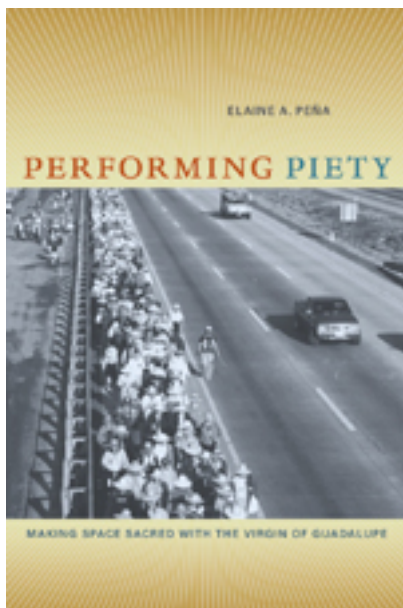


## ***Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe* by Elaine A. Peña**

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In *Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe*, Elaine A. Peña examines four manifestations of the Virgin of Guadalupe cult, two within the built environment of Chicago and two evidenced by the physical movement of *peregrinas* (pilgrims) in Central Mexico. This book contributes to the field of critical Guadalupan studies both in its examination in transnational sites of the cult as well as its focus on all-female pilgrimages. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, Peña argues that believers create sacred space through their devotional labor (singing, walking, cleaning, kneeling, etc.) and interprets this devotional labor as an embodied practice that results in the accumulation of devotional capital, putting the believer in good standing with fellow practitioners as well as with the Virgin of Guadalupe. She emphasizes the fact that each sacred space in Illinois and Mexico is produced and sustained by specific types of devotional labor, yet that a consistent repertoire unifies the practice of worship across geopolitical borders. This focus on devotional labor and embodied practice emerges from Peña's reflections on her fieldwork in two sites and during two pilgrimages devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

In each chapter of the book, Peña identifies the key players and pivotal moments that created the conditions for the production of each sacred space. This historical backdrop provides the context for Peña's fieldwork, from which she derives the bulk of her evidence. At each site, Peña takes part in a "co-performative witnessing" either by participating in activities at the

shrines or by walking along the pilgrimage routes. The active engagement in the production of sacred space lends credibility to her interpretations and supports her decision to study pilgrimage through the lens of phenomenology and performance studies. Rather than just referencing devotional labor, Peña herself performs devotional labor, both in enduring the difficult trek to Tepeyac and, I would argue, in the intellectual labor of recording, processing, and publishing this book.

*Performing Piety* also traces Peña's journey from her graduate study at Northwestern University, where she searches for a research project, to completing several pilgrimages with all-female peregrinas to Tepeyac. She divides the book into three sections: "Building," "Walking," and "Conquering." In "Building," Peña examines the Second Tepeyac of North America, located in Des Plaines, Illinois, which she argues serves both religious and secular functions. Not only does Second Tepeyac provide a space for believers to congregate and worship the Virgin, it also serves as a makeshift *taller de ciudadanía* (citizenship workshop) held during Sunday services. The concurrence of these activities points to two different types of migration northward: the successful peregrinations of the Guadalupean cult and the more challenging immigration of people across the border. In addition, Peña broadens the well-documented concept of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a specifically Mexican symbol of national identity to include the presence of believers from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala.

In the two chapters that comprise the second section, "Walking," Peña compares two different pilgrimage routes, one originating from Santiago de Querétaro and the other from Zitácuaro, Michoacán. In her recollections of traveling with these two groups of women, Peña emphasizes the economic disparities as the most pronounced difference between the participants. While the women from Querétaro take part in an officially sanctioned pilgrimage to Tepeyac, complete with luggage trucks and mobile churches, those from Zitácuaro participate in an unofficial one and lack the aforementioned amenities. Peña portrays the peregrinas from Querétaro as consumers, who purchase food, shelter, and souvenirs along their pilgrimage. This ability to consume translates into buying a more prominent place at the front of the line—a sign of devotion—and Peña draws attention to the hierarchy among the women, which is determined by financial expenditures. On the other hand, Peña characterizes the women from Zitácuaro by their individual stories, bodily signs of physical exertion (i.e., calluses, bruises, sore muscles, etc.), and their rejection of commercialization. She links these hardships to sociopolitical factors beyond the control of the individual women, including the negative effects of NAFTA and immigration from Michoacán to the United States.

Returning to the greater Chicago area in the final section, "Conquering," Peña focuses on the apparition of the Virgin Mary on a tree near Rogers Park in 2001. Believers flocked to the tree, leaving candles and flowers, and performing other acts of devotional labor, including erecting a shrine to protect the apparition. This miracle did not appeal to all members of this ethnically heterogeneous neighborhood, and it posed new challenges for local police enforcement, which

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seized this moment to collect information on illegal immigrants. Peña analyzes this apparition through the lens of these tensions between believers and non-believers, culminating in a mysterious fire that disfigured the apparition and, much later, two annual celebratory block parties that incensed some of the neighbors.

In each chapter of *Performing Piety* Peña emphasizes the specific challenges that face both individuals and communities in their desire to worship the Virgin of Guadalupe. Her in-depth knowledge of Guadalupan studies, transnational communities, and ethnoreligious spaces help support her insights and provide a useful framework for situating her research. The book includes perfunctory maps and self-taken black-and-white photographs—the latter serve as visual signposts that convey basic information, yet are hard to decipher. As an additional resource for scholars interested in sonic dimensions of the peregrinas journey, she includes the lyrics to several songs as the “Pilgrimage Repertoire” in the appendix. Throughout, Peña weaves together theory, history, ethnography, and performance studies to create a convincing argument on the nature of transnational Guadalupan devotion.

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**Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Southern California, where she earned her Master’s degree in Art History in 2009. Her dissertation focuses on contemporary Mexican artists who reinterpret Pre-Columbian visual culture in their work. Her research interests span from late 19<sup>th</sup> century Mexican casts in U.S. museums to the impact of collecting practices on indigenous communities. She has participated in summer programs in both archaeology and anthropology, and has worked in various museums in San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C. In addition, she is a Research Assistant for Kaya Press, a non-profit independent publisher for books that address the Asian Diaspora.