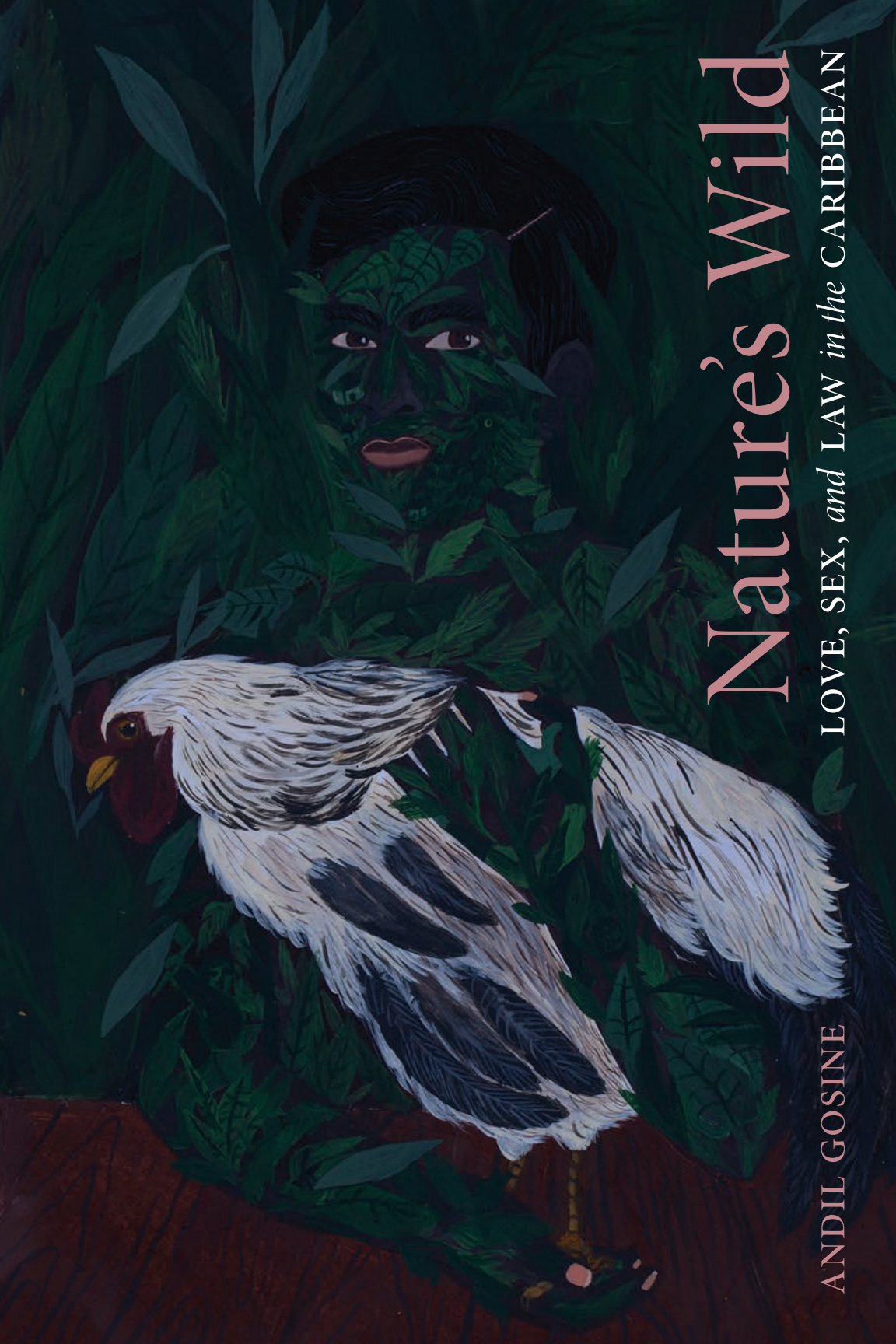


The book cover features a dark, moody illustration. In the foreground, a white chicken with black spots on its wings and tail stands on a wooden surface. Behind it, a person's face is partially obscured by dense green foliage, with only their eyes and mouth visible. The overall color palette is dominated by deep greens and dark tones, with the white of the chicken providing a sharp contrast.

Nature's Wild

ANDIL GOSINE

LOVE, SEX, and LAW in the CARIBBEAN



NATURE'S WILD

LOVE, SEX, *and* LAW *in the* CARIBBEAN

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, ix

INTRODUCTION, 1

1 *Puhngah!*, 13

2 Clothes Make the Man, 32

3 The Father, a Godfather, and the
Specter of Beasts Old and New, 62

4 *Désir Cannibale*, 103

5 *Natures' Wild*, 130

NOTES, 153

WORKS CITED, 159 INDEX, 171

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Introduction

I was late to learn of sex. I was thirteen years old and in my second year at Presentation College, a Catholic all-boys school atop San Fernando Hill in Trinidad. Twenty-something-year-old Mr. Ramkissoon (not his real name) was talking us through the brackets and multiplication and square roots that would lead us to a solution x , so much a favorite activity of mine that I often asked him for extra algebra homework. Mr. Ramkissoon was one of our few male teachers to don a stylish, contemporary wardrobe. Those teachers who were Brothers of the Order sported long white cotton robes, while a favorite of the older men was the “Shirt Jack,” better known internationally as the Cuban-associated guayabera. Mr. Ramkissoon’s daily wardrobe comprised a form-fitting shirt tucked into narrow-legged slacks, a sharp contrast to the shining navy blue polyester of the heavy-set, rosy-faced visitor who suddenly appeared and interrupted our lesson in algebra that afternoon. Father Larry

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(not his real name) would occasionally make these visits to provide moral instruction. Neither the students nor teacher were told in advance about when he might appear, thus ensuring that a sense of trepidation permanently hung in the air. The two exchanged a few words and after a quickly forgotten note indicating the transition, Mr. Ramkissoon abruptly left the classroom.

Father Larry pointed to the row of students in which I happened to be seated and ordered the five of us to stand up. "Prove to me," he instructed, "that you are not a homosexual." We stood silent in the nook between surface and seat of our creaky wooden desks. Father Larry paused, his slanted smile signaling sadistic delight about the humiliation that was certain to unfold. Another pause and I could see his hand ready to lift and point at one of us to prompt an answer. I was sure that his pointing finger was to land in my direction. Instead, a confident, cheerful voice broke the silence. "Show me the girls [at the adjoining Presbyterian school, Naparima] next door," snapped Ramsingh from the back row (where else would the appointed class jester sit?), "and I'll give you proof." Everyone, including Father Larry, erupted into laughter. This spontaneous burst of heterosexual teenage lust rescued the classroom's five potential homosexuals, including me, from the burden of proof. But I was so caught up in my shame that nothing he said registered after that, although I am sure he must have stayed for at least an hour. The minute Father Larry finally exited, I turned to a classmate for relief. "What," I asked, "is a homosexual?" His answer prompted another question: "But . . . what is sex?" He filled me in some more, much to my surprise and horror.

This provocation from Father Larry was my entry point for conscious thinking about sexual desire. Thirty years later, I am struck about how efficiently this encounter maps the complex terrain of historical antecedents for the production and regulation of sexualities in colonized territories like Trinidad and Tobago, identifies some of the main actors engaged, and signs important questions and tensions at the heart of contemporary debates about sexual rights. Our exchange with Father Larry, a microcosmic expression of a dynamic produced and reproduced in scales large and small, in contexts past and present, offers evidence of the key arguments presented about sexual rights struggles in the Anglophone Caribbean in scholarship and popular media, signing both the long, structured history of homophobia that actively delegitimizes nonheterosexual sex and the primary role played by the Christian Church and state institutions like schools in its production. As in the encounter with Father Larry, however, this history is complicated and layered with contradictions. Just as Father Larry's disciplining of homosexuality simultaneously introduced me and, I would guess, other boys to its very

possibility, and may have even worked to sanction homoerotic imaginations, so too have related cultural and legal codes intended to control sexuality also produced ambivalent consequences, sometimes positing completely different effects consciously and subconsciously.

The exchange between Father Larry and us students is also an example of a five-centuries-long struggle put to Caribbean peoples: to prove ourselves human, and not wild, like animals. “Every culture feels that they’ve hard-won distances between themselves and the animals,” West Indian American artist Lorraine O’Grady observed to me in a 2010 interview, “and anything that reminds you that you haven’t come so far is problematic. [It] puts the culture in jeopardy.” Negotiations of the distance between “human” and “animal” play out in all kinds of everyday acts and throughout the institutions governing our conditions of life, but what perhaps most threatens the ideological maintenance of this division is sex, and sex is therefore the target of intense regulation. The sex act, O’Grady says, reminds us of our animality and is “almost an affront to the ways in which culture has tried to circumscribe nature.” In the artist’s diptych *The Clearing* (plate 1), O’Grady draws a line between five hundred years of pairings between white men and Black women that imperil the human/animal divide propping up facades of civilization across the Americas in the subtitle of the work: *or Cortez and La Malinche, Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, N. and Me*. Each subject holds a different position in the fields of power it occupies, but all, including the artist herself, are implicated in the messy execution of sexual desire; as Giorgio Agamben has also said of every culture that claims itself civilized, “man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human” (2004, 26).

In her related 1998 essay “Olympia’s Maid,” O’Grady theorizes that the relationship between the white male and the Black female was the start of the disruption of faith between the white male and the white female. On plantations in the American South, sex between white masters and enslaved Black people was evidenced by the abundance of light-skinned progeny. The masters’ wives assumed a state of suspended disbelief, choosing, at least on the surface, to deny their own eyes rather than admitting the fractured trust embodied around them: “There were these children who obviously looked like their husbands, but they would have to believe the lies that their husbands were telling them, ‘No, you’re not seeing this,’ right?” O’Grady observes. “The white male on the plantation was having to lie, a lot, and the white female was having to believe what she knew were lies.” In her diptych, the white male is in chain mail to symbolize the French *roman* of courtly love, “and this was the end of [that] idea.” O’Grady’s work shows the lines drawn by sexual engage-

ment as floating markers at a range of simultaneous levels, making and unmaking power and identity, an exposure of what is rendered invisible by normative culture, her couples reclining on multiple horizontal axes, in physical contests where the stakes are entitlement to acknowledgment, presence and representation, and humanity. The lines drawn between interracial sex and acceptability—and the ways in which the slippage across those lines reveals the fragile stability shored up by discursive and legislative strategies that put distance between more human and less human—are but one expression of how sex has been regulated to restrict access to self-constitution of identity in Euro-American and other cultures.

A major component of the expansion of European colonization in Africa, Asia, and the Americas was the introduction of legal statutes that set out “civil” parameters of sex, including laws forbidding interracial and homosexual sex. Father Larry’s command that we prove our nonhomosexuality is, I argue, a manifestation of a five-centuries-long struggle in the Americas for each of its colonial and postcolonial-era cultures to place distance between ourselves and animals. In the same fashion, contemporary contests for power and meaning making between some religious organizations, the state, local and international sexuality rights activists, and others continue to unfold on the global stage with evolving significances for the contemporary Caribbean. Our realization of what M. Jacqui Alexander has theorized as “erotic autonomy” (1994, 6) therefore requires that we recognize and seriously attend to the production of and our response to anxieties about the threat of wild animality. The unfolding global climate emergency in which species extinction is a human life-threatening consequence further underlines the necessity of weighing and confronting the demarcation of humans from other animals in the most practical and urgent terms.

In the five chapters that comprise *Nature’s Wild*, I take up the lens deployed in O’Grady’s art practice, which helps us refocus the role of sexual desire in the human/animal divide that has long undergirded sociopolitical dynamics in the Americas, to examine the history of the regulation of homosexuality in Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean countries. I contend with the persistent identification of sodomy as a dividing line between human and animal, and think through how an acknowledgment of sodomy’s role in the drawing of this line might alter how we understand, approach, and configure struggles over the regulation of sex. I begin with *puhngah*, a word that suggests anal sex. Long before I was familiar with sex in even the most basic terms, I heard this word used, including in the joke that anchors chapter 1. The broad currency of jokes that invoke the term suggests the cultural res-

onance of its subject: hinging on the fate of three doomed missionaries who have been captured by a native tribe, puhngah serves as the joke's punch line. As with O'Grady's art, which exposes submerged forms of knowing in the sexual and epistemological, the joke described in chapter 1 plumbs the depths of knowing for its uncomfortable humor. Any narrative joke works because it takes the listener across the line between not knowing and knowing, and this one conflates the experiential knowledge of what puhngah is with what the word means to unwittingly profound effect. In the joke, puhngah is shown to be something to fear if it is known but perhaps to be feared even more if it is not, for that is to relinquish control over it, and over the definition of those who practice it. In visceral terms, the joke shows that fears of puhngah transcend the bodily to take on ontological dimensions: the fears it reveals, significantly, are of puhngah as not just an erasure of the line between one body and another but also an erasure of the lines drawn between those who know it—in the linguistic, cultural, bodily, and biblical senses—and those who do not. This fragment of comic narrative, couched in both humor and in homophobia wielded as a tool for existential domination, creates a space for enacting the subversive ontological perils of crossing this line. In this first chapter, I parse the joke—in its disordering representation of some of the elements at play in Father Larry's intermittent capture of the classroom for moral training—to trace the operation of sodomy as a dividing line between human and animal since the moment of European encounter in the Americas.

Historical records from the sixteenth century show how Spanish invaders characterized Indigenous peoples, including Trinidad and Tobago's Kalinago (whom Columbus misnamed "Caribs"), as sodomites as an effective means of characterizing them as *less human* than their conquerors, and *more animal*. Such records build on a literature founded by early fifteenth-century colonizers, which from the earliest times used sodomy as a reductive key for dehumanization. In his much-cited and circulated letter of 1495, Michele da Cuneo, childhood friend and shipmate of Christopher Columbus, offers deliberately exaggerated claims that the Kalinago/Carib people he encountered widely practiced sodomy, although, significantly, he also notes that they were likely unaware of homosexuality as a sin (Lunenfeld 1991, 283). This complex denigration redoubles the sense of the Kalinago/Caribs as more animal by coupling the act of sodomy with an animal-like lack of ethical perspicacity about sexual behavior, and an unawareness of a European moral code that he presents as natural—an irony given that da Cuneo was a notoriously brutal rapist who preyed upon those same Kalinago/Carib people whose sexual morality he judged inferior to his own. Their dehumanization was necessary

to justify their displacement, enslavement, and genocide, and the citation of sodomite practices was central to that justification.

Spanish colonizers' invocation of sodomy to advance colonization was consistent but not institutionally inscribed, except through church doctrine. This would change with the arrival of the Victorian era in Britain at the height of its imperial reach, when legislation against sodomy was imposed. In Trinidad and Tobago and other British colonies in the Caribbean, sodomy would become officially outlawed in 1861, through the adoption of the Offences against the Person Act. Notably, this law set out similar sanctions against and punishments for sodomy and bestiality, underlining the use of the former to prove the latter. In most scholarship, this pairing is conceived as a tool that has primarily functioned to further convey the immorality of homosexuality; by contrast, I propose that the pairing represents something more complex: the long-established role of sodomy as a defining line between human and animal, and a means of arbitrating who can claim access to the rights that come along with the much-desired "fully human" status. The criminalization of sodomy along with bestiality was maintained through the first fifty-six years of Trinidad and Tobago's political independence. In the discourses of both advocates and opponents of sodomy's decriminalization, as I will show, we find evidence of the parties' struggles over the definition of the distance and distinction between human and animal. The identification of heterosexual, Christian or Christian-mimicking marriage—along with its various ritualistic accoutrements—as the primary means by which nonwhite Trinidadians may be seen to graduate to the category of human further exemplifies how anxieties about animality shape the country's social organization and politics.

One of the reasons why sex is such an effective method for revealing our animality is that any sex act is typically performed in a state of being stripped bare, or at least bare of the usually most-covered parts, bereft of that ultimate material barrier between human and animal and basic signifier of the human condition: clothing. Nakedness exposes more than just skin; it reveals the subversive potential inherent in dressing, undressing, and changing clothes, and the undermining of clothing's use as a means of policing and determining identity and constituting prescribed versions of humanness. In chapter 2, "Clothes Make the Man," I describe and examine the nearly decade-long case of four Guyanese people who were arrested and subsequently fined for being bodies in the wrong clothes. Their arrest, harassment by the police and judiciary, and initial conviction rested plainly on nineteenth-century British colonial laws that prescribed gendered clothing as a fix for the base animality

of Caribbean peoples. This chapter considers the large body of antivagrancy laws put in place by the British that both ascribe and propose recuperation from Caribbean peoples' animality. I argue that the eventual legal victory by the arrestees may be viewed as a decolonizing act that confidently refuses to respond to the demand to prove ourselves "not animal." While the persistent institutionalization of dress codes by Caribbean governments continues this colonial imperative, their authority is being challenged in creative ways.

Chapter 3, "The Father, a Godfather, and the Specter of Beasts Old and New," considers the discursive transposition between the Caribbean homosexual and homophobe over the past two decades, the latter now taking the place of the former as a demonized, bestial figure. This switch is echoed by a similar reversal of key generators of this fantasy. Once wrought by the European colonial officer, contemporary figurations have new authors: policy makers, politicians, businesses, and local and international activists together co-constitute the nonwhite homophobe as an animal. The world of gay international activists in particular has indulged this representation without acknowledging how the transference, with the Caribbean homosexual's position as a maligned and animalized figure assumed by the homophobe, is effectively a repositioning of this racialized, hierarchical perspective rather than an emptying out of this colonial dynamic. For this reason, the work of Trinbagonian LGBTQI+ activist Colin Robinson, the titular "godfather" in the chapter, is all the more significant. His leadership as cofounder and cochair of the country's most visible LGBTQI+ organization, CAISO, represents a significant departure from this contemporary trend. Refusing to engage the racist tropes that have been widely deployed to attack Caribbean governments, leaders, and people as homophobic, Robinson has instead pursued alternate strategies that challenge racialized and classist postcolonial reformulation of a politics of respectability. This chapter highlights alternative stories of Caribbean life that he and others from the region have tried to tell that depart from dominant representations, and traces the competing narratives told in Trinidad following the April 12, 2018, ruling by its High Court that effectively decriminalized sodomy for the first time in the country's history. I consider and contrast the varied and often-conflicting discursive arguments and strategies pursued in the advocacy of sexual rights. Tracing the nationalist impulse of Robinson's politics to those of the Father of the Nation, Eric Williams, I engage Sylvia Wynter's critiques to consider some of its limitations and possibilities. Similar to O'Grady's characterization of the dynamics of power in *The Clearing*, I seek out a subtler engagement that recognizes the difficult ambivalences of the distorted, varied afterlives of colonization.

Having spent the previous three chapters outlining how the animalization of Caribbean people has produced persistent racialized violence over the past five hundred years, I use the last two chapters to make a perhaps surprising proposition: that we who are so threatened with its slur embrace being marked “animal” or, at the very least, refuse to heed the call to prove ourselves not animal. Not all Caribbean people are similarly animalized, of course, but white, African, Indian, Chinese, Indigenous—all our humanities—are constituted in relationship to the demarcation of human from other animals, and with much varied ideological and material consequences. Rather than leaping to divert a charge like Father Larry’s—to prove the civility of our bodies through a mimicking of Western, Christian, heteropatriarchal norms, as in the case of Ramsingh, the student who called out his willingness to dominate the girls of the nearby school to demonstrate his own acceptability—this book looks at these lines drawn for us, and those who refuse to cross them to prove something, who refuse to beg for recognition of “human, not animal.”

Analysis of images, including of sixteenth-century renderings of colonial violence in woodcut, T-shirt designs by activist organizations, and contemporary Caribbean art, is also a central running thread in this project, reflecting the significant role visual cultural production has played in documenting—and disturbing—history, politics, and power. Each of the two final chapters shares a contemporary artistic response to the animalization of Caribbean peoples that confidently answers back: “We *are* animals; so what?” In chapter 4, I consider how Guadeloupean artist Kelly Sinnapah Mary’s installation *Notebook of No Return* in the Martinican exhibition *Désir Cannibale* provides historical documentation and analysis of Indo-Caribbean people on the island that both weakens the violent intentions of colonial accusations of animality and also simultaneously complicates our subjectivities. And in chapter 5, I present and discuss my journey toward the production of artwork that shares and weighs my experience of growing up in rural Trinidad and the subsequent navigation of my Caribbeanness from outside my land of birth. I discuss how falling in love and heartbreak forced a contention with my own animality and the disciplining of it, which in turn became both catalyst and subject of my artwork. I argue against a divide between human and animal that is both cognizant of the history of racialized animalization that the previous chapters outline and an ecological commitment. Discussing the process of producing pieces of visual art I completed between 2011 and 2019, this final chapter is a reporting of the exploration that led me to a recognition and an aspiration shared with Sinnapah Mary: *We are animal*. This declaration, I ar-

gue, is layered with an awareness of the ongoing global ecological crisis and a statement of alliance with other animals and forms of life.

My interests in environmental justice, antiracism, and sexuality rights have been inseparable, and this final chapter explains in part how they are mutually constitutive. In so doing, my project attempts to carve out and begin to meditate on new questions in the contemporary theorization of sexuality in the Caribbean. In this now diverse and well-populated field that is seen to have “come of age” (McNeal and Quinn 2016, 1), conversations about Caribbean sexualities nevertheless consistently center questions, arguments, and policies around the notion of sexual citizenship, a consequence of broad and specific historical political and academic trajectories. M. Jacqui Alexander’s “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen” (1994) has (suitably) become the central framing text for scholarship and activism on sexual rights in the Anglophone Caribbean. Subsequent to the publication and circulation of this work in particular, scholars and activists have centered notions of “sexual citizenship” in relationship to analysis of sexual identity and the erotic. Lawyer and legal scholar Tracy Robinson, who has been a key figure in debates about and struggles for sexuality rights and protections over the last two decades, draws on Alexander’s articulation of connections between property ownership, respectability, and erotic agency to formulate “sexual citizenship” as the basis of various sexual and gender rights claims (2007). Setting up her *Citizenship from Below*, for example, Mimi Sheller explains that in the Caribbean, “to act and make claims as a free citizen, political subjects must first position themselves as raced, gendered, national, and sexual subjects of particular kinds . . . , in discursive performances that always rest on the exclusion and repulsion of others” (2012, 21). Aaron Kamugisha further clarifies that citizenship in the region “has been constructed not merely on the denial of the experiences of black and Indian masses but also on the denial of the experiences of women and homosexuals—in short everyone who did not fit the template of ‘white bourgeois heterosexual man’ in its now brown/black male Caribbean configuration” (2007, 35). Echoing the vast body of scholarship on Caribbean sexualities, Rosamond King asserts that “both Caribbean cultures and laws stipulate that the ideal Caribbean citizen is a heterosexual, gender-conforming, biological man” (2014, 16). The task at hand, it follows, is affirmation of the rights of all citizens, and the extension of claims of citizenship and citizen rights to the whole community, beyond this figurative white man.

Because this focus on citizenship is an iteration of the confrontation with the ways in which “human” has been historically powerfully defined to render the nonwhite subject inhuman, theorization of “human” by Caribbean schol-

ars provides a telling analysis. While “sexual citizenship” and claims to recognize the fullness of marginalized subjects’ humanities can be effective and tangible means through which struggles over policy and politics can often be negotiated, particularly in reference to policy and law as experienced in the most availably coherent terms, Wynter warns us against this perpetual pursuit of recognition as a universal human subject that, she points out, is singularly formulated through Western European cosmogony. Is “citizenship,” even if extended beyond European “Man,” ever possible if its constitution is invested in the supremacy of the white man? Developing Frantz Fanon’s concept of sociogeny, Wynter traces the specific historical development of the universal “Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human itself/ourselves” (2003, 260). “All our present struggles with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment, global warming, severe climate change, the sharply unequal distribution of the earth resources,” Wynter adds, “are all different facets of the central ethnoclass Man vs. Human struggle” (260–61). “Man” as we know it only operates through its investments in these social discourses and hierarchies.

Zakiyyah Iman Jackson further develops Wynter’s theorization of “Man” to challenge the “virtuousness of human recognition or humanization”—that which often feels like the endgame of much sexual rights advocacy work—to show that *we* are *human*, like *Man*. Reexamining the presumed stripping of Africans’ humanity during the Atlantic slave trade, Jackson concludes that “humanization is not an antidote to slavery’s violence; rather slavery is a technology for producing a *kind* of human” (2016, 96). She cites Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, where the author juxtaposes the degradation of enslaved people with that of animals, to demonstrate how “the slave’s humanity (the heart, the mind, the soul and the body) is not denied or excluded but manipulated and prefigured as animal, whereby Black(ened) humanity is understood paradigmatically, as a state of *human* animality, or ‘the animal within the human’” (97). *Beloved*, Jackson says, details “the violence of liberal humanism’s attempts at humanization” (97–98). Taking a similar position, Saidiya V. Hartman writes,

Suppose that the recognition of humanity held out the promise not of liberating the flesh or redeeming one’s suffering but rather of intensifying it? Or what if this acknowledgment was little more than a pretext for punishment, dissimulation of the violence of chattel slavery and the sanction

given it by the law and the state, and an instantiation of racial hierarchy? What if the endowments of man—conscience, sentiment, and reason—rather than assuring liberty or negating slavery acted to yoke slavery and freedom? Or what if the heart, the soul, and the mind were simply the inroads of discipline rather than that which confirmed the crime of slavery? (1997, 5–6)

For Fanon, “the black soul is a white man’s artifact” (1967, 14). He declares, “I am not a prisoner of history. . . . I should not seek there [history] for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself” (229). These provocations challenge the near-universal embrace by Caribbean rights advocates of notions of “sexual citizenship,” whose claims are implicitly tied to the particular constitution of humanity of European “Man”; the plea is to become treated as He is treated. But as Wynter has argued, this task is an impossible one, as this “Man” is premised on the degradation of the nonwhite subject. Instead of continuing to center European Man, Wynter asks, “might there be a post-humanism that does not privilege European Man and its idiom?” She proposes that

if we are to be able to reimagine the human in the terms of a new history whose narrative will enable us to co-identify ourselves each with the other, whatever our local ethnos/ethnoi, we would have to begin by taking our present history, as narrated by historians, as empirical data for the study of a specific cultural coding of a history whose narration has, together with other such disciplinary narrations, given rise to the existential reality of our present Western world system. (D. Scott 2000, 198)

Nature’s Wild strives toward this reimagination of “human” through examination of some historical aspects of anxieties about homosexuality that have shaped the contemporary Caribbean. Neither a complete interrogation nor a fully developed manifesto, this project wrestles with the specific possibility of refusal of a demarcating line between human and nonhuman animal that “Man” impels. Whether colonialism’s structured violence is read as either a consequence of the dehumanization of nonwhite bodies or as enabled, as Hartman argues, through its particular constitution of human, the separation of the human from nonhuman animal has remained a driving feature of postcolonial states in the Caribbean. Throughout *Nature’s Wild*, I point to examples of how what Agamben calls “anthropogenesis,” the separation of the human from the animal that results in the constitution of human (2004,

80), has already been challenged in various ways and also meditate on what possibilities both disregard to demands to prove ourselves human and our embrace of our animality might produce. These efforts trouble and sometimes struggle against the human/animal separation that Agamben argues is “the decisive political conflict [of the Western culture], which governs every other conflict” (80).

This book is as much a personal account as it is a social historical contention with the call for the colonized subjects to prove their own humanity. Throughout, therefore, I reference events and experiences from the first fourteen years of my life growing up in the rural space of George Village, Trinidad, as well as from the spaces in which I have worked and lived since. Readers will recognize that through this project, I am confronting my indoctrination into ideology of “Man” and striving to reclaim my own animality. This gesture toward unruliness is echoed in the interdisciplinarity of this project, moving across various fields but also offering both art criticism and the creation of visual art as part of the analysis and in support of my argument. Indeed, it is through artistic practice and cultural production that I have most grappled with O’Grady’s observation that sexual desire entirely undermines humans’ self-constitution as not animal—hardly a surprise given that my own foray into artistic production was formatively defined by my work with and study of O’Grady. The formative influence of O’Grady, as well as artists Richard Fung, Leor Grady, Wendy Nanan, Sur Rodney (Sur), and, through his work, Félix González-Torres, has shaped my art-making practice as primarily an expression of one’s search for truth. Such an approach, as I have understood it, requires critical self-examination and an awareness that our instincts and intimacies are fully entwined with, but never fully captured by, social history. This engagement with these visual artists and with visual art practice has also influenced the style and form of my written expression, shaped by a desire to open up more explorative space than reach strongly decisive conclusions.