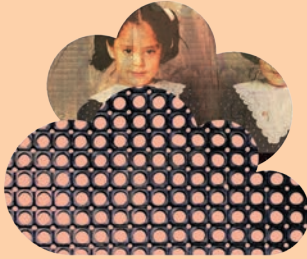
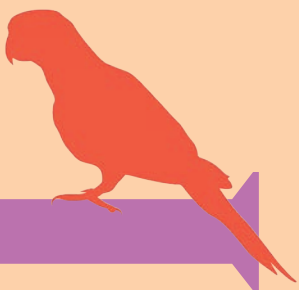


Mexican Fabrics



Monica Huerta



MAGICAL HABITS

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WRITING MATTERS! A series edited by Lauren Berlant,
Saidiya Hartman, Erica Rand, and Kathleen Stewart

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Durham and London 2021

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Aimee C. Harrison
Typeset in Portrait Text and Helvetica Neue
by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Huerta, Monica, [date] author.
Title: Magical habits / Monica Huerta.
Other titles: Writing matters! (Duke University Press)
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2021. | Series: Writing matters! | Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020044109 (print)
LCCN 2020044110 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478013266 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478014171 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478021483 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Ethnic restaurants—Illinois—Chicago. | Mexican American cooking—Social aspects. | Food habits—Social aspects—United States. | Mexican Americans—Ethnic identity. | Mexican Americans—Illinois—Chicago. | Cultural pluralism—Illinois—Chicago. | Decolonization—Study and teaching (Higher) | Feminist criticism.
Classification: LCC TX715.2.S69 H84 2021 (print) | LCC TX715.2.S69 (ebook) | DDC 647.95773/11—dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020044109>
LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020044110>

Cover art: Digital reproduction of lithograph of *Vespertilio-homo* on the moon. Originally printed in the *New York Sun*, on August 31, 1835. Photograph of Chicago skyline by Jeff Brown.

Publication of this book is supported by Duke University Press's Scholars of Color First Book Fund.

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IN WHAT FOLLOWS, dear reader, you will notice there are times when I use the first-person plural, *we* or *us*. Might I ask for your patience? It is not always obvious whom I mean, and it's for this reason: I don't know.

This book seeks to enact as much as describe. When I use *we*, therefore, I imagine it more as a liturgical than a declarative or prescriptive utterance. It's liturgical in this sense: in church, there were times when the priest's *we* would include me ("Give us this day our daily bread") and times when it would not ("We believe in One God, the Father, the Almighty"). No one quite gave me permission to identify or opt out, but the space was nonetheless available between the altar and me. Therefore, just as I ask for some patience, I also intend this note as an invitation.

I write in anticipation that some who have come to these pages will feel acknowledged. Svetlana Boym writes that "the nostalgic is looking for a spiritual addressee. Encountering silence, [s]he looks for memorable signs, desperately misreading them."¹ I wonder if it's possible to hold that misreadings can take us both into and out of nostalgia, if encountering memorable signs in what reveal themselves, over time, as misreadings can also release us, and if instead of looking for a spiritual addressee, I might be able to sustain—as a practice and a habit and a ritual—the conditional. If I were to have already found one, or many. If not, the fair truth is that that's how many books disappear, even those which studiously, humbly avoid either the first-person plural or an invitation. And so I take this other risk. Alone when I write *we*, but maybe soon with some company.

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A STATUE OF BENITO JUÁREZ stands in a small, tree-lined plaza beside the Wrigley Building, at the bend between the northern and eastern branches of the Chicago River. His figure is small enough that his metal clothing sits biggish on him. A more compassionate sculptor might have shrunk the coat to make it fit. Under the coat, bow tie, buttoned vest, and overcoat that reaches just below his knees, he hides one hand behind his back and relaxes the other at his side. It's an old-fashioned shape for repose, meant to emphasize, perhaps, that Juárez the Man belonged to a different time. His face wrinkles faintly around marked features and looks over as pedestrians and traffic glide along Michigan Avenue. Yet, even if tucked away, at the bend of a river, in the shadow of a building, Juárez the Statue, our (this book's and my) patron saint, presses very much on the present in a way that could undo us all.

I first found Juárez the Statue while conducting research for my senior thesis. I was surprised to find him there, in part because I hadn't been looking for him. Genuinely interested in an answer, I asked him, What are you doing here? And with both seriousness and a sense of play, he shot back, What are *you* doing here?

It happens that Abraham Lincoln greatly admired Juárez. Their terms as presidents coincided not only in chronology and civil war violence, but in the contours of the conservatisms and liberalisms that fractured their national polities. As president of Mexico, Juárez also contended with international wars, as when the Mexican army fought off a French invasion. For this and other reasons, he was called "the Mexican Lincoln" by some.² In turn, it was in part Lincoln's support for Juárez's efforts against the French that gained Lincoln respect from some Latin American leaders—especially as an emblem of a broad sense of "American" possibilities set apart from US imperial designs. The Mexican victory against the French was a particularly surprising one because the Mexican treasury was then still crippled by the imperial land grab that our textbooks refer to as the Mexican-American War (1846–48). (Lincoln, while a con-

gressman, had publicly opposed the war.) Through its invasion and military victory, including a march through Mexico City, the United States seized not only millions of acres, but also the eventual wealth from both the California gold mines and the oil rigs of the Southwest. Yet, drawing these divestments and profits together, one sees again settler colonial nations relying on displacements, dispossession, and violence to build up their coffers.

In the war's aftermath, millions of Mexico's citizens—some of whom thought of themselves as *Hispanos* with cultural ties to Spain—were given the option of becoming American citizens. Historian Laura Gómez has said that the war “should be understood as the moment in which Mexican Americans first became constituted as a racial group.”³ Whether Mexicans were a distinct race, however, would become its own legal and cultural tangle over time.⁴ And that tangle would carry with it an insistence that Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez has characterized this way: “The insistence on *Latinidad* as *mestizaje*, a triumphant and vigorous mixing of ‘three races’ to produce a unifying ethnicity in which we are ‘all mixed’—*café con leche*, *unos más café*, *otros más leche*—holds the same underlying structures of anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity as Anglo and U.S. racial hierarchies based on hypodescent.”⁵



On March 21, 1999, Mayor Richard M. Daley, the heir to Chicago's Daley family political machine (the bearers of the most local version of white supremacy of this story), recognized Juárez the Man as both a “Great President of Mexico” and as a “Hero of the Americas.”⁶ These are the words emblazoned on the plaque that accompanies the statue. But as the first indigenous Mexican president, his particular occupation of that political office bucks against the very claims of the postcolonial, *criollo*, settler-national sovereignty it rests on. In the United States perhaps even more so, because, of course, the office of the president of Mexico has no jurisdiction in the Chicago built on Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi, Miami, Ho-Chunk, Otoe, Missouria, Iowas, Meskwaki, Menominee, Sauk, Kickapoo, and Illini Confederacy lands. One paradox of Juárez's presidency was that he oversaw a massive eradication of collective indigenous rights, even as he was Zapotec.⁷

But as a symbolic arrivant to Chicago, his indigeneity nonetheless reminds us of the unstable jurisdiction of “Chicago” as a product of ongoing environmental devastation and dispossession, and of the consolidation of contemporary nation states through the same.⁸ The statue's ability to stand in as a heroic symbol for all the Americas, while in Chicago, renders his presidency beside the point, his heroism perhaps (and unintentionally) more oriented to-

ward a future that hasn't yet arrived and for which Juárez himself might not have prayed. For reasons that Mayor Daley can't have meant, that Juárez the Man might not have asked, Juárez the Statue nonetheless asks all of us who are not recognizable through relations as indigenous to these lands: What are you doing here? Let's hear the question politically and existentially, in the viscera where those tend to join.

Also unbeknownst (it feels safe to assume) to the board that selected Juárez the Man for recognition with Juárez the Statue beside the Wrigley Building, that building is likewise the product of a series of embedded, contested histories. The William Wrigley Jr. Company accumulated a fortune built from selling chewing gum, as though to really pinpoint how susceptible people are to suggestion: we'll chew just for the sake of it if someone artfully suggests we have the need. The company had its offices in the Wrigley Building until 2012, the same year the city designated the site as a landmark. It was designed by the architectural firm Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White and completed in 1924. The architect most responsible for its design, Charles Beersman, took inspiration from French Renaissance and Spanish revival styles, but specifically had the Giralda Tower of Seville's Cathedral in mind. Originally built as a minaret, the Giralda Tower was a tower for another god. But the building in Chicago looks enough like the cathedral-mosque to remind us that, in the early twentieth century when skyscrapers were first being imagined and built, architects were among those who believed their science might save humanity.

We haven't outgrown the architect's desire, and it's a good thing, when so many registers of catastrophe are undeniably plain, no matter what stories one is using to understand or deny them. But in the institutions and professions that have built up around the social role of aiming to make knowledge (and sometimes aiming at saving humanity with it), the largest rewards accrue to those who make heroic claims, as though anticipating our own statues. The first study of its kind. A discovery. A solution. New insight. This bears immanently on our present. Restitution. Recovery. Some of them are, in their way. In their way. But the heroic posture our professional and institutional structures ask us to perform rubs against the specialization of our trainings, the finitude of our resources, the multiple and ongoing collaborations necessary to actualize any project, the crumbling of political-material investments in education and social infrastructure more broadly. The professional structures that validate treating the enterprises of education like property to be bought and sold—paradigmatically owned—and, whether intellectual or otherwise, the logics of property always already belie any "before property" and those that we might yet summon. In more than one way,

property rights are a claim to time as a claim to eternity. The heroic posture, then, is the projection of the property logic—even when the heroic posture announces the limit points built into every kind of knowledge and knowing, even new knowledges and new knowings. And we uphold it, because we have bills, and because it feels good to wear, like a biggish coat.

One could venture that the heroic posture depends on those limit points; that in fact those limit points are the only reason to keep claiming discovery, arrival, uncovering, solving—in order to keep solving and arriving. This is emphatically not, by any stretch, a critique of those limit points. Quite the opposite. I'm more wary of the impulse for claiming or wanting a Totalizing Knowledge than of even these heroic postures. This is, rather, an appreciation of how important it could be, for those relatively few of us whose work is recognized as making knowledge from within a professional enterprise of making knowledge, to appreciate and name our limits just as much as our vantage, our practices, our habits of mind. And so this book takes up the limits of ways of knowing to sing in the growing scholarly band that aspires toward some otherwise, with Ruha Benjamin, with Lauren Berlant, with Stephen Best, with J. Kameron Carter, with Sarah Cervenak, with Ashon Crawley, with Eve Ewing, with Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez, with Alexis Pauline Gumbs, with Saidiya Hartman, with R. A. Judy, with Tiffany Lethabo King, with Fred Moten, with C. Riley Snorton, with Kathleen Stewart, with Priscilla Wald, with Judith Weisenfeld. I am grateful to write in a time when there are so very many more.

Of specific concern to this book are certain habits of thought to which we've been called in the hopes of both deconstructing racial and settler-colonial capitalism's structural and philosophical life and filling out historical archives shaped through and by these historical violences and imbalances of power. This book performs the question of whether these same critical imperatives—meant to liberate minds and so futures—can be livably lived in, that is, what they yield to and in a life when critical turns of thought are practiced like habits for living. Partly, through their critical practice I propose that constantly exhuming archives looking for versions of certainty can also become suffocating; that living as critique can manifest dizziness, distance, loneliness; that critique can take us far in a thick accounting with the past for the present, in an archaeology for the future, but falters as a mechanism for deciding what kind of choice or change it's time to fight for. As Neetu Khanna asks in *The Visceral Logics of Decolonization*, “How are we to feel new feelings?”⁹ If critique can bring us closer to contending with multiple temporalities, our locations amid these, and the feel of the material world that enraptures and

incarcerates and murders, this book digs in at the join where someone has to decide what to do, how to stay tender, become honest (by bringing close the intimate project of “being honest with yourself” with the more public one of “education” with the more explicitly political one of having and abiding by allegiances), but also to keep going with room for joy. On most days I would fight you and say this last part is paramount.

In all, *Magical Habits* is an experiment that takes inspiration from, for example, Alexis Pauline Gumbs’s poetic trilogy: *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*, *M Archive: After the End of the World*, and *Dub: Finding Ceremony*. I aim at a lived-in process in solidarity with an abolitionist praxis, understood, after Ruth Wilson Gilmore, as a consequence of divesting while presencing at once, and of affectively, spiritually, intellectually pressing toward a different political horizon but in such a way as to hold the institutional and structural divestment and reimagining toward which various collectives and coalitions push as also an entry point for reimagining everyday relations outside, especially, carceral logics, which work in important ways with property’s logics. As I have understood it (I am still learning) and taking leadership and drawing insights from the many generations of scholars and organizers like Mariame Kaba who have been doing this work, an abolitionist praxis requires, among other things, placing yourself, too, in relation to every manifestation, current, and countercurrent of history, and especially the structures and institutions whose primary outcomes are quickening death and thickening suffering for some. This while, at the same time, actively imagining and implementing the *where* that a pivot toward elsewhere—an elsewhere away from historical repetition—leads. Here, I aim to write the personal differently. In keeping with the spirit of experiment (this book works more like a series of questions rather than a handbook or argument), I also allow for missteps and incompleteness on the way to both assuming and inviting that horizon. *If I were already to have found them. If we were already to be a we, you and I.*

Magical Habits aims to find and articulate this unstable edge, between the practices of producing knowledges toward decolonization and the habits of living, sometimes in unfreedom, that some of those modes of thinking can nonetheless beget.¹⁰ This is because, in addition to making knowledge, I and what follows are invested in what it means, and what it takes to stay urgently attentive, but also supple and free, and how to cultivate multiple modes, multiple habits of thought rather than proposing there is one way of knowing, one genre, one discipline, one posture that can save us. That is, I’m invested in insisting that there are no heroes, just us and the habits we might choose to insist on and inch our ways to elsewhere.

What follows owes an obvious debt to a feminist mode of storytelling as criticism, inspired by scholars like Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, Black feminists from Sojourner Truth to Sylvia Wynter to Saidiya Hartman, and Latina feminists, especially those who find a theoretical origin with Gloria Anzaldúa. As with hybrid texts like *Borderlands/La Frontera*, *The Hundreds*, and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, this one practices omnivorous writing first to honor what each mode yields, to honor each as its own genre and so episteme, any of which needn't claim primacy or universality in a world enmeshed in and reproduced through radical difference and differentiation. I share the aims of these feminist traditions as with those who sought and seek to theorize beyond white-cis-hetero-masculinity's acutely limited vantage, especially about how to imagine and hold and relate to a capacious historicity of settler-colonial racial capitalism, its contradictions unresolved, its afterlives potent and thriving, while at the same time cultivating some other future than the one most probable through a logical (often genocidal) extension of those same afterlives.¹¹

At the same time, I also peer out from decades of misunderstandings of the Combahee River Collective's notion of "identity politics"—those willful, those unwilling. Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, for one, has done important work to clarify these misunderstandings. The collective wrote, "We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity."¹² As someone who grew up privileged in important ways, mostly beige, and ethnically ambiguous looking to some, I had to do a different kind of work to find and make the allegiances through which to articulate a more holistic politics. But there was no other beginning than through my position and positionality, and with disinvesting from the hierarchies that made the same possible, palpable, pleasurable—and without the need for recognition for this, which is also doing the very least.

Most often, inside and outside our classrooms, when a "vantage point" is proposed, the assumption is that a person's biography created it, and that biography, especially its identity markers and foundational structures, can become exemplary of those markers, those structures. And yes, in their way. And no, not entirely or exactly. By now, it's a maxim that any viewpoint is subjective, and also something much more than that because the structures that helped create it are broader, the markers historical. The connection between identity and politics was a practical one, that we learn about the world from where we stand, and if we stand in relation to structures of power whereby the power enforces limitations on our lives, we know more about those structures than those wielding their power.

And alongside the misreadings of the Combahee River Collective the personal need not have a proprietary (and so exclusive) relationship with those broader historical forces on account of their vantage. It can be helpful to parse the lived possibilities for finding a radical politics from the knowledges made available by various positions in relation to power. After all, the claim Anzaldúa makes is not only about the existence of a “new mestiza consciousness” but about that consciousness as a way of knowing. And in proposing it as a way of knowing, she proposes a work of imagination, a process of having been learned, having been practiced, in line, for one, with William James’s notion that all knowledge is teleological.

It’s first a way of knowing because a structural position produced it. But a way of knowing needn’t only be comprehended or even shared exclusively from within that structural position, even if and even as there are key and foundational aspects of felt experience that are shared, shared broadly, and shared through highly specific material and affective pathways. The point nonetheless is that a way of knowing can be learned, even if a life lived from within its production by specific structures might not be able to be entirely, neatly empathized with from another location in relation to those structures.

It (empathy) is an important question, but, just like what’s idiosyncratic about these personalized yet structurally produced vantage points, how important empathy needs to be in any moment and in any account is a local, rather than a structural, question. The daily torture of racism, classism, and cis-gendered heteronormative patriarchy can transform our spiritual needs for empathy into seeming as though they should be or might be structurally resolved. Material inequities require structural transformation. But even if it breaks our hearts and keeps us yearning (and for many, we’ve now moved far beyond the desire for empathy’s offerings), no empathy has ever been successfully prescribed, by either structures, saviors, or stories.¹³ Examples can be given and described, but need ever to be lived out, imperfectly, and according to the utterly human pace of one by one by one. This is, in part, the structure of empathy: there is no crisp prescription; only the intended receiver gets to decide if it’s been given. And who are any who have committed active, ongoing, unrelenting harm to say to any other, This should be good enough for you.

Plainly then, my aim in what follows is neither empathy nor recognition—excursions which, in a certain moment, could be crucial but which are also so often unsuccessful. As critic-authors like Namwali Serpell have explored, there are not only real imaginative limits to empathy’s promises and to seeking recognition through words and pictures, but there are also common violences in the midst of both.¹⁴ Even more plainly: on account of my relative

material stability and privileged though not harm-free trajectory through racialized matrices, in the pages that follow I do not need either empathy or recognition from you. And whenever I can help it (I cannot always help it), I am not here (in the local sense of this book, and in the broadest sense) to be consumed, enjoyed, or comprehensively comprehended. I have other needs and desires, and in the world we inherited, these are a luxury good I hope to put to good use here.

These are just some of the ways in which what follows departs from the critical tradition of (auto)biomythography that has a root in Audre Lorde's *Zami*, even as the stories here will reverberate against the same. These works, up through memoirs such as Carmen Maria Machado's brilliant *In the Dream House* and Myriam Gurba's resplendent *Mean*, marshal narrative and history toward expanding the grounds of recognizability for a varied authorial *I*. In these pages, *I* serves the accumulation of a questioning practice about our relation to archives, history, and nostalgia. The *I* that travels here gathers and disperses without an interest in culminating, appearing, or restoring archives. There is, then, more in common with Sharon Holland's reading of the biomythographical in novels where *I* is a question or the grounds for questioning.¹⁵ It's with this latter impulse of narration that what follows picks up and drops out of the personal: not toward recognition or historical restitution (though some of that might happen along the way), but toward an experimenting *I* as a dissolving ground from which and toward which emerge the historical, the familial, and the fictional as another set of questions. Put another way, I try to write inside/outside the propertied logics that tend to authorize personal writing. Juárez the Statue and I looking askance at one another, asking: What are you doing here?

It's fitting, then, that our patron saint offers his promise of another future from beside—and not inside—his temple, looking away from it but never able to leave. He's on the threshold of the conditions of his own possibility, capable of seeing just past it, after it but also not searching for another imperium. One of the challenges this book proposes is about that kind of intellectual and emotional openness as a habit of thinking and feeling: Is it sustainable—and how?—to keep being open to finding your and your thinking's limits? More: that his temple's style betrays layers of intertwined imperial and colonial histories renders both emblematic of how quickly a local story becomes global if it's allowed to bleed, and how the ends of those stories can nonetheless stay open: What are you doing here? As a kind of answer, our patron saint of questions reaches backward and forward in time, unsettles his own presumptions of authority, and disregards any neat boundaries between history, useful ac-

cidents of interpretation, and whatever happens next. Let's decide he's the patron saint of this book by being the patron saint of all of that, of an inclination, of an opening, of insisting, a capacity for loving beyond knowing for certain and becoming safe (worthy) of that kind of love in return.

The writing in this book, then, follows Juárez the Statue's symbolic and affective lead. It arises from the particulars I know best, of growing up in Chicago's Mexican restaurants; extraparticular histories that reach out into global flows are one, and a more familiar, answer to the question of what we are doing here. But those particulars are also the vantage point from which my writing seeks out the unlivable limits of some of our critical habits for history. To those ends, I take on several modes of writing. Each approaches history and critical historical practices from its own generic and intellectual strengths. The numbered pieces work most like criticism in both an associative and personal mode, closest in spirit to what C. Nadia Seremetakis has called "micrological ethnographic sites" that "trace, translate and analyze cultural phenomena and practices as performative dynamics of and in everyday life" even as "they are cross cut by recurrent themes."¹⁶ These portions of *Magical Habits*, then, are written as the kind of ethnography—of producing and encountering thinking as a critic about and with history—from within the "dynamics of and in everyday life" and often from the vantage of childhood and youth, sites of so much open and undisciplined theorizing, though not often taken in as such by scholarly cultures and conventions. The dated pieces are fictionalized echoes that an archival dig could miss but that are nonetheless pieced together from inherited family oral histories. Some names have been changed to protect privacy, others have not. These two—the numbered and the dated—are in an ongoing dialogue about the relationship between self, history, and storytelling habits as self- and world-making. The single fairy tale playfully extends the philosophical ramifications of this dialogue by dramatizing perhaps the most popular mariachi ballad in Latin America, sung ritualistically in any relation to masculinity and with aspirations toward being "El Rey," despite, so the lyrics go, not having a throne, a queen, nor anyone who understands you.

Throughout, I've included bits of documents and images that gesture toward the kind of archive that informs still another mode of writing in which I work here, a sketching of a cultural history of Mexican restaurants in Chicago. I first took on that project as a college senior, just as I met Juárez the Statue. I include it here, edited for clarity, to signal the writing practice most familiar to scholars. I also include it to make plain once again—by way of contrast with the other writing—the liveliness its conventions miss. As a won-

derful reader of this manuscript helpfully put it, genre here acts as “a holding environment” for all the questions I ask.

My writing as a scholar-in-training is also a provocation to consider what it can do for us and our intellectual cultures not to partake in the fiction of our own scholarly progression as along a trajectory of linear time. Much as we might deconstruct both those notions—progress, time—for scholars, it’s nonetheless possible to imagine that somehow our aging begets something better, more, more heroic. I suppose this choice on my part is a kind of professional risk. I would write this cultural history differently were I writing it now. But the hope is that the humility inherent in the gesture of making scholarship into its own intimate archive might also be a productive one. Even if only to insist as much by translating what else happened beyond any book’s margins. And yet, how would our postures of “understanding” shift away from the heroic if we thought of the process not as one marked by accumulation (a propertied affair), but as one of continually divesting previous habits, and then seeking to divest again? What writer hasn’t suggested it? I write the book as the book writes me.

Offering these modes of writing as part of an intertwined critical project, I loosen the strict, generic bind of each while nonetheless holding up their intellectual promise.¹⁷ The hope is to help cultivate a more capacious livability in our thinking that honors irresolution’s affective strain, that is, the work of living decently (ethically) and rigorously in a world built such that choosing both can be excruciating, while at the same time proposing the humility of wandering eagerly and attentively toward our needs (another name for our limits) as toward one another as toward the horizon abolitionists articulate. It’s also a call to be responsible for becoming a safe haven. The hero’s journey, after all, can be paralyzing in its loneliness, and the rewards of that journey—even if victory were possible, as in conquering one single archive once and for all—more likely to be empty of joy. Accolades are nice but rarely snuggle or dance with us. Why not keep bending our writing and our thinking toward opening up the possibilities for ever more rewarding practices and habits, where the reward is the chance at more chances of making ever more freedom into lived, material realities? The rewards might be about divesting, giving up the gods hidden over by professionalism’s marriage to the way capital, for one, has structured the shape of our fields of inquiry.¹⁸ It can be a revolution: to pray differently, that is, to take on scholarly rituals that lead to elsewhere—an elsewhere that’s unknown in any definitive sense, but must, nonetheless, exist. That is, if as knowledge-makers possibilities are primarily what we desire to be opening?

Because, finally and urgently, I want us to make all and any forms of knowledge while and as we honor the sacks of tender, feeling flesh we drag to computers, to libraries, and back home after long days, overwrought with and underloved from history; honor the students who trust us with their potential; honor the beloveds waiting patiently or impatiently for us to finish that thought; honor us all without re-creating habits that cordon off one portion from another, that ask us to sacrifice ways of knowing in order to feel like a hero in a diorama we've created from a shoebox. For these reasons, my critical wanderings stubbornly refuse to choose one mode, one habit, one genre, one kind of knowledge and knowing. In practicing and making habits from the multiple, in writing from and as the relentless limits of the multiple (rather than another heroic, Whitmanesque version of multiplicity), I reach beyond the powerful, bewitching idea of one, not to conquer but to offer, and to find a way to genuflect toward our patron saint as a mode of dignity rather than abasement. If we sacrifice the singular hero and the need for the same, there's a chance (however fragile, however sincere, however hopeful, however simple) we'll gain one another. That, too, is what I am doing here.

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PREFACE

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- 1 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 8.
- 2 Nicola Miller in Biagini et al., “Interchange,” 471.
- 3 Gómez, *Manifest Destinies*, 17.
- 4 See Molina, *How Race Is Made*; and López, *White by Law*.
- 5 Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas*, 11.
- 6 It is not without a sense of historical irony that one of the best-known sites of Chicano mobilizing and protest against the City of Chicago happened at Benito Juárez High School on the lower west side of Chicago. See Marroquin, “Youth as Engaged Cultural Workers.”
- 7 For essays on the ways indigenous communities throughout Mexico worked both against and within Juárez’s liberal, consolidating reforms, see Ohmstede, *Los pueblos indios*.
- 8 In *The Transit of Empire*, Jodi Byrd borrows the term *arrivant* from poet Kamau Brathwaite to theorize horizontally among indigenous peoples and racialized peoples and as an attempt to signal the ongoing displacements of settler colonialism.
- 9 Khanna, *The Visceral Logics of Decolonization*, 1.
- 10 In their important article, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang “remind readers what is unsettling about decolonization,” which “brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (1). The article enumerates the ways in which making decolonization into a metaphor, even a critical one, even one oriented toward social justice ends, plays into the production of what they term “settler moves to innocence” (1). Taking their provocation seriously, in this preface I avoid using the term as a metaphor, and write about other motivations and intellectual practices as working “toward decolonization.”
- 11 I’m inspired here and elsewhere by the ana-grammatical insights of Black feminism as related by Christina Sharpe in *In the Wake*.
- 12 Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” 19.
- 13 Paul Bloom distinguishes between cognitive and emotional empathy in *Against Empathy*. These are helpful categories. I would suggest, too, that there might be a way to think of each of these as embedded in the histories by which some are more and less easily empathizable, in any register.
- 14 Serpell, “The Banality of Empathy.”
- 15 Holland, “When Characters Lack Character.”
- 16 Seremetakis, *Sensing the Everyday*, 5.

- 17 As I've written these sections, I've often thought of the moment in the introduction to *Touching Feeling* when Eve Sedgwick describes the trouble and risks of seeking to write "nondualistically": "I've always assumed that the most useful work of this sort is the likeliest to occur near the boundary of what a writer can't figure out how to say readily, never mind prescribe to others: in the Jacoblike wrestling—or t'ai chi, as it may be—that confounds agency with passivity, the self with the book and the world, the ends of the work with its means, and, maybe most alarmingly, intelligence with stupidity" (2). She cites her stubbornness as related to being a Taurus. Alas, my own is Cancerian.
- 18 I am ever thankful for the generous thinking and work of Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and other critical university studies scholars.

1. THE SYNTHESIS PROBLEM

- 1 Kathleen Stewart's remarkable attention to the ordinary as intensities made available through critical description kept me sane in my own making out of the ordinary in these essays. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*.
- 2 Reading Sianne Ngai on the gimmick clarified why I thought this was the right and ironic question to ask here, and why we need and want splotches. S. Ngai, "Theory of the Gimmick."
- 3 The cardiovascular system of these essays aligns best with Antonio Viegó's vision for multicultural, antiracist Lacanian subjects, split and so unmanageable either by state projects or by the attendant aesthetic projects that make ethnic subjects palatable. Viegó, *Dead Subjects*.
- 4 Everything I know about color, I learned from Nicholas Gaskill. Gaskill, *Chromographia*.
- 5 Huerta, "What's Mine"; Mensel, "Kodakers Lying in Wait."
- 6 Scholars like Tao Leigh Goffe and Kyla Wazana Tompkins have done important work to expand the questions and insights that can be gained through studying foodways.
- 7 I submitted "The Burrito Dream: Authenticity and Cultural Hybridity in Mexican Restaurants in Late-Twentieth-Century Chicago" to the Committee on Degrees in History and Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of bachelor of arts with honors at Harvard College, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on February 28, 2003. If you search for it on HOLLIS, Harvard's online library catalog, it may help to have the HOLLIS ID# 990095161050203941.
- 8 For an extended series of studies on this moment in world-making, see Flores, Aparicio, Mora-Torres, and Torres, *The Mexican Revolution in Chicago*; and *Historic City: The Settlement of Chicago*, commissioned by the City of Chicago Department of Development and Planning. The latter publication communicates the explicit goal of tracing the "ethnic" immigration into the city of Chicago.
- 9 "The war [World War I] stimulated the migration and importation of Mexican labor into Chicago for the first time; their numbers equaled or surpassed