

Acknowledgments

Books emerge through ways of living, and this one springs from an extraordinary decade spent in collaboration with my life's most abiding friend, Julietta Singh. It came into being through exchanges of books, thoughts, and feelings with her over time. I learn from her daily what it means to live, think, parent, teach, write, eat, and desire new worlds. Our experiments in queer kinship and coparenting have been formative to this project, as has our daughter Isadora, whose wonder is infectious and who is embedded in these pages.

And now, two brief stories. In 2011, weeks before defending my dissertation, I was interviewed via Skype for the Copeland Fellowship at Amherst College. The theme, that year, was the Future of the Humanities. The camera on their end was positioned such that I couldn't see any humans most of the time, so it was like being interviewed by a seminar table and a window that spoke in various voices. Near the end of the interview, Austin Sarat, the chair of the committee, asked me what I would think of a proposal to close the Department of German to open, instead, a Department of Catastrophe Studies. While I later kicked myself for not replying, "Thinking of Walter Benjamin, I suspect a German department already is catastrophe studies," in the moment I rehearsed a standard claim that I would oppose any move that would further diminish a focus on the in-depth study of languages and literatures. Austin replied, "So, you're a humanist just like the rest of us?" Needless to say, I didn't receive the fellowship. I want to begin by thanking Austin Sarat for his obvious disappointment, which I took to be not just in me, but in "the rest of us." The affective charge of that response reoriented my reading, thinking, and writing, and without it I'm quite certain I would have written a very

different book. *Animate Literacies* is my attempt to wander way from being a disappointing humanist.

The other event that made this book possible was a leave from teaching in the spring of 2013 to stay home with my infant daughter, Isadora. Writing anything scholarly while caring full time for an infant whose needs and schedule are radically unpredictable (despite exerting whatever control we tried) was out of the question, so I filled the small amounts of downtime I had by emailing people. If there is a benefit to not holding a tenure-track position, it is that I wasn't in a rush to publish a monograph and was able to take time to figure out how to unlearn my humanist habits. So I envisioned an edited book on the politics of humanism and schools, both university and P-12, that would gather scholars working across humanities, social sciences, and educational fields. No publisher I contacted could see a way to market such a volume, but those emails set into motion chains of events that determined my antidisiplinary career and brought me into conversation with people who radically changed how I thought.

The folks housed in education programs I contacted became some of my closest colleagues in the fields of curriculum studies and educational philosophy, in part through my work coediting two books collecting their essays. While *Animate Literacies* isn't pitched as a direct contribution to the field of curriculum studies, all of my thinking about these matters has been shaped by my friends and comrades in that field. First and foremost, I want to thank my closest collaborators and coeditors: Jenny Sandlin, Debbie Sonu, Stephanie Springgay, Aparna Mishra Tarc, Sarah E. Truman, John Weaver, and Zofia Zaliwska. I've also learned more than I can ever comprehend from Peter Appelbaum, Sandro Barros, Donald Blumenfeld-Jones, Dennis Carlson, David Cole, Mary Aswell Doll, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, Liz de Freitas, Jen Gilbert, Walter Gershon, Sandy Grande, Rob Helfenbein, Mark Helmsing, M. Francine Huckaby, Gabe Huddleston, Jan Jagodzinski, Jim Jupp, Crystal Laura, Patti Lather, Tyson Lewis, Bettina Love, Marcia McKenzie, Marla Morris, Helena Pedersen, Barbara Pini, Sam Rocha, Bettie St. Pierre, Eve Tuck, and Jason Wallin.

The late William Spanos responded to one of my emails with enormous enthusiasm, and within two months had sent me a full text for the collection. His generosity, to a young scholar he'd never met, kept me working to find a venue for the essays that didn't fit the curriculum-oriented

books. He also introduced me to his former students R. Radhakrishan and Asimina Karavanta, who each contributed to the collection. Mina invited me—and Julietta and Isadora—to Athens for the War on the Human Conference, and ended up coediting the collection with me: a special issue of *Symploke* called “Posthumanisms.” Her friendship and thoughtful critique have meant a great deal to me, and I owe her an incalculable debt for leading me to the work of Sylvia Wynter. Jeffrey di Leo, at *Symploke*, also indirectly led me to Christopher Breu, who has become one of my most important interlocutors (about literature, music, politics, and pedagogy), and whose Facebook page hosts a dialogue about philosophy and literature that has inspired many of the ideas in this book. Some of the other participants in that dialogue—Stacy Alaimo, Carlos Amador, Sean Grattan, Annie McClanahan, and Rebekah Sheldon—have, whether they know it or not, helped me figure things out.

Jeffrey later invited me to review two books by Brian Massumi for the journal, which led to Erin Manning sending me a message the night before I began teaching for the spring semester of 2017. My literary powers are woefully inadequate to the task of expressing how much Erin and Brian’s presence has meant to my life. Far beyond their support of this book, I have come to love their energy, their enthusiasm, and the way they dream better worlds into existence. Erin and Brian came to Richmond in April 2018, and the only word I’ve ever found that comes close to describing what happened among us is “magic.” It was transformative far beyond what I could have ever anticipated.

I want to thank the participants of an ACLA seminar that Julietta and I organized in 2015 called “Bodies/Texts/Matter”: Karyn Ball, Christopher Breu, Hsuan Hsu, and Susan McHugh. I read “*Beloved’s* Dispersed Pedagogy” there, and their responses shaped the book that grew out of it. I also want to thank Stephanie Springgay for bringing me to the University of Toronto/Ontario Institute for the Study of Education as a visiting scholar in early 2017, and for inviting me to have the After the Anthropocene Working Group in Toronto read two chapters of this book in draft form. The spirited discussion helped me to clarify many of the stakes of this book. I also shared a portion of the book with participants of the “Non-human Encounters” event at New York University, organized by Ann Pellegrini and Katie Gentile, who also happened to be, along with Carla Freccero, the speakers on the Animals panel with me. This was the single most

exhilarating and inspiring academic event I've ever been a part of, and I owe a great deal to Ann for inviting me, and for all the conversations we had around it, conversations that haunt the pages of *Animate Literacies*. Christian Haines, Christopher Breu, and Greg Seigworth read drafts of the manuscript and offered crucial feedback when I needed it most.

In graduate school, I spent time in two different PhD programs—comparative literature, where I finished, and literacy education, where I began. Working in and across two fields that are so institutionally separated—at the University of Minnesota, they were housed in different colleges—has inspired my affective dysphoria with disciplinarity. In the years leading up to beginning this book, I often found myself toggling back and forth between the theoretical humanities and curriculum studies (in terms of journals and conferences), even as I have persistently failed to see any benefit to their separation.

My years at the University of Minnesota were shared with a host of incredible teachers, mentors, and friends who animated my education: Richard Beach, Robin Brown, Tony Brown, Thomas Cannavino, Aaron Carico, Siobhan Craig, Patricia Crain, Cesare Casarino, Nicholas de Villiers, Shirley Garner, Andrea Gyenge, Matt Hadley, Christian Haines, Wade Haynes, George Hoagland, Nate Holdren, Qadri Ismail, Kjell Johnson, Josephine Lee, Richard Leppert, Catherine Liu, Cecily Marcus, David O'Brien, Valentine Pakis, Aly Pennucci, Ricardo Rebolledo, Sara Saljoughi, Harvey Sarles, Simona Sawhney, Hoon Song, Matthew Stoddard, Benedict Stork, Gary Thomas, Joe Tomkins, John Troyer, and Julie Wilson. While in curriculum and instruction, I flourished thanks to Tom Friedrich, Kyle Greenwalt, and Mark Vagle. Above all there, I want to thank the members of my doctoral committee: Timothy Lensmire, John Mowitt, Thomas Pepper, Jochen Schulte-Sasse, and Shaden Tageldin.

Working at the University of Richmond has afforded me the unusual opportunity to teach across disciplines and constantly experiment with my pedagogy. I especially want to thank the students across the years in my *Vampires in Literature and Film*, *Modern Literary Theory*, *Feminist and Queer Theories*, *Democracy and Education*, and *Philosophy of Education* classes. In the Department of English, I could not have found more proactive and generous chairs than Suzanne Jones and Louis Schwartz, or better colleagues: Bert Ashe, Laura Browder, Abigail Cheever, Daryl Dance, Terryl Givens, Libby Gruner, Brian Henry, Ray Hilliard, Peter Lurie, Joyce

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I want to also thank the university for funds that enabled Julietta and me to bring Jack Halberstam, Christopher Breu, Erin Manning, and Eileen Joy to campus. In different ways, each of them has shaped how I think about the politics of the university, humanistic inquiry, and what it means to be a teacher.

The city of Richmond has been a constant source of ghosts as the former capital of the Confederacy struggles to think through its past as it rises to a new status as one of the US's hippest cities. Especially because of my involvement with the local public schools—part of it made possible by the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement at the University of Richmond (and especially the work of Sylvia Gale, Amy Howard, and Cassie Price)—I am keenly aware of how the legacies of slavery and a slave economy are woven entirely through the material fabric of contemporary life, and how settler colonialism is an ongoing violence. At the same time, it is a city hospitable to an ecologically oriented food scene that quite literally keeps me alive. Rebecca Ponder and Alistar Harris (and Georgia) at Origins Farm, Autumn and Brian at Tomten Farm, Hunter Hopcroft and the crew at Harvest, Kate from the St. Stephen's Farmer's Market, Maurice from the Birdhouse Market, and Anna from the Byrdhouse Market before that, plus all the folks working toward the Richmond Food Coop: thank you for re-

minding this kid who spent tons of time in gardens and on farms growing up why it matters so much what and how we eat, and expanding my sense of what it means today to imagine ethical forms of everyday life. Thank you to Lamplighter Coffee for providing a great deal of the caffeine that made this book possible, and often a table at which to write. Thanks to the folks at Salvation Tattoo (especially Josh Autrey) and Black Rabbit Tattoo (especially Jelena Wolves) for the endorphins, and to the whole crew at High Point Barbershop. Ward Tefft, Julie Glover, and everyone at Chop Suey bookstore are the best.

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the theoretical humanities can receive. Being able to work with Liz as she transitions from assistant to an editor at the press has been a dream, and her commitment to the project matters enormously to me. Last, I want to thank the two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions, critiques, and enthusiasm kept me going and significantly improved the book.