiness of the real is death and its rituals. The creative repetition that rituals bring allows us to do something with life. The same operates for psychoanalytic practice; session after session, it is the recognition of a fall—the object *a* is a fallen object—and it is to make of that fall, that remainder called desire.

Death once again places within our coordinates an unfillable void, the real as impossible; to deny it, to ignore it, is nothing more than a grave error, something that Lacan points out in seminar 6 “*Desire and its Interpretation*”:

In the list of these phenomena, it is appropriate to include those through which one manifests not this or that particular madness, but one of the most essential collective madnesses of the human community. If, with regard to the dead, the one who has just disappeared, the so-called rites have not been carried out, then singular apparitions arise. This is what explains, for example, the appearance, in the foreground of the tragedy Hamlet, of that image that

can overwhelm the soul of each and every one of us, namely, the ghost (Lacan, 2014, p. 372).

The phantom that protects us from that (traumatic) real of emptiness—horror vacui—which Aristotle had already pointed out as "Nature abhors a vacuum," where nature itself will seek to fill that void with something; therefore, we could say that there is something in humanity that abhors emptiness. Fortunately, psychoanalysis transforms that emptiness into something else; even its ethics, the ethics of desire, which Lacan will outline in Seminar 10, *Anxiety* :

The void is something that no longer interests us at all from a theoretical point of view. It hardly makes sense to us anymore. We know that in the void, gaps, fullness, packets, waves, and anything else you can imagine can occur. But for Pascal, whether or not nature abhorred the void was crucial, because this signified the horror of all the wise men of his time toward desire. Until then, if not nature, at least all thought had been horrified that there could be, anywhere, a void . (Lacan, 2013, p. 80).

Therefore, according to Lacan in *Seminar 6, Desire and Its Interpretation* , *mourning is related to psychosis* . It is not that mourning is a psychosis itself, but it is related because it concerns the void that signifies the Real (emptiness), where mourning takes one path in the face of this emptiness, and the psychotic mechanism takes another.

In other words, mourning, which is a true loss, intolerable for the human being, creates a hole in the real. The relationship at stake is the inverse of the one I propose to

you under the name of *Verwerfung* when I say that what is rejected in the symbolic order reappears in the real. The intolerable dimension, strictly speaking, that presents itself to human experience is not the experience of our own death, which no one has, but rather the death of another, when that person is an essential being to us. Such a loss constitutes a *Verwerfung*, a hole, but in the real. By virtue of the same correspondence that I articulate in *Verwerfung*, this hole turns out to show the place where the missing signifier is projected; this formula, like its inverse, must be taken literally (Lacan, 2014, p. 371).

If mourning doesn't manifest through the funeral rites for the dead, "singular apparitions" arise; it's as if the ghost becomes a specter. And this is what Hamlet shows us: the ghost, that which can protect us from the real, falls away, and what appears is the specter of the father, the king, who hasn't even been buried when his mother marries his uncle: "The dishes cooked for the mourning feast served as cold cuts on the wedding table." For Lacan, funeral rites are intended to satisfy what is called the memory of the dead. The tragedy of Hamlet points to the need for symbolization when confronted with death. Death leaves a "hole in the real" that reappears in the symbolic (the inverse movement of foreclosure), and the funeral rite is a way of dealing with the real from within that hole. Without rites, mourning cannot take place; it is there that the community and signifiers can help to process what has been lost.

The work of mourning is consummated at the level of *logos*—I say this rather than at the level of the group or the community, even though the group and the

community, insofar as they are culturally organized, are of course its supports. The work of mourning presents itself above all as a satisfaction given to the disorder that is produced. This is what explains why all folklore establishes the closest relationship between these two facts: if something fails, or is elided, or is not granted, in the satisfaction due to the dead, all the phenomena that arise when possession, phantoms, and larvae come into play, when they are set in motion, occur in the place left free by the absence of the signifying rite (Lacan, 2014, p. 372).

Larvae are more like specters than ghosts. Psychoanalysis distinguishes between a specter and a ghost, and this difference lies in their relationship to the Real (the void). A specter represents the irruption of the Real into the symbolic order, something that cannot be fully assimilated or represented and that returns to disrupt the established order. A ghost, on the other hand, is an imaginary-symbolic construct that acts as a veil over the Real, giving it consistency. The ghost allows us to make sense of what would otherwise be incomprehensible or traumatic (the Real), protecting us from the truth of the Real (its emptiness).

The ghost of Hamlet's father is between the two deaths, therefore, he wanders there in a terrifying and monstrous way because when he was murdered he could not pay his symbolic debt (he was living in sin when he was murdered by his own brother, Hamlet's uncle), and since there was no ritual or mourning, he asks that this debt be

paid through the corresponding ceremony so that he can truly die.

To the question, "Why do the dead return?" there is an answer: because they are not properly buried, because funeral rites are becoming less and less established, because there is neither the place nor the time for mourning. In Hamlet's case, the act of revenge cannot be sustained; he hesitates. Something in his desire is amiss as long as it remains tied to the desire of his queen mother. He doesn't know what his mother's desire is, and the only thing he glimpses is that she is looking to his uncle Claudius, the supposed locus of the phallus. There is neither mourning nor desire because Hamlet insists on that locus, and for desire to arise, the subject must have worked through a negation of the phallus.

Hamlet can transcend the specter of his father. By killing Claudius, he finally buries his father, and he can become the Prince of Denmark, presenting himself as "Hamlet the Dane." The play begins with an unfulfilled duel and concludes with one that, once completed, allows Hamlet to reposition himself and carry out his act. Hamlet finds his desire in exchange for his own life; in the place of castration, comes sacrifice.

We can think of the analytic act as a letting-be in order to be able not to be. Hamlet, by identifying himself as "the Dane" and being able to fulfill the duty of avenging his father's death, cannot make the other movement of letting-be: first, the object of his mother's and uncle's enjoyment,

and then the Danish prince—movements necessary to rid himself of them in this attempt at not to be. This is the final step Hamlet cannot take, so he puts his life on the line because it is the only thing he can do, forgetting that the subject's sacrifice is not always with their life but with death, because it implies the death of the subject's being, a knowledge with death, with that non-being (Lacan would say, a lack in being) of their lack in being in their being of enjoyment. It is not with life that the price of the subject's non-being is paid, but with the death of the Other as complete, as totality, and thus be able to live. This is how the dead are buried, by mourning what has been lost, both of the Other and of oneself, and this must be sustained not only in the act, but in life itself in order to be able to live.

3.7. From the father's name to the proper name: a clinic of nothingness in the cases of NN in Colombia

In Colombia, the internal armed conflict has resulted in millions of victims, hundreds of thousands of forced displacements, murders, and disappearances. The latter have contributed to the proliferation of cases of unidentified bodies, or NN, an acronym derived from the Latin "Nomen Nescio," meaning "I do not know his name," and which in Spanish refers to "no name." This last point becomes a matter of paramount importance for Lacanian psychoanalysis, because the concept of the name permeates its theory and is key to the conceptualization of the subject.

The unnamed person becomes a symbol of exclusion, of being forgotten; it is the denial of a legal place, and this

has effects on the symbolic order of society. The unnamed person signifies an identifying void that has consequences not only for the individual but also for the social bond, that is, for relationships with others. The absence of a name (unnamed person) indicates a failure in the inscription of the symbolic order, with profound implications for the constitution of the subject, a failure in the fundamental processes of subjectivation.

To clarify this further, let's begin by explaining that Lacan, in his early seminars, especially in Seminar 3, *The Psychoses* (Lacan, 2017), introduces the Name-of-the-Father as a fundamental signifier. This Name-of-the-Father should not be confused with the biological person of the father; it is a symbolic function that establishes law and order within the subject. It is the signifier that allows the subject's inscription into the symbolic order. The Name-of-the-Father (or the Names-of-the-Father, as Lacan pluralized the concept in the later years of his teaching) is a primordial signifier. As already stated, it does not refer to the real or imaginary father as a person, but rather to a symbolic function that establishes law and order in the field of the Other. It is the signifier that establishes law and prohibition: primarily the incest taboo, which allows the subject to break free from the fusional relationship with the mother and introduces them into the order of culture.

The name of the father functions as an anchor point that organizes the other signifiers and gives coherence to the language and the symbolic world of the subject; it is the condition of possibility for the subject to acquire a position

in the symbolic order, a place from which he can desire and relate to others within the limits of the law.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is a journey from the Name-of-the-Father to the proper name, which is key to understanding the constitution of the subject. These two concepts, although related, occupy distinct places in psychic structuring and the individual's relationship with language and the law.

While the Name-of-the-Father establishes the general symbolic framework, the proper name relates to the subject's singularity, to that which distinguishes and makes them unique. For Lacan, the proper name lacks meaning: Unlike common names, the proper name does not refer to a meaning. Its value lies in its distinctive and sonorous function, its materiality. It remains immutable across languages, untranslated, only transferred. It is articulated with the unary trait: This concept refers to the most elementary mark of difference, the first indication of the subject's identification, which is not based on similarity, but on pure difference. The proper name operates as a trait that distinguishes the subject from others. It is related to the letter and jouissance: For Lacan, the proper name is linked to the letter in its materiality beyond meaning. It can encapsulate something of the subject's singular jouissance, functioning as an "acronym" that condenses a particular history and, often, an unconscious jouissance. It sutures a structural lack: The proper name, although it does not fill the subject's structural void, functions as a kind of "false suture," a way of naming what escapes full meaning. It is a name of the Other:

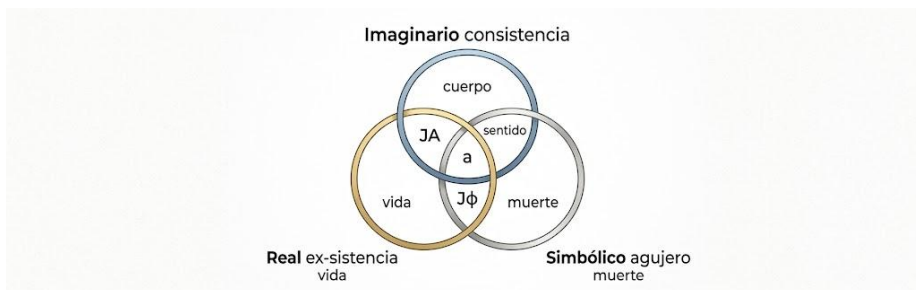
Initially, the proper name is given by the Other (parents, culture), which implies that the subject is born with a name that carries the desires and ideals of the Other.

The transition or relationship between the Name-of-the-Father and the proper name is a complex and dynamic articulation in the constitution of the subject. The Name-of-the-Father is the foundation that allows the subject's entry into language and the symbolic order, establishing the conditions for the subject to be named and, eventually, to differentiate themselves. Without the function of the Name-of-the-Father, the subject would remain outside the law and the world of signifiers.

Once the symbolic structure has been established thanks to the Name-of-the-Father, the proper name emerges as that which singularizes the subject within that structure. It is the mark that inscribes the subject as a unique being, with their own history and their own *jouissance*, beyond mere familial or cultural affiliation. The Name-of-the-Father is a general function of the law, while the proper name is what designates the subject's most intimate and particular existence. In psychoanalytic treatment, the aim is for the subject to be able to "do something" with the proper name they were given, to appropriate their singularity beyond the initial impositions of the Other.

In his later work, Lacan, by pluralizing the Name-of-the-Father in "The Names-of-the-Father," acknowledges that the paternal function can be embodied in diverse ways and that the law is not a monolithic entity. This opens the way to

the singular invention of the subject, to the possibility that each individual "makes do" with what fate has dealt them: a "know-how" producing a way of being in the world that is no longer reducible to the initial inscription of the Name-of-the-Father. That is to say, it is about how the subject can make use of the paternal function—and its different versions—to construct their own "nomination" or their own way of "tying a knot" in life, of forging a bond with the real of life, the symbolic of death, and the imaginary of the body, just as is shown in the Borromean knot.



Now, the phenomenon of the NN has effects on the proper name as it has been conceived in Lacanian psychoanalysis. This affects the symbolic existence of the subject, at their symbolic anchor point, at their point of attachment that enables the subject's historicization, their personal narrative, and their place in the community, but above all, in the social bond, in their relationship with others.

Since the proper name lacks a descriptive meaning, it functions as a signifier without signified, an S1 that anchors

the subject in the chain of signifiers. The proper name is what allows the subject to be called, recognized, and ultimately, gives them existence in the field of the Other.

The proper name functions as a condition for the subject's entry into the (symbolic) Law and into the social bond. Without a name, the subject remains outside the law and beyond the recognition of others. The proper name is the mark that distinguishes the subject from others and, at the same time, inscribes them within a community. The situation of the unidentified person in Colombia represents a radical deprivation of the proper name and, therefore, a difficulty or impossibility for the subject's inscription within the symbolic order.

The lack of a recognized proper name implies a denial of lineage, history, and ultimately, of one's very existence in the eyes of the social Other. For the person without a name, the social Other does not "recognize" their name, thus leaving them in a position of non-place and symbolically excluding them.

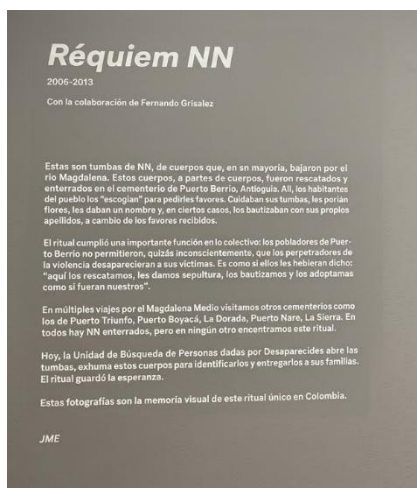
The Denial of the Name (NN) in a society is the ultimate expression of the exclusion of the Subject; it is their annihilation. And here a question arises: what to do with this nothingness or this annihilation of the subject? A clinic of nothingness, with the uninscribed aspect of death, which is to name that dead person by their name, this nothingness poses the symbolic non-inscription (death), where life is detached from a body. In the documentary "Requiem NN" by

Juan Manuel Echavarría (2013), what is shown is the attempt to re-inscribe that body (remains) with death and life.

Identification gives a person a place. The unidentified person (NN) has no place; therefore, it is necessary for the social bond that every person has a place. Feelings of not belonging, uprootedness, and derealization can lead to negative psychological effects. Invisibility and the denial of existence amount to the annihilation of the individual. In Colombia, the persistence of unidentified persons leaves an open wound in the social fabric and reminds us of the State's failure to care for and protect its citizens.

In Colombia, it is essential to emphasize public policies that not only address the legal identification of unidentified persons but also recognize the profound psychological and symbolic impact of the lack of a name. The importance of restoring a name and memory as acts of symbolic reparation and reintegration into the social fabric cannot be overstated, and psychoanalysis could contribute to this by listening to the individuals involved (family, friends, and the community at large).

The documentary attempts to address the issue of the bodies that float down the Magdalena River in Puerto Berrío, Antioquia. There, the community of Puerto Berrío begins to take ownership of these unidentified bodies, giving them names and rituals, to prevent them from being forgotten and to care for their graves and pray for their souls. They also take care of themselves in a context where violence is increasingly prevalent.



Photograph taken by the author and enhanced with Gemeni

A collective knowledge of bodies that float down the river, but which, through adoption and the assignment of a name, attempts to break with the compulsive, deadly repetition of overwhelming violence, restoring the dignity of the bodies (imaginary). With the name, death is inscribed, transforming repetition into an act of re-existence (the reality of life).



Photograph taken by the author and enhanced with Gemeni

The reality of life is traumatic if the symbolic nature of death is not inscribed through the imaginary realm of the body. What the documentary "Requiem NN" shows us is that a singular and collective know-how can be developed from this trauma. Giving these bodies a name is to symbolize, from the perspective of death, life itself, which would otherwise be unbearable. The ability to name creates a space for processing this traumatic aspect of life.



Photograph taken by the author and enhanced with Gemeni

There will always be something!

The desert reveals a secret to us: that of nothingness, and yet, the desert itself could be a place for whoever inhabits it. Thus, the real also operates for psychoanalysis, without the intervention of the symbolic and the imaginary; the real is nothing, and only the symbolic, through the creation of a void, can transform that nothingness into a void, a form that constitutes the imaginary, so that a subject

may come into being. The subject is what emerges when something can be done with that void of the real from the intersection of the imaginary and the symbolic.

For Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the void is not merely a concept but rather the very foundation of the entire theory. Here, the void is not the absence of something; instead, it is a structuring and constitutive element of the subject and psychic reality (the subject of the unconscious). The subject is that which does not respond, the unpredictable and incalculable. This "incompleteness" is not a defect but the condition of possibility for the emergence of something new. It is the space of freedom, of political praxis, and of radical transformation.

The void is not a deficiency to be filled; it is the condition of possibility for desire, language, and therefore, for the very existence of the subject. When Lacan speaks of the lack, the "lack-in-being," it is not that something is missing in the real of the void, but rather that in the very emergence of the subject, it can retroactively position itself from and toward that place as if something were lacking. From the moment the subject enters the order of language, it experiences this void as a lack; what is fundamental there is the void that makes the lack appear in the subject and the Other. Lacan (2003), in Seminar XI: "*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*," states the following regarding this:

The unconscious is the sum of the effects of language on a subject, at the level where the subject is constituted by the effects of the signifier. This clearly establishes that with

the term subject—which is why I mentioned it initially—we do not designate the living substrate necessary for the subjective phenomenon, nor any kind of substance, nor any being of knowledge in its pathology, secondary or primitive, nor even the logos incarnate somewhere, but rather the Cartesian subject, which appears at the moment when doubt is recognized as certainty—only, with our way of approaching it, the foundations of this subject are revealed to be much broader and, consequently, much more subservient to the certainty that errs. That is the unconscious (Lacan, 2003, p. 132).

This subject, altered by the signifier, is what Lacan (2010) would later elaborate theoretically as "parlêtre," "speaking being"—a theory that explicitly introduces *jouissance* and the body. *Jouissance* arises from a body affected by the signifier, a body stirred, mobilized by the unconscious. In his experience, Lacan gradually realized that the divided subject, the subject of the unconscious—although still important in his theory—did not accurately reflect the reality of the speaking being in psychoanalytic practice or experience.

The parlêtre emerges as a way of accounting for the link between being and *jouissance*, mediated by language. It is important to note that this concept does not imply the construction of a substance or an ontology; that is, it does not entify the subject, linking it to *jouissance* and the body. And this is true even though *jouissance* can be conceived as a positivity—filling the constitutive void of the subject—beyond desire, and the subject as negativity.

The Slovenian philosopher Žižek states that emptiness is the ontological incompleteness of both the subject and the Other. The subject, like the Other, is not "full" or "filled" with a primordial substance, nor can it be filled. Both the subject and the Other are inherently flawed and in a constant process of self-constitution. Hence, these ideas are permeated by all the postulates of dialectical materialism, or as Lacan termed it, "materialism," a fusion of the French words "mot" (word) and "matérialisme" (materialism), to designate a very specific conception of materiality in psychoanalysis, centered on language. One could say that psychoanalysis is a dialectical materialism, where irreconcilable contradictions exist within the subject, stemming from language, and this has effects on the subject itself and on its relationship with others.

This materiality is not that of a physical object in space, but rather that of an inscription, a trace, a sound that impacts the body. Materialism, then, serves purposes quite different from communication. The experience of the unconscious. The word, in its sonic, rhythmic, and repetitive dimension, has a direct impact on the constitution of the speaking being and on their enjoyment. Negative materiality, or what some propose as a negative ontology, would place a subject within a poetic topology, where there is no direct meaning to account for the subject's place and its effects through and in language. This, in turn, shows us that language is not information but resonance, vibration.

All this theoretical exploration serves to demonstrate that, in this desert of reality, there is always something to be

found, from observing stars that remind us of our insignificance in the universe, to the remains of human beings disappeared by the policies of horror, as occurred in the documentary filmed in Chile, "Nostalgia for the Light," by Patricio Guzmán (2010). Here, the Atacama Desert becomes a "great open book of memory"; at this moment, the desert ceases to represent nothingness and becomes a possibility that allows the subject to emerge. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the book traces the journey from the ancient indigenous, pre-Columbian civilizations that inhabited the desert, through the itinerant miners, to the clandestine detention camps of the Pinochet dictatorship. It recounts how the astronomical telescopes installed there form part of this journey. Thus, astronomy and archaeology are presented to us in the documentary as practices for tracking stars and human remains, but above all, for not losing ourselves as subjects in the face of the onslaught of oblivion; they are ways of reminding us of our place in the universe and on earth.

The documentary expresses a concern for the materiality of the past, a materiality (Lacan) of the subjects in that desert of the real, from a psychoanalytic perspective. Regarding human remains: "they are made of calcium, the same calcium as the stars," but unlike the stars, the disappeared still have no name. Therefore, the search must continue so that these remains, like the stars, may have a name. For example, a woman searches for the body of her brother, who disappeared in the Atacama Desert during the Pinochet dictatorship, but finds parts of his body: a foot with

a shoe, part of his teeth, his forehead, his nose, and an ear shattered by a bullet. These parts of her disappeared brother's body can become something (nothing), but they also correspond to a meaning that transcends nothingness, allowing her to inscribe something within death, that is, to know him dead. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, this something, instead of nothing, is the object *a*.

The traditional metaphysical question that Žižek takes up is not, "Why is there something rather than nothing?", but rather, "Why is there nothing rather than something?". This suggests that, as we analyze reality, we encounter a fundamental void at its core. Although the object *a* is not itself a topological figure, its function as the cause of desire can be understood through the torus's hole. The object *a* is that "void with borders" that attracts desire, yet cannot be filled.

The object *a*, although not a concrete object — because it is not the objects themselves, but what is ungraspable from them, what is subtracted— is what escapes symbolization and imagination: that which cannot be said or seen completely, only partially, hence its character of negativity, but also of possibility for desire.

The object *a* is that active void (Le Gaufey, 2013), which, through its negativity, makes it possible to create, desire, and love. It is these possibilities that the women who searched the Atacama Desert—from a feminine perspective—teach us, this persistence of "something." It is no coincidence that the object *a* is the object-cause of desire

in Lacanian theory. When one desires something, the immensity of the desert and its nothingness can become a search for a remnant; it is to make disappearance something to be found, something to be, something to live, even if this search is for the impossible (real). Fortunately, psychoanalysis serves to think about the impossible, to make lost causes—the subject is a lost cause—a cause to be made.

4.

Notes on popular culture, politics, and psychoanalysis

4.1. Identity, that damned identity! Zionism as the fetishistic identity response to antisemitism

I also concede, with regret, that the unrealistic fanaticism of our compatriots bears some responsibility for stirring up mistrust among the Arabs. I cannot feel the slightest sympathy for a misguided piety that turns a piece of Herod's Wall into a national relic and, because of it, offends the sensibilities of the region's inhabitants.

Letter from Sigmund Freud to Chaim Koffler, member of the Foundation for the Resettlement of Jews in Palestine

What bound me to Judaism—I feel obliged to confess this—was neither faith nor national pride. In reality, I was always a non-believer; I grew up without any religion, though this did not mean I lacked respect for the so-called ethical demands of human culture. I strove to keep a certain nationalist fervor in check. I considered it malignant and unjust, especially in light of the terrible events we Jews were enduring. [...] As long as I was Jewish, I felt free from certain prejudices that limit others in the use of their intelligence. As a Jew, I was prepared to live in opposition and to renounce assimilating into the “compact majority .”

Freud, Sigmund. Correspondence 1873-1939. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1963, (Letter 220, May 6, 1926, To the members of the B'nai B'rith Lodge, pp. 409-410).

Freud did not believe in the creation of the State of Israel in Palestine, nor in a nationalist Zionist project. In **Moses and Monotheism** (1992e), Freud theorizes about the importance of Jewish identity and the formation of the State of Israel, an idea that had been circulating in Europe for some time. According to his postulates, Jewish identity did not have a single foundation or origin; rather, and according to his proposal in **Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego**, this ideal of unity was formed along the way.

This ideal originated through the figure of Moses and his God of "unity," which, according to Freud, meant that neither Moses nor his God were Jewish. Rather, the Jewish people adopted these representations to consolidate themselves as "God's chosen people"—a God created in the image and likeness of their ideals, much like the State of Israel today.

Freud did not deny the importance of a state to shelter all the persecuted Jews in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Rather, to create one in Palestine, based on the idea that this was the “promised” land, he needed to construct a mythological history and an origin story, because, according to Foucault, every origin is a myth: Moses and his monotheistic religion served as the myth of “God’s chosen

people and their promised land.” This is what Zionism managed to create at the beginning of the 20th century, which, backed by the military and economic power of the United States and England, founded the state of Israel in Palestine.

For English psychoanalyst and Professor of Humanities at the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, Jacqueline Rose (2005), who has dedicated several writings to the Jewish question—especially in her book "*The Question of Zion*"—it is a central problem. There she pays homage to the researcher Edward Said, author of "*The Palestinian Question*." Along these lines, Rose describes Zionism as having an "immensely traumatic impact" on both Palestinians and Jews.

Zionism could be seen as the other side of the Jewish nationalism that Freud foresaw, just as Nazism was the most brutal face of German nationalism. For Zionism, the Palestinian appears as the Jew did for Nazism: a symptom, an element that comes to disturb the paradise of Zion, just as the Jew disturbed the Thousand-Year Reich.

Here, the symptom not only reveals what is wrong—the flaw—but also a truth: that all nationalism, racism, classism, or sexism is expressed as a violent attempt to conceal the fact that behind nation, race, class, or gender, there is nothing, or more precisely, there is a void that these ideals attempt to fill. The problem is that this void cannot be filled, and these ideals try to deny this impossibility. Therefore, the Palestinian, the Jew, the immigrant, the poor

person, and the woman operate as that superfluous or missing object; for Lacanian psychoanalysis, this object is the object *a* .

The French writer, philosopher, and rabbi Delphine Horvilleur (2023) argues in her book " *Reflections on the Anti-Semitic Question* " that the anti-Semite has prematurely convinced himself that by getting rid of the Jew, he will instantly find the fulfillment he longs for; hence, "hatred of the Jew is the fantasy of a filler." It is noteworthy that this idea had already been anticipated by Freud in **Moses and Monotheism**.

For Horvilleur, we must consider the question of identity in a way that does not imply death, something Freud also considered, both in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, as well as in *The Future of an Illusion and Civilization and Its Discontents* . For this rabbi and philosopher, "we must help people break free from their certainties, which are often perfect recipes for fanaticism and fundamentalism... we need to convince ourselves that we are not defined solely by our birth or our affiliations."

Today, it's difficult to avoid thinking about the issue of identities, because they serve to constitute and ground a more solid self, which ultimately transforms identifications into more rigid identities. This intensifies in an era where identity politics are gaining ground, and the stronger these politics become, the more exclusion and attacks occur because this "other" hinders the consolidation of that ideal of identity.

The Jew in Nazism and the Palestinian in Zionism embodied the limit to the supposed harmony of the Reich and Zion, as well as to achieving total capitalist modernization today. In this sense, the Jew then and the Palestinian now embody that which prevents the Aryan “whites” and the Jews from consolidating the perfect Reich or the longed-for Zionist State of Israel.

This idea has been revisited by the Slovenian philosopher Žižek in his article, “The Object a in Social Bonds,” where he responds to the French philosopher Jean-Claude Milner (2007). In Milner's text, “ *The Criminal Inclinations of Democratic Europe* ,” Milner argues that the Jewish presence continues to impede a unified, all-encompassing Europe. For Milner, the Jewish presence continues to operate as the “not-all,” thus representing an obstacle to this unifying European ideal. Žižek adds the following to this argument:

The irony that Milner misses is that today it is Muslims, not Jews, who are perceived as a threat and obstacle to globalization: it is a common refrain in journalism to point out that all the major world religions have found a way to coexist with capitalist modernization, with the exception of Islam, which is why the present conflict is often described as being between the democratic West and “Islamic fascism.” Once we got rid of the parasitic Jewish intruder? It is HERE that Lacan's logic of the not-all finds its appropriate use: significantly, although Milner points out that the thesis that “everything is political” belongs to the not-all (a reminder of his Maoist youth?), he unfolds the social dimension of the not-all only under the guise of

the inconsistent/unlimited Whole, not under the guise of the antagonism that cuts through the entire social body ("class struggle"). The anti-Semitic figure of the Jew allows us to confuse the Not-All of constitutive social antagonism, transposing it into the conflict between the social Whole (the corporate notion of society) and its external Limit, the Jewish intruder who - from the outside - introduces disproportion and degeneration . (Žižek, 2005).

The problem is identity, hence Freud (1992f) dedicates, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* , a chapter to identifications, which, after two years of writing this text, would be the foundation for explaining The Ego and the Id, as the structure of his second topography: the id, the ego and the superego.

Antisemitism, like Zionism, could be seen as a weapon in the struggle for identity; two fetishized faces of identity that, in their rigidity, limit the identifications necessary for the construction of subjectivity. The problem with these positions is that there is a self solidifying at all costs to the detriment of those that do not focus on the subject's subjectivity. Nazism and Zionism are the denialist and reactionary responses to capitalist logics that, during the 20th and 21st centuries, needed to break with identities, but since this capitalism can adapt and be made to adapt, today it also needs those identities to continue consolidating itself.

Jerusalem (Zion) becomes the ideal of belonging, but it is also the defense against anyone who threatens it. Israel presents itself as an organic and harmonious whole, thus

requiring an external intruder (the Palestinian) to explain its divisions and antagonisms. The Zionist figure embodies a displacement and condensation of social antagonisms, positioning the Palestinian as something to be eliminated: “They are all Hamas terrorists.”

A 2024 study by Peter Luca Versteegen of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, titled “ *The Social Position of Trump Voters in American Society: Uniqueness and Radical Right Support* ,” concludes that Trump voters may feel socially excluded, even if they are not socially marginalized. Trump voters can be categorized as white, Christian men; however, this research leaves open the possibility that other populations, such as Latinos and Black people, also supported him. In this analysis, he argues the following:

It is important to note that this shows that experiences of exclusion may not arise because these voters are marginalized from society, but rather because they subjectively feel invisible within it. This distinction is important because people who feel marginalized will try to belong (i.e., fit in), whereas people who lack uniqueness will try to have their white, male, or Christian background recognized. Consistently, Trump’s rhetoric and policies do not promote his voters’ belonging to society, but rather their distinctive role within it (e.g., Smith and King, 2021). This interpretation connects with a growing line of research that emphasizes the relevance of subjective threat over traditional explanations such as economic hardship (e.g., Jetten and Mols, 2021; Mutz, 2018). My findings build on these accounts, as they suggest that perceived

threats to one's group position undermine the experience of being recognized and valued, thereby derailing one's experience of social inclusion. Therefore, while common frameworks understand people in vertical opposition to elites and horizontal opposition to outgroups (Obradović et al., 2020), I add a third dimension, where opposition arises if a subgroup feels poorly integrated into the superordinate group (Versteegen, 2024).

The above involves psychoanalysis, insofar as it problematizes issues of the self and its identifications, in an era in which, paradoxically, the self is strengthened through ideals of triumph, autonomy, success, self-love, etc.

This requires recalling the work of Wilhelm Reich and Theodor W. Adorno in the 20th century, as well as Lacanian psychoanalytic critique of the ego, which allows us to understand contemporary phenomena such as the victory of Donald Trump in the United States and other political leaders like Bolsonaro in Brazil, Milei in Argentina, and Meloni in Italy. Beyond their differences, the triumph of these politicians is the triumph of ego politics over the subject and of the illusion that it is possible to identify completely with an ideal.

Donald Trump represents the triumph of the self-made man, the pinnacle of American capitalist individualism. This ideal of the "self-made man" fails to recognize social and economic inequalities and ignores the power structures and social dynamics that favor certain groups over others. Regarding this ideal, Wilhelm Reich (1972), in "The Mass Psychology of Fascism," problematizes

some aspects that remain relevant in the 21st century, even when analyzing the reasons for Donald Trump's victory:

This identification with authority, with the company, with the State, with the nation, etc., contained in the formula: "I am the State, the authority, the company, the nation," represents a psychic reality and constitutes one of the best examples of an ideology transformed into a material force. The employee, the civil servant, begins by nurturing the idea of being identical to his superior, until little by little, due to his chronic material dependence, his being is transformed in the sense of the dominant class (p. 67).

The self-made man is a myth that serves to underpin the idea of the autonomous and self-sufficient individual, so fashionable in neoliberal capitalism. Figures who become emblematic, such as Jobs, Musk, Gates, Zuckerberg, Bezos, and, of course, Donald Trump, among others, are points of identification and ideals for many individuals in contemporary society. Regarding this, Reich says:

With his eyes constantly turned upwards, the petty bourgeois creates a conflict between his economic situation and his ideology. He lives in mediocre conditions, but presents himself outwardly as possessing a highly exaggerated and often ridiculous power of representation. He eats poorly and little, but attaches great value to proper attire. Elegant manners and dress are the material symbols of this structure. And few things are more appropriate for judging the mass psychology of a population at first glance than observing its clothing. It is "eyes turned upwards" that marks the specific difference

between the petty bourgeois structure and the class structure of the industrial worker (p. 67).

The higher the ideal, the greater the ego's impotence in reaching it. This ideal ego constantly tries to live up to that superegoic call for fulfillment, and it is here that certain practices, instead of calming this drive toward the ideal, reinforce it, further consolidating the ego. This is something that the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan already denounced in his early seminars: the path of psychoanalysis is not that of the "American Dream," a dream that, it seems, has recently become a nightmare for many.

Faced with the impossibility of achieving these ideals, the self becomes powerless; that is, instead of acknowledging the impossibility of the ideal itself—and the conditions that sustain it, such as neoliberal capitalism—the individual ends up blaming themselves: a self that is never truly capable of reaching the ideal. Subjective responses can range from the powerlessness of the self, which can manifest in forms such as depression or anxiety, to the “empowering” solutions promoted by motivational speeches. It is within this context that figures like Donald Trump have emerged.

This neo-fascism that Donald Trump represents is not a return to the past, but rather a response to the impotence of the self. Consequently, fascism represents the impotence of failing to process the past; therefore, one cannot historicize the present, much less the future. Paradoxically, the more one tries to strengthen the self, the more one impoverishes it. Here, fascism expresses itself as a failure of the self, which simultaneously serves the triumph of capitalism.

Adorno (2003), in his book " *Essays on Fascist Propaganda: Psychoanalysis of Anti-Semitism* ," argues that fascism serves the liberal self by helping it overcome its insignificance and impotence within the capitalist system. A prime example of this is what occurs in the United States, where the self—of many—is insignificant and powerless in the face of capitalist logic that gradually weakens it while simultaneously exalting and impoverishing it, thus further negating the subject.

That sense of self needs to be revitalized in order to "be something" and not fall into nothingness. Donald Trump and his policies allow for the maintenance of the illusion of a strengthened self, as is the case with a white man in the center of some American town, or even in certain sectors of Latino immigrants in states like Florida or Texas. In this way, he authorizes himself to occupy a position of racial or national superiority.

Fascism can be understood as a form of bourgeois counter-revolution, or also as that which returns because it could not be processed. In this scenario, the self becomes the subject's "salvation," but it also leads the subject to the worst: extreme individualization, causing isolation and a rupture in the bond with the other. Hence, the fate of the other—whether deported, imprisoned, or eliminated—is irrelevant.

This suggests that the policies of leaders like Donald Trump are more cynical and sinister. These positions seem to indicate that, instead of losing at the polls, he has managed

to gain more votes. The neo-fascism of Donald Trump, Bolsonaro, Milei, or Vox is obscene precisely because it conceals a truth. Just as when sex is explicitly depicted in pornography, a truth about sex is hidden—namely, that there is nothing to show—these neo-fascist movements exhibit a high degree of cynicism because they demonstrate that their policies are a representation of their economic interests.

Hatred toward the poor immigrant is not just hatred in itself; it also contains a representation that triggers an unconscious enjoyment. When Donald Trump says that “Latinos are thieves and criminals,” he is upholding a belief that many don't dare to voice. Many Latinos even think the same, not only to differentiate themselves from those “bad” Latinos, but also to identify with the “good” gringos. The problem is that this latter identification can never be complete without something to prevent it. Donald Trump simply provides the “bad” Latinos with a platform to blame. Herein lies the theft of enjoyment that the Slovenian philosopher Žižek borrows from psychoanalysis:

Here we should mobilize Freud's notion of "theft of enjoyment": the enjoyment of an Other inaccessible to us (the enjoyment of women for men, the enjoyment of another ethnic group for our group...), or our legitimate enjoyment stolen from us by an Other or threatened by an Other. Russel Sbriglia noted how this dimension of “theft of enjoyment” played a crucial role when Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021: “Could there be a better exemplification of the logic of ‘theft of enjoyment’ than the mantra that Trump supporters chanted as they stormed the Capitol: ‘Stop the theft!’? The

hedonistic and carnivalesque nature of storming the Capitol to ‘stop the theft’ was not merely incidental to the attempted insurrection; insofar as it was about reclaiming enjoyment (supposedly) stolen from them by others (i.e., Black people, Mexicans, Muslims, LGBTQ+ people, etc.)” (Žižek, 2024).

The problem is that this immigrant never stole any enjoyment, because that enjoyment never existed, although it's easier to believe that something did exist that the immigrant stole from us, and thus deny the impossibility of having that enjoyment. Making America Great Again has a problem, and that is that it's impossible to make great what never was. It's not that the United States didn't have a better past—in terms of the economy, jobs, or industrial production—but that this idealized past can never return because it never existed.

Donald Trump embodies the image of the white, Christian man, making it his sole source of pleasure. Therefore, the more his sexual abuse, obscenities, and shameless acts are exposed, the more supporters he seems to gain, and consequently, the more he revels in it! And so he will continue to do so without any limits.

With Donald Trump, things are more enjoyable because he embodies the triumph of enjoyment within neoliberal capitalism. The problem is that complete enjoyment is never possible; before that happens, the subject will disappear, and in its place, a loser will emerge. The more this individual tries to gain enjoyment through Trump,

the more powerless they will feel, and consequently, the more fascist responses will appear.

4.2. The epistemic denial or, what to do with race, class and gender in psychoanalytic praxis?

Is psychoanalysis a white privilege?

They say that Lacan, during his "landing" in Caracas in July 1980, uttered the famous phrase, "Be Lacanian, if you wish. I am Freudian." The veracity of what Lacan said in that city is in doubt, but in psychoanalytic practice it doesn't matter whether this phrase was actually uttered by Lacan or not; what matters are the effects of what was said on what was left unsaid, since after more than forty years, many are "Lacanian"—they position themselves there—and from that position they define what is or is not Lacanian, which in some places means being a psychoanalyst.

Being Lacanian produces subjectivities despite the analyst's neutrality and the end of analysis; this does not preclude the ideal of whiteness from shaping particular ways of being situated in the world. For Bento (2002), whiteness is constituted as: "a place of racial, economic, and political privilege, in which (white) race, not named as such, laden with values, experiences, and affective identifications, ends up defining society" (p. 7).

As Viveros (2015) also points out, in Colombia, whiteness is a signifier of racial privilege, embodying a power that is incarnated, circulated, and exercised in multiple ways, but above all, it is not necessarily related to a

"white" body, but rather to a position of privilege (to whiteness itself). For example, one is closer to "being" a psychoanalyst if one undergoes analysis and study in France, and to a lesser extent in Argentina (the most Europeanized country in Latin America). This places one in a privileged position over others who aspire to "become" psychoanalysts.

The ideal of whiteness—like all ideals—can never be achieved, as described in the previous sentence. In Colombia, this ideal has not only been racialized but also geographically confined to what has been called the golden triangle: Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali, with Bogotá being the "center" of that triangle. It is in these places that one must begin to become white.

Schools and universities should teach that geography and history are not just about landscapes and events; they also shape subjectivities. It's not the same to be born among mountains or near a river and the sea; it's not the same to live in the tropics or the Caribbean at almost 40 degrees Celsius at midday as it is to live in the Andes at an average of 17 degrees Celsius. Francisco José de Caldas was right, but mistaken, in his 1808 text, "On the Influence of Climate on Organized Beings," where he argued that climate can influence the physical constitution and intellectual faculties of organized beings. He posited that the Andean climate fosters civility, rational and intellectual thought, while tropical climates are conducive to violence, savagery, and ferocity.

A regulated cult, principles of morality and justice, a well-formed society whose yoke cannot be shaken off with

impunity: a clear and serene sky, a soft air, a benign temperature, have produced moderate customs and tranquil occupations. Love, this torrid zone of the human heart, does not have those furies, those cruelties, that bloodthirsty and ferocious character of the mulatto of the coast. Here (in the Andes) it has been brought into equilibrium with the climate (Caldas, 1808, p. 167).

In that case, Bogotá would be the ideal of whiteness, followed by Medellín, and to a lesser extent, Cali; the other cities would have to whiten themselves following these ideals, albeit on a smaller scale. Furthermore, the vast majority of cities and municipalities in Colombia are located in tropical climates, in Andean and mountainous regions. Therefore, Francisco José de Caldas writes that factors such as climate allowed certain areas to become places of “progress” and “development,” close to the “European” ideal of civility. The other areas remained at the mercy of their climates and their consequences. But both the Andean and tropical regions were permeated by the ideal of whiteness, exhibiting in these areas, some more than others, what the Moroccan psychoanalyst Ayouch, in his book “*The Race on the Couch*,” calls “racial melancholy.”

For a Black person in a situation of social advancement, to be someone, being Black means leaving their community behind. That is, they have to conform to a white ideal of the self, and the impossibility of corresponding to that white ideal of the self provokes a melancholic position in that Black body. That is why it is very important to make visible the movements of activism, the movements of

identification, that is, to make visible those possibilities of multiple bodies (p.258).

Lacan is that ideal of a psychoanalyst to be achieved, hence to achieve it one must go to study in France, with Paris as its center, undergo analysis with the disciples who still survive of Lacan (since Lacan is dead), and that will be the beginning of “being” a Lacanian psychoanalyst, the problem is that like every Freudian superegoic ideal “as Lacan you must be, as Lacan you are not allowed to be”, that ideal will never be achieved, therefore, there will come that racial melancholia, or rather, a psychoanalytic melancholia, where the practitioners of psychoanalysis will never be able to authorize themselves.

Psychoanalysis is a privilege of whiteness, not only for those who wish to undergo a psychoanalytic process, but also for the psychoanalysts themselves. Hence the desire to defend their position as psychoanalysts against any threat to the disintegration of that identity. The subject's problem is fixing their identifications to identities; there, the ego becomes an instance constantly threatened by everything that could disintegrate its identity. Therefore, it will react violently, even to the point of destroying whatever threatens it, in order to save its ego identity.

4.3. From epidermal denial to sexual difference

Whiteness, as an ideal, seeks to suppress the emergence of multiple identifications in order to fix them into a pure, unifying identity: the true or best one. Could it not be, perhaps, that we have identified with certain theories

in order to recover a lost and idealized form of identity? Marxism and even psychoanalysis could be included among these theories.

In this latter case, “being” true Lacanians is a way of whitening ourselves and achieving the French and European ideal of whiteness. To assert that “Lacan didn’t say that” or its counterpart, “Lacan already said that,” is not only a theoretical invalidation or validation that underpins a practice, but also an entire identity position that aims to attain the “being” of “I am Lacanian.” In Latin American contexts, the phrase “that’s not psychoanalysis” also intersects with “that’s not white enough.” The phrase “that’s not psychoanalysis” is followed by another: psychoanalysis is not racist, and although race doesn’t exist—like the Other in psychoanalysis—it has effects, so racism does exist, and it has effects on subjects.

According to Brazilian Lélia González (2020), in some Latin American contexts there is a “racism by omission”, where racism —although it could also be thought of in terms of classism and machismo (class and gender)—through other actions: inaction, negligence or lack of response to discriminatory situations.

Thus, someone ends up being discriminated against not only for committing a negative act, but for “doing nothing” to prevent or resolve a situation that causes harm or disadvantage to a person because of their race or ethnic origin. The omission and denial of racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination are articulated as symptomatic

responses to the denial of sexual difference posited by psychoanalysis; for some psychoanalysts, racist, sexist, and classist discourses and practices should not be considered relevant because everything is explained by the sexual difference inherent in reality.

However, it is in these practices that this difference manifests itself. Refuting these exclusionary forms—under the logic of “I know, but still”—constitutes a negation. In certain individuals, recognizing and refuting are part of a reality that can coexist without necessarily creating contradiction.

It is there that psychoanalytic practice becomes not materialist but idealist, in an inconsistent world, but complete at the same time, where the price to pay for sustaining desire is known, but, even so, it is not paid. This, as Lebrun tells us in his book *Ordinary Perversion*, “makes it impossible to confront the inevitable reality in which yes no means no, and it becomes difficult to know when it is yes and when it is no.” It is there that the couch and the consulting room become the “natural” environment of that denial, where everything is consumed so that nothing happens.

But this coexistence comes at the price of living “in a complete and inconsistent world, where opposites apparently do not oppose each other,” where one of the terms is as if on standby, but not dismissed. But once disavowal finds its privileged place, the subject finds himself unprotected. He can no longer count on phallic vectorization for drive organization. For, by letting himself

be carried away by the belief that he can say yes and no without contradiction, he is prevented from undertaking any work that implies a renunciation. This makes it impossible for him to confront the inevitable reality in which yes is not no, and it becomes difficult for him to know when it is yes and when it is no (Lebrun (2007, p. 321).

Speaking of racism, classism, and sexism from a psychoanalytic perspective does not imply reducing them to "unanalyzed fantasies" that constitute each subject's "imaginary" reality, nor to "unanalyzed remnants" of a supposed "lack of analysis." While these may be present, that is not all there is to it. Ignoring these factors prevents us from listening to a subject's subjective configurations. If we don't listen, then what do we hear? And the answer cannot be a distressing "beyond," as that would lead to essentializing the anxiety. Disregarding racial, class, or gender issues—which are also shaped by political, economic, and historical factors—constitutes a form of denial that can only lead to their return in the worst forms within psychoanalytic practice.

Given the above, several questions arise: How can imaginary identifications be addressed if they are not recognized? Does focusing on the subject's reality mean ignoring their imaginary and symbolic configurations? Doesn't this lack of awareness of the social and political dimensions in psychoanalytic practice make it elitist, accessible only to the privileged?

That's not psychoanalysis, it's social psychology or sociology! To this one might reply: not even Freud dared to go that far! Because his works could contradict what has been stated above, including *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, among other works ranging from *Sexuality and Modern Nervousness* to *Moses and Monotheism*, including *Totem and Taboo*, *The Future of an Illusion*, etc.

Psychoanalysis, as Pavón Cuellar (2024) argues in his book “*Psychoanalysis and coloniality: towards an anti-colonial inflection of the Freudian legacy*” can be used as a fundamental tool to enable disidentification movements, as well as allowing us to question that identity colonized by the imaginaries of the ideal of whiteness.

It is enough to listen to the symptoms carefully. This listening, moreover, is the most logical thing to do, since the symptoms ask to be listened to carefully and even demand to be heard. The first thing they express to us is a request to be heard. The repressed cannot be ignored in the return of the repressed (p. 164).

We need to rethink psychoanalytic practice, the places where we sustain it; decolonizing listening means starting to take into account issues of race, but also of class and gender, as many have been saying for years; breaking the narcissistic pacts that sustain the ideal of whiteness and its denial, in response to the famous phrase that Lacan supposedly said in Caracas, one could reply: no, thank you, we are going to be psychoanalysts by not being!

4.4. Not all enjoyment: Desire

In this era of anything goes, of unbridled enjoyment, a striking phenomenon is gaining momentum. Just as in Freud's time women manifested a series of hysterical symptoms in response to the rigidity of Victorian morality, as a way of saying "no!" to that morality, the hysterical strike mentioned by Lacan in Seminar 17, "*The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*," was directed against the completeness of the Other, against that Victorian moral totality. This phenomenon is what some have called "non-sex." Numerous articles, videos, and documentaries circulating online show that many individuals are choosing not to have sex, and what is most striking is that young people are the ones most frequently resorting to this abstinence. The question that arises is: why?

Faced with the superegoic imperative of enjoyment that Lacan posits in Seminar 20: "*Encore*," and the performance imperative that philosopher Chul Han presents in several of his texts, one possible contemporary subjective response is the "absence of desire." In this context, "non-sex" becomes the last refuge of singularity in the face of a market that standardizes pleasure. Isn't this lack of sex an attempt by the subject to "save" desire? When sex, reduced to total enjoyment, becomes an imperative of enjoyment, the subject responds with rejection—no sex! When the subject rejects the possibility of resorting to sex, they reintroduce a limit, thus skirting the constitutive void of the subject and their desire.

If the hysterical symptom manifested itself through conversion, like other symptoms, the symptom today can manifest itself from "asexuality", this being a way of placing oneself in an "outside the market", as a withdrawal from the scene.

The "everything" is presented today as an imperative: the ideal of "everything is possible" then appears as a response to total enjoyment, and to the pornographic fantasy of hypersexuality. Its counterpart is "there is no sex," as a denunciation that there is something being suppressed: the impossibility of the sexual relationship, as Lacan also explained in detail in Seminar 20: Encore.

Another question is whether ghosting isn't just another way of "erasing" oneself from the scene, thus avoiding the responsibility of dealing with the lack of a sexual relationship that gives rise to desire. Instead, there's no room for either desire or taking responsibility for the lack of a sexual relationship. Faced with the impossibility of not having sex, the response is an impotence that forces one's disappearance from the scene. The paradox is that the more consistent the ego and its ideals of self-sufficiency, success, performance, and so on, the more the impotence of recognizing that not everything is possible is reinforced, and that the only recourse to sustain desire is to act out a desire that reveals the subject's inability to maintain the tension it generates.

The symptom can be considered a response specific to each era. In a society where the market imposes the

mandate that "you can enjoy everything" through consumer goods, the other ends up being inconvenient, because they not only demand, but can also desire. Faced with this, it's better to "turn off" the screen: to disappear without saying goodbye, without closure or mourning. The "almost somethings" of today—where there is no relationship of courtship, of lover, much less of love—are another manifestation of these logics. These new manifestations of the symptom shape subjectivities that do not process otherness, difference, or desire. The subject prefers to "play dead" (disappear) rather than have to confront the truth of their own desire or the lack in the Other.

According to Chul Han, we live in a narcissistic society of sameness, where otherness and difference are eliminated, and the existence of others is denied. This same idea has been raised by the psychoanalyst Isidoro Vegh, among others.

For Chul Han, the other is not only necessary, but also important for Eros: "Eros is directed to the Other in an emphatic sense, who cannot be left at the disposal of the one. In the desert of sameness there is no Eros." (p.11 – 15), as well as for psychoanalysis "Desire is the desire of the Other."

The problem with the commodification of desire, according to Chul Han, is that we have replaced Eros (transcendent desire) with pornography; it is the triumph of enjoyment over desire. Pornography strips the body of its veil, turning it into pure, consumable flesh. In this

profanation of Eros, which pornography enacts, the other is stripped of its mystery; the other is presented to us as an ideal of totality and transparency, "enjoyment" in a direct way, eliminating the mediation of fantasy.

Eros needs a "veil" (the symbolic). By making everything visible and transparent, capitalism eliminates fantasy, which is important for psychoanalysis; there can be no desire without fantasy. Desire is not a direct relationship between you and the object; it is a relationship mediated by a screen: fantasy. This is where the formula of fantasy $\$ \diamond a$ comes in, where the barred subject (\$) relates to the small object a through a rhombus, which represents distance, desire, and drive.

The concept of the phantasm in Lacan is not only a framework but also a defense against the "Joyment of the Other"; it is the necessary distance because it sets a limit. The problem for Chul Han is that we live in an age that cannot tolerate limits. Everything must be "accessible," "connectable," and "evident." By destroying limits, the phantasm is also destroyed, and consequently, desire; the subject is left at the mercy of jouissance.

By trying to show everything, desire is nullified. According to Lacan, the Lacanian fantasy requires that something remain out of sight. The hypervisibility that Han speaks of destroys the subject's capacity to fantasize, turning the object into something flat and without libidinal value.

Late capitalism attempts to fill every void. Everything is available, everything is "possible"—the

dictatorship of "Yes, we can"—but capitalism is not a discourse; it is rather a short circuit of discourses. In the four discourses that Lacan defined (that of the Master, that of the Hysteric, that of the University Professor, and that of the Analyst), there is always a barrier or a limit that prevents desire from being satisfied immediately. There is an order, a cycle; that is, something is done with *jouissance*, a know-how with it. If this barrier between the subject and the object of *jouissance* is eliminated, the subject no longer experiences lack, but believes they can directly access the object, the other as an object of consumption.

Capitalism, with its promise of "everything is possible," ensures there will always be an object (commodity) to fill the void. Desire withers because capitalism eliminates negativity. It is a "non-discourse" because it doesn't create social bonds, only isolated consumers.

We must commit to a politics of desire rooted in psychoanalytic practice, where desire involves both the subject and the Other—that is, others. But this only occurs when both the subject and others are recognized as remnants, never as totalities to be appropriated, consumed, or apprehended. It is at this point that the Italian psychoanalyst emphasizes that there is always a "remainder," something that cannot be fully expressed or satisfied. This dissatisfaction is not a flaw in the system, but rather the driving force that compels us to continue creating, searching, and living. Without this void, desire would die.

4.5. Dreaming in order to desire

Dreaming is a resurgence of the soul's childhood life, which has already been overcome.

Sigmund Freud. The Interpretation of Dreams

This phrase encapsulates the essence of psychoanalysis and Freud's discovery: that the supposed overcoming of childhood is not truly over, and that dreams constitute one of the ways in which what was believed to be overcome returns. This idea was already present in *Studies on Hysteria* (1992h), where Freud states that most hysterical symptoms are substitutes for a wish, an idea he would fully consolidate in 1900 in " *The Interpretation of Dreams* ," where the central idea is that dreams are wish fulfillments. Throughout the text, Freud invites us to revisit the theory of wishing, which is linked not only to a series of experiences from the days preceding the dream, but also to memories in each person's history, all to show us that the unconscious is timeless.

A conscious wish only becomes the stimulus for a dream if it succeeds in arousing another parallel, unconscious wish, through which it is reinforced. I consider these unconscious wishes, in accordance with the indications I have gathered in the psychoanalysis of neuroses, to be always alert, ready at any moment to seek expression when offered the opportunity to ally themselves with a conscious impulse and to transfer their greater intensity to the lesser intensity of that impulse. Then it must appear as if only the conscious wish has been fulfilled in the dream; only a small, striking detail in its configuration will serve

as a clue to put us on the trail of the powerful auxiliary force that comes from the unconscious (Freud, 1992i, pp. 545-546).

What's important here are the associations and how these are reconfigured through the two mechanisms Freud described: condensation and displacement. "Dream-work" (Traumarbeit) makes the content we remember upon waking—the manifest content—only a distorted facade. What truly matters is the process of transforming latent thoughts through condensation and displacement.

Condensation occurs when a single image or figure in a dream represents multiple chains of associations. For example, the person in the dream might have the face of the boss, the voice of the father, and the clothes of a former teacher. All of this serves to group various emotional charges into a single element, allowing the latent content to evade the psyche's censorship.

Displacement involves shifting the emotional focus from an important element to a trivial one. For example, someone might dream of breaking a glass and feel bad about it, but in reality, that feeling isn't about the glass itself, but about something important that the glass "represents"—that is, the work of association is at play here. Again, the aim is to conceal what truly disturbs us: desire.

Freud's central thesis is that every dream is a (disguised) fulfillment of a repressed wish. Even when a dream seems distressing or meaningless, a deeper analysis reveals an underlying wish seeking satisfaction.

The wish that is represented in the dream must be a child's wish. Therefore, in the adult it comes from the unconscious; in the child, in whom the separation and censorship between the conscious and unconscious do not yet exist or are only gradually being formed, it is an unfulfilled, unrepressed wish from waking life. I know that this intuition cannot be proven in general (p. 546).

Desire is the fuel. Without an unconscious desire to hold onto and prevail over the day's experiences, there would be no sleep. Sleep is the psyche's attempt to harmlessly discharge internal tension while the body rests.

An unconscious and repressed desire, whose fulfillment could only be felt by the dreamer's ego as painful, took advantage of the opportunity offered by the painful daytime remnants that remained invested with it, lent them its support, and thus made them dreamable. But while in case a the unconscious desire coincided with the conscious desire, in case b the divergence between the unconscious and the conscious—the repressed and the ego—becomes evident, and the situation of the fairy tale of the three wishes that the fairy granted to the couple is realized (p. 549).

Freud uses a simile to further explain how dreams work, and he does so through an economic analogy: the daytime thought is that of the "entrepreneur" who has the dream idea, but the unconscious desire is the "capitalist" who provides the capital—the energy—for the project to be realized.

To put it in an analogy: It is quite possible that a dream thought plays the role of the entrepreneur for the dream; but the entrepreneur who, as is often said, has the idea and the drive to put it into practice, can do nothing without capital; he needs a capitalist to pay for the expense, and this capitalist, who provides the psychic expenditure for the dream, is in all cases and inevitably, whatever the daytime thought may be, a wish that comes from the unconscious (p. 553).

Dreaming is an attempt to re-establish an original experience of satisfaction through "perceptual identity": making the subject believe, through a visual hallucination, that the desire has already been fulfilled. However, if the unconscious desire were to present itself directly, it would awaken the dreamer due to anxiety or moral conflict. Therefore, it must submit to psychic censorship, which forces it to disguise itself through the "work" of the dream. For Freud, the dream is the guardian of sleep; the desire to continue sleeping is, in itself, a driving force of sleep. The psychic apparatus prefers to create a fantasy—the dream—that satisfies the desire in a hallucinatory way, rather than allow internal tension or an external stimulus (such as hunger or a noise) to force the subject to wake up.

This idea of Freud's continued to be reformulated in texts subsequent to *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (Freud, 1992j), Freud establishes a parallel between the technique of joking and dream work, noting that both are "formations of the unconscious" that allow for the disguised fulfillment of wishes. In his study on jokes (1905), he uses the term

"substitution formation" to explain how wishes find indirect means of expression.

In "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*" (Freud, 1992k), Freud revises his initial thesis upon encountering the dreams of traumatic neuroses and those that repeat distressing situations. There he posits that, while dreams seek to be wish fulfillment—linked to the pleasure principle—there exists a "repetition compulsion" that may transcend this principle. Finally, in "*New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*" (Freud, 1992c), Freud returns to the problem to clarify that, despite exceptions—such as traumatic dreams—the function of dreams remains, essentially, the attempt to process unconscious desires.

Dreams and desire have been the subject of research for many psychoanalysts. For example, in Winnicott's theory, it is a transitional space—the same space where play and art occur. Dreaming is a person's capacity to create their own world and integrate elements of the external world into shared reality, making them part of their internal world. The dream is a bridge, not a wall. Dreaming is, in itself, a desire to exist creatively. Just as a child uses a teddy bear to cope with the absence of their mother, the adult uses dreams to cope with their conflicts. In the dream, the object is created by us, but at the same time, it feels like something external that happens to us. This capacity to "create" reality is what Winnicott calls creative apperception.

For Žižek, dreams are not an illusion that conceals reality, but rather the place where we find the truth of our

desires. Žižek argues that everyday life—waking life—functions as a fantasy that allows us to ignore the Real. He uses the dream of the “burning” son to demonstrate that, in a sense, human beings “awaken” to social reality to avoid confronting the traumatic core of their existence. Consequently, he emphasizes that the fulfillment of the desire in this dream is paradoxical. Desire is not something “nice”; it is a disturbing force. In the case of the burning child, the dream is the materialization of the father’s reproach and guilt; it “fulfills his desire” to confront his own failings, and it is so powerful that consciousness cannot contain it.

Therefore, let us be brave: Let us wish!

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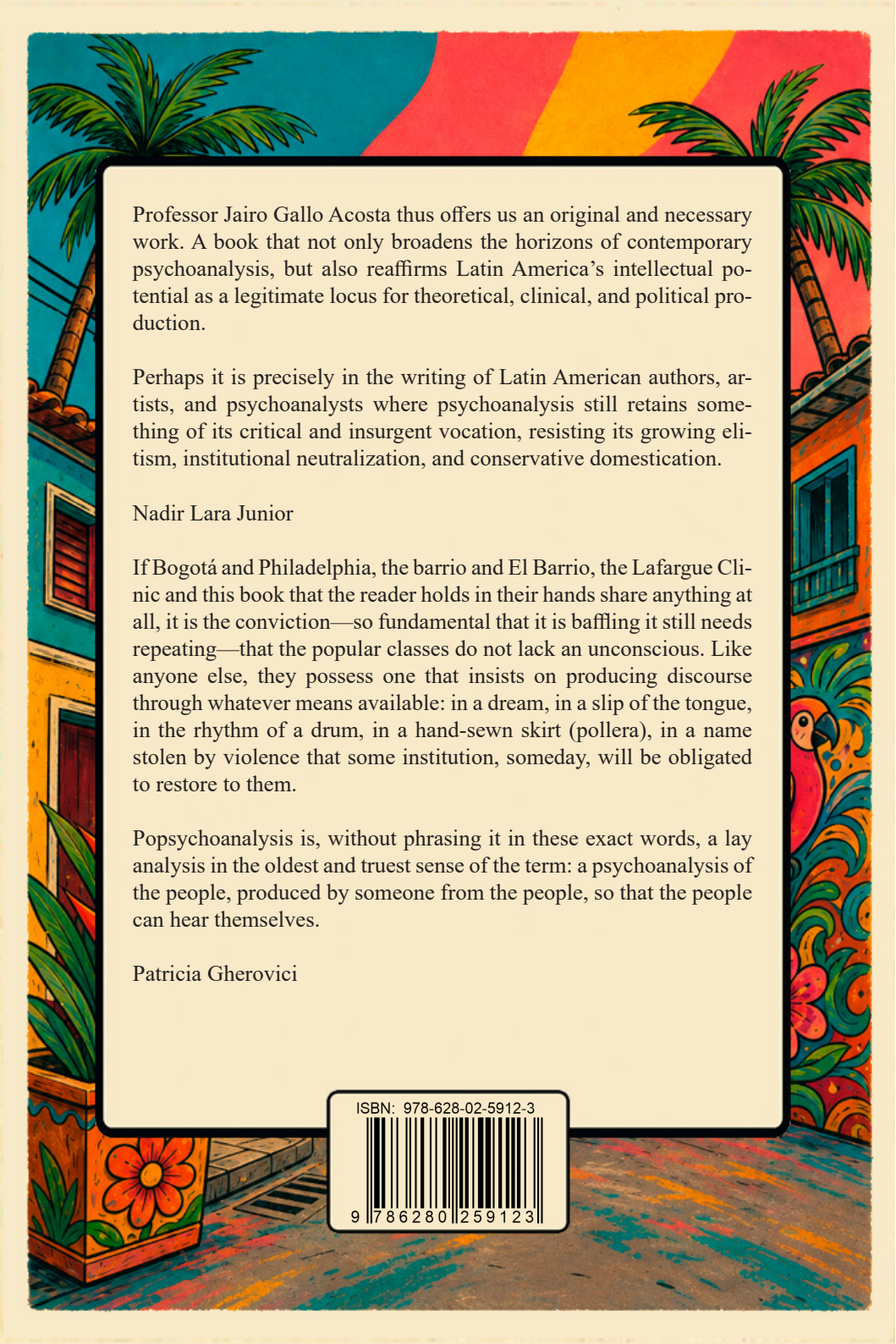
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Professor Jairo Gallo Acosta thus offers us an original and necessary work. A book that not only broadens the horizons of contemporary psychoanalysis, but also reaffirms Latin America's intellectual potential as a legitimate locus for theoretical, clinical, and political production.

Perhaps it is precisely in the writing of Latin American authors, artists, and psychoanalysts where psychoanalysis still retains something of its critical and insurgent vocation, resisting its growing elitism, institutional neutralization, and conservative domestication.

Nadir Lara Junior

If Bogotá and Philadelphia, the barrio and El Barrio, the Lafargue Clinic and this book that the reader holds in their hands share anything at all, it is the conviction—so fundamental that it is baffling it still needs repeating—that the popular classes do not lack an unconscious. Like anyone else, they possess one that insists on producing discourse through whatever means available: in a dream, in a slip of the tongue, in the rhythm of a drum, in a hand-sewn skirt (pollera), in a name stolen by violence that some institution, someday, will be obligated to restore to them.

Pops psychoanalysis is, without phrasing it in these exact words, a lay analysis in the oldest and truest sense of the term: a psychoanalysis of the people, produced by someone from the people, so that the people can hear themselves.

Patricia Gherovici

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