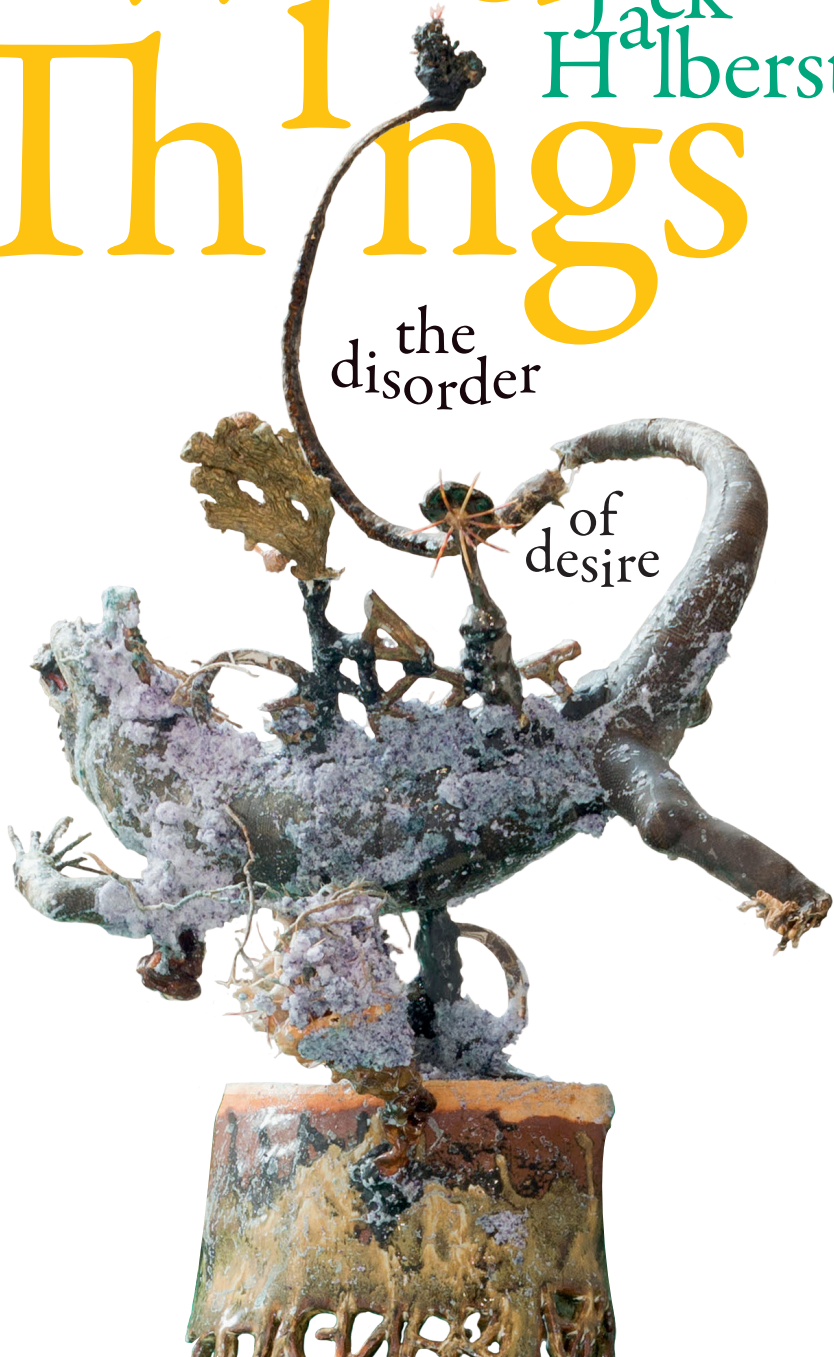
Wild Things

Jack Halberstam

the disorder of desire



Wild
Things

Perverse
Modernities

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For José

CONTENTS

PREFACE

ALEX THE LION: The wild? Are you nuts? That is the worst idea I have ever heard!
MELMAN THE GIRAFFE: It's unsanitary!
MARTY THE ZEBRA: The penguins are going, so why can't I?
ALEX THE LION: The penguins are psychotic.

—*Madagascar* (2005)

Many a book on the wild begins with a backward glance at the youth of the author, when times were different, when black-bellied dippers, red squirrels, or natterjack toads still roamed the woods and valleys, and when mankind had not yet begun to circle the drain in the universal pool of life. I am tempted to tell you about the hedgehogs that were easily spotted on my lawn in the mornings of my youth and that have now declined in numbers in the United Kingdom from 36 million in 1961 to 1 million today. I am, like so many of my generation, amazed at how much has been lost, how little we have to show for it, and how quickly we have embraced a world largely cleansed of all connections to wildness. And yet, like many others, I come not only to mourn wildness but also to rediscover it, to track its path from there to here, to find my way through and with, and to take walks into the woods, into the streets, and into other less obvious dark and deep places of the wild. However, we must not imagine that the wild is ours to discover or rediscover; we should resist the temptation to believe that it once existed and now has gone; and we must find a way around the treacherous binary logics that set the wild in opposition to the modern, the *civilized*, the cultivated, and the real. And, while the wild is tethered to nature in our imaginations, or to one particular version of nature, wildness is not limited to the natural world, and it has an extensive life elsewhere too—in aesthetics, politics, theory, and desire.

Our notions of the wild do still largely derive from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century naturalists like Thoreau ("How near to good is what is

wild") or John Muir ("I never saw a discontented tree"). And despite rigorous analyses of the colonial production of distinctions between the domestic/tame/civilized and the foreign/wild/barbaric, we still, in literature and film, subscribe to such distinctions, leaving their imperial heritages untouched and contributing anew to the romance of going back to some mystical unsullied land (Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*), on the one hand, or discovering our real selves in the nakedness of nature (Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*), on the other. But perhaps the wild is better described nowadays by the melancholic words of Alex the Lion in the animated classic *Madagascar*, for whom the wild is "the worst idea I ever heard," suitable only for the psychotic penguins, and representative of a fantasy of freedom that the zoo itself maintains and stokes. And so, this book cautions against investments in a wildness that lies in a distant past never to come again or in a future of restored wildness that will be delivered through science and conservation. This book takes the wild instead as an epistemology, a terrain of alternative formulations that resist the orderly impulses of modernity and as a merging of anticolonial, anticapitalist, and radical queer interests. As in *The Queer Art of Failure*, I chart here a meandering road through counterintuitive terrain, and as in earlier work of mine on gothic monstrosity, queer time and space, and subjugated knowledge and archives, this book looks to what the culture has discarded for clues to new wild logics of being and doing.

But before we take a leap into that kind of wildness, I must, for once in my life, obey the law of genre and tell you one of the stories that brought me to the wild. The story that stays with me, even more than the missing hedgehogs, as an indicator of a wildness manqué concerns a cuter and even more elusive creature. Although I have been known, on occasion, to accept invitations to talk at somewhat remote places (*remote* is a relative term here, relative to my permanent location at the time) on the basis of being promised a sighting of endangered or just odd animals like yellow-eyed penguins in Dunedin, New Zealand, quetzals in Costa Rica, and koalas in Brisbane, Australia, this was not one of those occasions. I had, perhaps foolishly, agreed to speak at a conference on "remote sexualities" to be held in one of the truly remote and wild places in Europe—the Faroe Islands—not in search of a creature, but just to see a place I knew I would otherwise never visit. The Faroe Islands have to be accessed through Denmark since they hold the status of an autonomous country within the Kingdom of Denmark, but they sit in a bleak and stormy spot between the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic. The Faroe Islands are 200 miles north-northwest of Scotland and cover only 540 square miles, their total population numbering less than ten thousand.

Traveling to the Faroe Islands took on a host of symbolic meanings, as it was at a difficult time in my life. I was in the process of a breakup with a partner, and we began to feel like bit players in an epic tale of struggle and adversity as one leg after another of a very long and elaborate itinerary carrying us from California to an island north of Scotland was canceled or late. Why we persevered in our efforts to get to the islands was not clear to either of us. Nonetheless, after a protracted travel experience lasting almost two days, we disembarked from a small plane into a forlorn airport in the Faroe capital of Tórshavn (*capital* being a rather fancy word for this tiny area of land). Almost upon arrival we both felt some combination of claustrophobia and agoraphobia. The islands were too small, the sky was too big, and there was simply nowhere to hide from the weather, the climate, space, light, dark, water, sadness, and remoteness of all kinds. From every spot on the main island you could see the ocean, terrifying and gray, turbulent and menacing. It was summer, so the nights were very short and the light was almost oppressive in its persistence. We holed up in our hotel and tried to block the light and the views in order to sleep.

The next day, after the conference—a fascinating event which, as a city-person, I bluffed my way through—we agreed to go on a boat trip around the islands looking for the mating puffins that the islands were known for. The puffin is often misidentified as being a cousin of the penguin, but the two species are not related, despite the fact that both their names mean fat or swollen (puffed). We knew the puffins were here somewhere because Tórshavn was full of reminders in the form of sad taxidermic specimens—"stuffed puffs" as we quickly dubbed them. Puffins were also, even more sadly perhaps, on a few menus and were considered a local delicacy. The stuffed puffs stared at us in cafés, in the hotel, and adorned publicity posters, postcards, tourist publications, menus, and so on. I can attest that, in their stuffed form, puffins quickly lose their charm; rather than presenting us with the slightly cheeky demeanor of a puffy, paddling pelagic, the stuffed puffs looked more like discarded toys from an era lacking both comfort and imagination.

Despite the creepy omnipresence of stuffed puffins, or maybe because of it, we set out enthusiastically to encounter the real thing. The little boat that was to take us around the islands did not inspire trust in its seaworthiness, and the water was inevitably rougher than we would have liked. As we rounded small islands, we heard from the captain/guide that some of the islands in this archipelago were home to only two people—a mating pair, I suppose—for whom the solitude was unfathomably (to us at least) alluring. Finally, we came to a stretch of rocky cliffs. The captain explained that they had to airlift sheep into and out of these stretches of land in order to give them access to grazing land.

I struggled to picture a helicopter lowering bewildered sheep onto these small strips of green. But the main attraction of these rocks were not the odd sheep that sometimes got stranded there, but the puffins that made their nests here every year and laid their eggs and watched their chicks hatch, grow, and then set off into the ocean to try their luck against their many predators. I thought I saw a creature move among the rocks, but no, it was just a clump of grass waving in the wind. The captain went to all the places he knew to find the puffins, and we ignored the rising seas as we scanned the dark face of the rock for signs of life.

After hours of futile searching, we had to admit defeat and recognize that the hour was late, the seas were high, the weather was foul, and the puffins were gone or, perhaps, had never come to roost at all. The captain was baffled and muttered something about it being too late in the season, but a deckhand commented that it was not just that the puffins were not here; it looked as if they had never been here. Whether it was my age, the breakup, the remote location, I am not sure, but the missing puffins were indescribably sad to me and have remained with me ever since as a symbol of something I lost, an opportunity that passed me by, and a time that will never come again. Without the living birds, the stuffed puffs ceased to be a reminder of a living species that populated the region and became instead a melancholic and slightly pathetic marker of a vanishing breed. The wild, I learned too late, is not a place you can go, a site you can visit; it cannot be willed into being, left behind, lost or found. The wild limns our experiences of time and place, past and present, and beckons us to a future we know will never come.

The introduction to this book will not provide a conventional genealogy of wildness; rather, it builds a lexicon within which wildness is the central principle. Appropriately, perhaps, there is not a central argument sweeping all the thoughts along toward a punch line; rather, I offer a vocabulary for wildness that might hold some of the pieces of this book in productive tension. Definitions of *wildness* will jostle with one another for classificatory dominance, and just as quickly as formulations of the wild emerge, they may just as easily recede into babble. We will journey from bewilderment to chaos, from weeds to wandering, from the will to wilderness; we will be in the wild but not imagine ourselves to be of it; we will be guided by unhinged children, poets, animals, and wild thinkers. We will think ourselves wild too and then question the "we," the "wild," and everything in between. Like the stuffed puffs, after all, the human subject of Euro-American philosophy and romance may itself be nothing more than a relic of a time long past, living in the ruins of a world that once beckoned and looking ahead to oblivion: less an angel of history and more a ghost dancing at its own funeral.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Wild Things was written in the long shadow cast by the death of José Esteban Muñoz and is dedicated to his memory. I hope this book can live up to the shared project that he, Tavia Nyong'o, and myself imagined we were all writing. As I was developing some ideas for this project on wildness, I quickly became aware that Nyong'o and Muñoz were also, together and separately, exploring some similar questions about queerness, new materialism, and alternative political imaginaries also under the rubric of *wildness*. Indeed, in 2013, Nyong'o and Muñoz taught and curated a class titled "Wildness." This class, and I quote from its syllabus, proposed to "employ wildness and the wild as critical tropes that potentially open a conversation across queer studies, ecology, aesthetics, animal studies, disability studies, and critical race studies." The syllabus was an inspired mix of readings on new ecology, animal studies, and queer theory, and José and Tavia supplemented the readings with walks around the city accompanied by invited guests.

While I was invited to visit the class, I never did make it to New York City that fall, and the conversation that Muñoz, Nyong'o, and I had wanted to stage about cohabiting the critical terrain of wildness was constantly and fatally deferred. We had hoped to create a small book out of these conversations titled *Three Paths to the Wild*, which would cover some common interests we share on race, anarchy, punk, sexuality, desire, animals/pets/children, music, high and low theory, a new term for queer vitality, queer eco-critical endeavors. In *Three Paths* we wanted, separately and passionately, to do something

that would not exactly introduce a project so much as immediately occupy it, inhabit it, and begin to live with and in it. We had wanted to experiment with writing styles, write in and out of each other's chapters, and yet still hold on to those chapters as individually authored but multiply rewritten. All of us had turned to a critique of state politics in the wake of the financial meltdown; we were reading Thoreau, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, James Scott, Lucy Parsons, Saidiya Hartman, Dean Spade, Jodi Byrd, and others for nonlibertarian models of anarchy and were thinking about *wildness* as a space/name/critical term for what lies beyond current logics of rule. But time, fate, and mortality intervened. José died, tragically young, in December 2013, and our conversation on wildness is now permanently delayed and can only be rudely transferred to this text.

Apart from the conversations between José, Tavia, and myself, this book was written with, for, and alongside the wild theorizings of a large and unwieldy group of thinkers who, I hope, will not mind finding their names listed under the heading of "wild theory." They include Branka Arsić, Jane Bennett, Lauren Berlant, Rizvana Bradley, Jayna Brown, Judith Butler, Jodi Byrd, Mel Chen, Pete Coviello, Harry Dodge, Roderick Ferguson, Stefano Harney, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Gayatri Gopinath, Saidiya Hartman, Zakiyyah Jackson, Kara Keeling, Lisa Lowe, Dana Luciano, Eng-Beng Lim, Fred Moten, Martin Manalansan, Uri McMillan, Maggie Nelson, Tavia Nyong'o, Paul B. Preciado, Chandan Reddy, C. Riley Snorton, Julia Bryan Wilson. Thanks to New York friends Tina Campt, Kandice Chu, Arnaldo Cruz-Malave, Cathy Davidson, Lisa Duggan, David Eng, Licia Fiol-Matta, Keri Kenetsky, Lura Kipnis, Iona Mancheong, Miller Oberman, Jordy Rosenberg, Daniel Da Silva. Much gratitude to my new colleagues at Columbia who have all influenced my thinking profoundly in a very short period of time: Vanessa Agard-Jones, Joseph Albernaz, Branka Arsić, Marcellus Blount (in memorium), George Chauncey, Sarah Cole, Julie Crawford, Denise Cruz, Patricia Dailey, Brent Edwards, Katherine Franke, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Bernard Harcourt, Saidiya Hartman, Marianne Hirsch, Gil Hochberg, Jean Howard, Tey Meadow, Audra Simpson. Friends further flung include Tosh Bascara, Sara Davidmann, Carla Freccero, Dominique Grisard, Silas Howard, Josh Kun, Katrin Pahl, Jens Rydstrom, Julietta Singh, Katherine Bond Stockton, Damon Young. Thank you to the readers of this book who tried hard to wrangle its unruliness into a legible form: Jayna Brown, Kandice Chu, Pete Coviello, Dana Luciano, and, as always, Ken Wissoker. Many missteps surely remain, but the book exists only because of the rigorous readings I received. For research assistance, thank you to Sam Davis and Diana Newby Rose.

The gorgeous image on the cover of *Wild Things*, a sculpture by Candice Lin titled *Petrification*, has been lifted from an installation by Lin at the Los Angeles–based gallery Commonwealth and Council in 2016. I am deeply grateful to Lin for allowing me to use this sculpture, to extract it from the larger installation. I let it stand here as a marker of things, dead and alive, that escape the webs of classification cast by human knowledge and endeavor.

Finally, special thanks to my cherished friends Lisa Lowe, Ira Livingston, Gayatri Gopinath, and Macarena Gómez-Barris, my wild muse.

Part I

Sex in the Wild

Sex before, after, and against Nature

Wild—
Grow or develop without restraint or discipline.
—*Oxford English Dictionary*

In *Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak's beloved book for children of all ages, we follow a young and untamed traveler as he learns the difference between the domestic world of the family and the wild world of lost and lonely creatures. This simple story of Max's journey maps the potential and the dangers of wildness. All at once, wildness appears in the book as a mark of exclusion, a place of exile, and it reveals the violence required to maintain radical separations between here and there, home and away, human and wild thing. *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* explores the wild not simply as a space beyond the home but also as a challenge to an assumed order of things from, by, and on behalf of things that refuse and resist order itself. Wildness names simultaneously a chaotic force of nature, the outside of categorization, unrestrained forms of embodiment, the refusal to submit to social regulation, loss of control, the unpredictable. This sequence suggests a romantic wild, a space of potential, an undoing that beckons and seduces. But, obviously, the wild has also served to

name the orders of being that colonial authority comes to tame: the others to a disastrous discourse of civilization, the racialized orientation to order, the reifying operations of racial discourse (wild "things"). For this reason, to work with the wild is also to risk reengaging these meanings. I take the risk here because wildness offers proximity to the critiques of those regimes of meaning, and it opens up the possibility of unmaking and unbuilding worlds.

For example, *Where the Wild Things Are* opens with Max, a young boy dressed in wolf's clothing, creating disorder in the family home. Max, wielding a large hammer, knocks a large nail into the wall to hang a knotted sheet across the room. His act of building here—over this makeshift rope he has draped a curtain to create a shelter and has hung, from a clothes hanger, a threadbare stuffed toy dog—is also a scene of unmaking. Max himself balances precariously on an uneven stack of books to hammer his nail at the right height, and his imprecise banging has created a large hole in the wall. This tableau of destruction captures the work of this book, the art of wildness and the space of disorder. Max is potentially an anticolonial wanderer who refuses to settle the wild places he visits and who rejects the leadership he is offered. And Sendak presents him here in layered complexity as an image of wild subjectivity. Max is young; he inhabits the family home against his own will; he simultaneously destroys that home and attempts to build another world within it. He uses books practically and not metaphysically, and he drapes himself in the costume of a wild animal signifying the chaos of childhood. The stuffed animal hanging at the other end of the rope poses questions about the relations between child, wild creatures, and beloved toys. The stuffed animal is both Max's alter ego and what he fears becoming in the orbit of his all-too-present mother and his very absent father. Max has a long furry tail, a phallic symbol of authority, but no power to go with it. He is small (hence the stack of books he needs for height and the oversized tool in his hand), he is impotent, and he is angry. In the next panel, on the next page, the trouble continues as Max, in the wolf costume, chases the family dog down the stairs with a fork in his hand. Does he intend to kill the pet or eat it? Is his confusion about the status of the household animal another sign of his immaturity or a refusal to observe the proper distinctions between humans and animals and between different kinds of animality? Max is suspended in this panel just above the ground; he is not flying exactly, but neither is he standing; he occupies a space of suspension, hand still raised, tool/weapon at the ready, anger now turned to glee. The wild, these two panels demonstrate, maps a set of relations between humans and animals, human representations of animals, animals in effigy (the stuffed dog), pets, family, world, performance, costume, nature, space, and temporality. The book

asks both *where* the wild things are and *when* the wild things are; it provides few answers but many questions.

Some of the questions posed by Sendak's classic story have been asked before in other mythic tales about young adventurers and wild creatures. And many of these stories—like Burroughs's *Tarzan* or Kipling's *Just So Stories*—have served to confirm an imperial order of things within which the domestic and the wild are not simply markers of the proximity to home but also serve a racial system within which wildness represents a time before, a primitive past, and unrestrained temperament. So conventional is this mapping of the human that it continues to play across contemporary variations on the theme of human-nonhuman relations in such novels as *Life of Pi* (2001) by Yann Martel and, as earlier work of mine has shown, throughout an animated universe of films pitting humans against robots, monsters, fish, and rogue pets. But, as we will see, the wild does not simply name a space of nonhuman animality that must submit to human control; it also questions the hierarchies of being that have been designed to mark and patrol the boundaries between the human and everything else.

Maurice Sendak's conjuring of the wild acknowledges these hierarchies and then tries to undermine them. Sendak creates a visual vortex in the first few pages of the book by setting up a series of receding mirrored surfaces within which confusion about authority, order, hierarchy, and sequence prevails. Thus, we see on the wall behind Max, as he chases a pet dog in his wolf costume, a painting, an image of a wild creature we will soon meet. The artist's signature, "by Max," sits beneath the image, forging a relation between Maurice Sendak, the author, and Max, the protagonist, the child in the wolf's costume and the queer adult artist who draws him, draws him drawing wild things, and draws millions of children into the wild. But the hierarchies that are supposed to separate author from creation are further confused when Max's mother calls him a "wild thing" and sends him to his room without supper. Refusing the authority of his mother, and eschewing an identification with his absent father, Max conjures other worlds. A forest grows that night in Max's room "and the walls became the world all around."[1] Because Max could not go wild, the wild came to him, at night and in his imagination. But rather than being a place of wonder and innocence, the wild in Sendak's genius conjuring is a place of ruination, destitution, anarchy, and despair. The wild, Sendak warns, is neither a place you occupy nor an identity to claim. The wild is an uneven space of aesthetic power ("by Max") and an equivocal and limited source of opposition. We will follow Max to where the wild things are not to know them and to love them or destroy them, but to map the shape of the

world that depends on their rejection. And when we come to where the wild things are, we can decide whether to answer the call to stillness or whether, instead, to start the wild rumpus.

Before Nature: Hello from the Other Side

I've forgotten how it felt before the world fell at our feet . . .
—Adele, "Hello"

The wild plays a part in most theories of sexuality, and sexuality plays its role in most theories of wildness. For the past one hundred and fifty-odd years, heterosexuality and homosexuality have sat opposite each other on a seesaw weighted one way or the other by public opinion, legal rulings, medical expertise, religious belief, and political necessity. The natural condition of heterosexuality, doctors, lawyers, priests, and politicians have proposed, can be deduced from the mechanics of reproduction, the morphologies of sexed bodies and the social structures of family and work. And the unnatural condition of both homosexuality and transsexuality, some of the same sources aver, can be confirmed by the Bible, multiple court cases and legal trials, medical investigations, and political animus. But in a world where neither *nature* nor *God* holds the same sway over human understandings of good and evil, normal and perverse, bodies and life, we must consider what sexuality in general, and what specifically queerness, might be *after* nature.

Wild Things makes the case for considering modern sexuality as a discursive force that runs in several directions at once—toward the consolidation of self within the modern period, away from the rituals and prohibitions of religious belief, and toward indeterminate modes of embodiment. In terms of what Michel Foucault called "the history of sexuality," queer bodies reenter the symbolic order through a "reverse discourse" whereby they fashion both classification and rejection into selfhood.[2] The term that medicine used to pathologize nonnormative sexual desire, in other words, *homosexual*, now becomes the route to acceptance. This is an *incorporative* model of sexual definition. Another model of sexuality links sexuality to nature and produces natural and unnatural forms of desire. This *ecological* model looks for connections between environmental ethics and queer politics.[3] This model is often invested in space, terrain, and geography and tethered to oppositions between rural and urban areas that then give rise to concepts of "eco-sexual resistance."[4]

But sexuality has also been cast as a *postnatural phenomenon*, and I join with this project by adding the notion of a disordered or wild desire to the postnatural sense of a proliferating set of desires. After nature, desire is profoundly cultural and barely connected at all to nineteenth-century narratives of the natural. We are in need of new lexicons for the forms of desire and the shapes of bodily legibility and illegibility that currently make up our postnatural world. And so, the category of *wildness* in this book will stand for the order of things that we have left behind, the anticipatory mood that accompanies all claims of coming after something, and the unknown future that, for now at least, still beckons from the horizon. Wildness is all at once what we were, what we have become, and what we will be or, even, what we will cease to be in the event of postnatural climate collapse. And, as this book reveals, while those who want to go into the wild almost always operate in bad faith, others spin wildness into an orientation to the void, an ontology "beyond the human," as Eduardo Kohn puts it,[5] and a disorder that reminds us of a time, in Adele's words from her song "Hello" (2015), "before the world fell at our feet." But wildness is not simply the opposite of order, nor the intensification of the natural. Nor is wildness a conventionally defined political project oriented toward disturbance; wildness is the absence of order, the entropic force of a chaos that constantly spins away from biopolitical attempts to manage life and bodies and desires. Wildness has no goal, no point of liberation that beckons off in the distance, no shape that must be assumed, no outcome that must be desired. Wildness, instead, disorders desire and desires disorder. Beyond the human, wildness spins narratives of vegetal growth, viral multiplication, dynamic systems of nonhuman exchange. But in the realm of the human, a colonial realm within which the human functions as a sovereign power, the terminology of the wild has been a disaster.

Wildness, indeed, has simultaneously provided the lexicon for massive systems of violence and the justification for the removal of Native and Black peoples. Wildness, in other words, has historically been weaponized and has provided some of the language for what Sylvia Wynter has called the "coloniality of being."[6] Within this structure of being, Wynter proposes, bourgeois humanism produced an imperial order of *man* dependent on a series of foundational hierarchies all organized around an exaggerated sense of the power of colonial masculinity. This power, furthermore, expressed itself through seemingly neutral formulations of power—order, law, social stability—while actually constituting entire groups of people as irrational, unstable, and violent. As Wynter writes, "it was to be the peoples of the militarily expropriated New

World territories (i.e., Indians), as well as the enslaved peoples of Black Africa (i.e., Negroes), that were made to reoccupy the matrix slot of Otherness—to be made into the physical referent of the idea of the irrational/subrational Human Other, to this first degodded (if still hybridly religio-secular) 'descriptive statement' of the human in history, as the descriptive statement that would be foundational to modernity" (266). Where a coloniality of being invests the colonial explorer with the god-like qualities of creativity, omniscience, and benevolence, so too a system of racialization ascribes everything else to the peoples to be colonized. Wildness takes its place within this new order of being and, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, could be relied on as shorthand for the supposed savagery of Indigenous peoples and specifically their "savage sexualities," as Kanaka Maoli scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui puts it. These "savage sexualities" in a Hawaiian context, Kauanui claims, were actually alternative formations of desire and kinship but were cast by missionaries as evidence of "backsliding into 'heathendom.'"[7] Wildness was also part of a set of alienating languages used to justify slavery. For this reason, working with wildness as a concept risks animating long-established discursive connections between Native peoples and wildness, on the one hand, and Black people and wildness, on the other.

In earlier periods, wildness was less of a racial term and more of a description of states of being against which social norms could be established. Wildness, as Hayden White comments in an essay titled "Forms of Wildness," belonged to a class of "self-authenticating devices," like "heresy" and "madness," which, according to him, did not simply describe a state of being so much as "confirm the value of their dialectical antitheses."[8] And so, wildness, White proposed, particularly in premodern thought, lent value to the term *civilization* while defining through opposition a negative terrain and value, a state "hostile to normal humanity" and a way of being defined as "passionate and bewildered" (165) because not constrained and ordered. But how does wildness function in a modern context, and can it be anything but the opposite of a supposedly positive, indeed normative, value to which it lends weight? I argue that wildness can escape its function as a negative condition and can name a form of being that flees from possessive strictures of governance and remain opposed to so-called normal humanity. In what follows, I try to offer another account of wildness within which it functions as a form of disorder that will not submit to rule, a mode of unknowing, a resistant ontology, and a fantasy of life beyond the human.

Modernist literature, we well know, has incorporated some understanding of the wild as part of a colonial sensibility that is both drawn to and repelled by

expressions of wildness—hence we get movements like primitivism that direct desire and fear onto a precivilized past represented using the language of racial otherness. And we see art movements like Fauvism (French for wild beasts) within which the artist tries to capture the unruliness of emotional turmoil as a riot of color. All too often, as these movements show, wildness has been associated with racialized forms of precivilized disorder, as a mode of being that, even though it represents something that white Europeans felt they had lost, must nonetheless be tamed and governed. Within England specifically, wildness has functioned disastrously as part of an elaborate spatial sense of national belonging that has supposedly been spoiled in the postcolonial period by unchecked immigration and the collapse of a rigidly maintained class system. However, modernist texts, often canonical works, also show the fault lines that had begun to appear in such binary constructions as domesticity and wildness. This book dips in and out of literary modernism—represented here by T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, Stravinsky, Nijinsky, and others—precisely because the works that depend on a fantasy of wildness also, sometimes unwittingly, become the foundation for a new articulation. And so, to take one example, while Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* depended on fantasies of Native and folk cultures for its soundscapes and its mise-en-scène (the sacrifice of a young maiden in a folk fertility rite), the symphony was quoted extensively in jazz works that followed by artists such as Alice Coltrane and Ornette Coleman.[9] *The Rite of Spring* also served as the basis for a queer performance of Indigenous gender variance created by First Nations two-spirit artist Kent Monkman, whose work I explore in chapter 2.

Colonial notions of the wild—savage otherness, immaturity, apocalypse—are all too familiar, but they do not exhaust the meaning of wildness and neither do all fantasies of becoming feral fall under the sway of primitivist notions of unspoiled nature or fetishistic desires for a pure otherness. Furthermore, the materials that modernists drew on to sketch this shaky opposition between modern and primitive, civilized and wild, are not static or immobile—like the rhythms that Stravinsky borrowed from Russian folk music, the phrasings of the wild contaminate the texts into which they are drawn and create the seeds of alternate formulation of origins, influence, order, authority. And so, to return to Kent Monkman, who paints massive canvases in response to nineteenth-century landscape painters like George Catlin, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Cole, Monkman reformulates the relations between copy and original in a truly queer mode. In one brilliant painting, *Trappers of Men*, for example, Monkman paints his alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, appearing in a vision on a lake to the painters Piet Mondrian and Jackson Pollock. While Mondrian faints before the apparition of Miss Chief, Pollock catches

his fall and watches as Mondrian's paintbrush splashes paint onto a buffalo hide. As Monkman comments in a lecture, Pollock was influenced by "Native pictographs and sand paintings."[10] Far from being the author of the new, in Monkman's counter-history of art, Pollack accidently chances on an aesthetic method that may be new to him but has a long history among Indigenous artists. Monkman comments in the same lecture, "My work has been about challenging history and about how history . . . depends upon the teller." In this version of history, modernist aesthetics are deeply dependent on the material they mine, discard, and then represent as primitive. But Monkman does not destroy the modernist frame; he works patiently within it, bringing disorder to scenes of vertical authority, queer sexuality to scenes of reproductive plenitude, and Native cosmologies as the frame for modernist vision. Here, Monkman practices a decolonial disarticulation of the material conditions for modernist aesthetic production.

In Monkman's revisions of the modern, history is a wild site of human unknowing, a space of pleasurable bewilderment, and a relation to disorder that, as I will explain later in this book, gives rise to an epistemology of the wild or, using terminology from a writer drawn to the strange world of falconry, what I will call an epistemology of the ferox (Latin for fierce or wild; see chapter 3). Queer theory has long been a site for rethinking epistemologies, and queerness has been inextricably linked to ways of knowing and not knowing and even forms of knowing that depend on not knowing. Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* is the obvious reference point when considering domains of bodily forms of knowledge, but the closet has proven to be too narrow and even too domestic as a symbol, and numerous critics have proposed other epistemologies over the years. Whether or not we accept the closet as a dominant mechanism for sexual knowledge, however, Sedgwick's emphasis on epistemologies has been a durable and irreversible contribution to the study of sexuality. Wildness too offers access to other forms of knowledge, but with wildness we leave the strictures, indeed the internal confines, of the home and enter a larger world of vegetation and animals, rocks and landscapes, water, and creatures seen and unseen. The epistemology of the closet, indeed, like other urban and colonial models of knowing, depends on the obliteration of ways of knowing that have been associated with Native cosmologies and ignores what Macarena Gómez-Barris calls queer and decolonial epistemes and "submerged perspectives" or, in her terms, "a fish-eye episteme" that sees from below the usual modes of perception.[11] An epistemology of wildness, or an epistemology of the ferox, both swap out the image of an interior room representing a secret self for a wide-open space across which an unknowable self is dispersed.

This book therefore seeks out another history of sexuality, one essentially at odds with the closet and the metaphors of *out* and *in*. But because an epistemology of the ferox is at least in part the other to the epistemology of the closet, certain figures may appear in both archives and then demand a new archive, or a rethinking of the modernist archive altogether, and new ways of reading canonical authors *against* the great tradition into which they have been placed. This scrambled history gives rise, as Monkman's comment on historical perspective implied, not only to different and decolonial inscriptions of authority but also to queer theories of historical temporality itself. Other histories of sexuality, in other words, lie nestled in the category of the wild, sexualities that are, in Pete Coviello's terms "untimely" in the sense that they were not properly scooped up by new classifications of homosexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but lingered in the unspoken forms of address, gesture, and relation that preceded the sexual ordering of things.

As some new materialist work shows—think here of Jane Bennett in her turn to the vibrancy of the material world, or of Eduardo Kohn in his conjuring of "how forests think," or of Branka Arsić in her analysis of vitalism—wildness often offers a way of being in the world differently, of interacting with rather than separating from vegetal and animal forms of life.[12] In her book on Thoreau, for example, Bennett is able to bring out a rich understanding of wildness as a provocation, a retreat from the conventional, an affront to the normal and the expected, and an environmental condition—Thoreau, she offers, finds wildness in unhuman geographies like the woods but also in fleeting states like moonlight.[13] For Thoreau, we learn from Bennett, the wild nestles up to the good not as a moral investment in the natural, but as a longing, in Bennett's words, for something "extraordinary, unencompassable" (72). And this queer something that exceeds the ordinary and resides in the irrational can be accessed through alternative relations to vegetation, to animals, to beauty, to politics, to life and to death. Bennett connects Thoreau's wild to Nietzsche, but wildness of this kind also makes an appearance in Foucault's *The Order of Things*, wherein Foucault argues that, in a postreligious world, "transferring its most secret essence from the vegetable to the animal kingdom, life has left the tabulated space of order and become wild once more. The same movement that dooms it to death reveals it as murderous. It kills because it lives. Nature can no longer be good."[14]

Nature can no longer be good. In one of those broad sweeps that punctuates *The Order of Things*, Foucault makes an enormous claim, one that no doubt can never be verified or, for that matter, denied, and he makes the modern episteme a framework that takes shape around a core of unknowing and

un-being, and that unleashes as much as it frames. In *The Order of Things*, in the chapter where this extraordinary passage occurs, Foucault lays out the history of thought on nature and shows how, as I have also been claiming, a fragment of the antinatural can be found within all natural histories. Making a break between eighteenth-century narratives of "a progressive gradation" and nineteenth-century notions of "radical discontinuity" (300), Foucault proposes that once "historicity" is introduced to the concept of nature, "it constitutes a sort of fundamental mode of being" that is expressed "in the form of animality" (301). The animal, for Foucault, is that form of being that is "the bearer of death," and, as such, he says, "it belongs to nature only at the price of containing within itself a nucleus of anti-nature" (302). This antinatural centerpiece, a version of which Foucault ties to Sade, embraces sexuality as death, as the potential for evil, and as a mode of embodiment and knowing that is oriented ambivalently toward un-being. Foucault gives this ambivalent mode of knowing a name, "the wild," and speculates that within a modern equation, life is forever in danger of "becoming wild once more" (302). While the "once more" indicates that wildness is behind us but could come again, the "becoming" suggests that wildness is always still to come. What is this *wildness* that threatens to engulf life or that accompanies the knowledge of death? And what is the meaning of the "untamed ontology" that bears the body, as he puts it, "towards a precarious form" (303) and threatens to destroy us metaphysically even before we meet our inevitable end?

While Foucault's casting of the wild as after God but also after a moral order guaranteed by God sounds like the opposite of Thoreau's claim that the wild lives next to the good, it in fact repeats Thoreau's sense that life always exceeds our attempt to know and classify and escapes the order we attempt to impose on it. Wildness for Thoreau is a constantly renewed relation to other forms of life; for Foucault it is an experience of finitude lived within what he calls "an untamed ontology." The untamed or wild ontology is a form of being that lies, according to Foucault, "on the other side of all the things that are" and "even beyond those that can be" (303). It is, in fact, *a disorder of things* that emerges and takes its ghastly shape in the shadows cast by the very project that discerns, desires, and demands order in the first place. This sense of a disorderly orientation to time and to life as it is remapped by death is expressed in many modernist art forms, including, perhaps most famously in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, a poem cycle that offers many of the epigraphs for this book. This series of poems, too often read only as a religious cycle, expresses a version of the "untamed ontology" that Foucault describes and offers numerous succinct formulations of the experience of mortality that opens onto a specifically

spiritual wilderness. And yet, the poem expresses a very secular sense of the relation between life and death: "In my beginning is my end."[15] Eliot indeed stages a series of confrontations with absence: "To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not / You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy" ("East Coker," 29). He faces head-on the inevitability of loss: "But this thing is sure / That time is not healer: the patient is no longer here" ("Dry Salvages," 41). He conjures a world where there is neither fixity nor order, neither inevitability nor directionality, "Neither plenitude nor vacancy" ("Burnt Norton," 17). Indeed, the poet is haunted in *Four Quartets* by "the passage which we did not take" and "the door we never opened" ("Burnt Norton," 13). Like Thoreau, the poet hears voices in birdsong and follows them toward "the still point of the turning world" ("Burnt Norton," 15). Eliot's song to the eternal time of nature, the abbreviated transit of the human, and the realization that "as we grow older / The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated / Of dead and living" ("East Coker," 31) is embedded also in the structures of desire that reach for the feral, the divine, and the unknowable. This form of desire is not simply religious, and neither is it homosexuality or its suppression within heteronormativity; it is, rather, the disordered backdrop to all narratives of the human that seem committed to order, regulation, harmony, and stability.

Wild Things explores what Eliot names the complex pattern "of dead and living" ("East Corker," 31) in relation to modern narratives of sexuality that subscribe neither to the neat binaries of sexual orientation (as psychoanalysis did) nor to more scrambled sets of perverse fixations (as early sexology did). Indeed, Eliot himself is one of the odd figures who, in this book, represent forms of desire not well captured by the medical, social, and even slang terms designed to represent them. Eliot, like other so-called loners in this book, lived a life at the very edge of our definitions of sexuality. "Neither flesh nor fleshless / Neither from nor towards" is how he might have described the orientation of the wild things who live neither in nature nor beyond it within "both a new world / and the old made explicit" ("Burnt Norton," 15, 16). Some biographers have suggested that his homosexuality makes sense of Eliot's poems; other commentators merely place him among the Bloomsbury group of sexual indeterminates and leave it at that.[16] The poetry suggests not one thing or the other, but all things, wild things, and a postnatural "place of disaffection" ("Burnt Norton," 17).

Early queer theory rightly noted the very recent provenance of forms of desire organized according to the homosexual-heterosexual logic.[17] And following Foucault, queer theorists were quick to affirm that the homosexual emerged out of a new logic of the body that saw a "personage" where previ-

ously there had been a set of behaviors. But the formal classification of the homosexual did not simply siphon off the vast networks of desire and activity that made up, and continue to make up, modern selves and neatly canter them into the silos of hetero and homo. Rather, the organization of bodies undertaken by modern sexology also resulted in another realm of disorganization, a set of remaindered categories that seem quaint and strange to contemporary scholars.[18] For Foucault, the morass of such perversions—which include "zoophiles," "zooerasts," "auto-monosexualists," among many others, are swept away by the force of specification that descends on the field of "strange baptismal names" never to return.[19] However, these other sexualities are not so easily contained, and their disorganizations of desire continue to impact the project of sexual classification well into the middle of the twentieth century. We need a way to register those bodies that congregate or disperse around the boundaries of a history of sexuality that has named names and made order out of chaos, and in so doing we will not simply be locating subjugated figures or celebrating a naughty and subversive set of nonconformists; rather, we will also be engaging disorderly forms of history, desires that lie beyond the consensus terms of their eras. While the arc of modern queer histories has bent toward legibility, recognition, maturity, and mutuality, wild bodies plot a different course through history and appear only at the very edge of definition, flickering in and out of meaning and sense and tending toward bewilderment. Bewilderment, furthermore, as a form of lostness and unknowing, is not a politically charged statement about being and knowing; it is simply the space rendered by the absence of meaning and direction.

In other words, our now familiar narrative about the history of sexuality, which moves easily from the multiple modalities of desire and bodies to the tidy binary formation of homo/hetero, must ultimately be rethought in terms of the perversions that have been swept under the carpet within twentieth-century projects of sexual classification but which actually speak of much more unstable ecologies of embodiment than those to which we have previously subscribed. This is in part the argument in Pete Coviello's book *Tomorrow's Parties*, where he argues that the modern order of sexuality had the effect of stilling an older and "untimely" language of insinuation and "impassioned ambivalence."[20] Coviello finds a vocabulary (in Thoreau, Whitman, Orne Jewitt, and others) for nineteenth-century sexual expressions that escaped a modern net of classification and appeared instead under the headings of such terms as "extravagant," "unyarded," or "errant" (10). We can stretch this sense of untimely desire, disorderly bodily expression, and untidy identities out of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth. At stake here is not peri-

odization per se so much as finding vocabulary, narratives, and figurations for the inevitable *disorder* of things, the ways of being that resist expert knowledge, that fail to resolve into identity forms, and that find expression in the practices of runaways, spinsters, eccentrics, and recluses. The unruly lives of the lost, the lonely, and the lunatic call their hellos from what Foucault calls "the other side of all the things that are."[21] The wild, like nature, we could say with Foucault, can no longer be good.

After Nature

The notion of desires contrary to nature has been central to most modern understandings of queer desire, and yet, with the exception of Paul Preciado's *Countersexual Manifesto* from the late 1990s, few accounts grapple with what happens to such understandings when nature is no more.[22] But what *was* nature in the realm of sexuality, and when and why did we leave nature behind? And why, as Preciado proposes, do we continue to study and describe sex "as if it formed part of the natural history of human societies" (7)? In the medieval period in general, the unnatural was often understood to be nested within the natural as a subcategory and as part of nature's overall plan.[23] As Joan Cadden remarks, following an Aristotelian line of thought, the belief was that "nature did everything for a purpose and nothing in vain."[24] Within this model and this understanding of nature, unnatural desires constituted the distortion of nature's purpose within an individual body and, sometimes, indicated that unnatural habits had evolved in the individual over time causing them to become defective but not classifying them as a particular or fixed type of person.

As early as 1533 in England, the buggery act sought to criminalize sodomitical activity between men or between men and beasts and classified such crimes as "against nature."[25] This clustering of crimes against nature to include both anal sex between men and sex between men and animals indicates how differently the concepts of crime, nature, and sexuality were defined in the early modern period. While modern legal action against sodomy eventually uncoupled bestiality from anal sex between men, we will see that within various contemporary accounts of intimacies between humans and animals this connection reappears like a shadow formation. Indeed, the lingering afterimages of early constructions of sex, nature, gender, and crime imply a palimpsestic structure for the history of sexuality within which, as Eve Sedgwick proposed several decades ago, "the historical search for a Great Paradigm Shift may obscure the present conditions of sexuality."[26] In place of the paradigm shift, Sedgwick offered a more finely tuned model of history within which

"modern homo/heterosexual definition are structured, not by the supersession of one model and the consequent withering away of another, but instead by the relations enabled by the unrationalized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist" (47). Sedgwick encourages attention to the relations between multiple readings of nature, the unnatural and the antinatural as they overlap within legislation, social and religious belief systems, and individual bodies. As an example of the payoff of such a method, we might consider precisely the evolution of discourses of bestiality and the classification of this behavior. If sex with animals was once so commonplace as to require legal intervention, and if it once rounded out a set of unnatural activities that included same-sex sexual acts, by the beginning of the twentieth century and within a domestic realm newly marked by the inclusion of animals as pets, the taboo on sex with animals was reinforced even as it was disarticulated from anal sex between men. Nonetheless, as we will see, some twentieth-century writers articulated a love for their pets that exceeds their intimacy with any other human being. Does pet love stand in for what was once a commonplace understanding of sex with animals? Does it substitute acceptable relations to animals over and against carnal relations? By the same token, do we understand the household pet wholly within a discourse of domestication or as part of a constantly shifting relation to wildness?

The transformation of animals from sexual partners to pets, a definition of domestication if ever there was one, indicates other kinds of shifts in the way we have perceived the natural and the perverse, the domestic and the wild, the sexual and the intimate. It also suggests that the template for life we call nature is subject to kaleidoscopic changes in the period in which modern sexuality emerged. If in earlier periods, unnatural desire was considered as a (twisted) part of a natural order or things, by the eighteenth century, as Susan Sontag proposed in her famous "Notes on Camp," nature was no longer a given, it had become a matter of taste and part of an evolving aesthetic split between the desire to fortify the natural and the will to improve on it or violate it. Sontag wrote: "In the 18th century, people of taste either patronized nature (Strawberry Hill) or attempted to remake it into something artificial (Versailles). . . . Today's Camp taste effaces nature, or else contradicts it outright."[27] With Oscar Wilde as her guide, Sontag offers an account of the cleaving of nature from aesthetics and, by implication, of homosexual taste from normal sensibilities (Wilde: "The more we study art, the less we care for nature"[28]). For Sontag, the emergence of a theatrical sensibility at odds with the natural is linked to the emergence of homosexuality. And, of course, Wilde's work makes clear why. To the extent that the newly formed regime of heterosexuality staked its claim

to dominance on the bedrock of the natural, the homosexual must invest in all available antinatural terrain.[29]

Homosexuality indeed depends on, requires, and bolsters this split between the natural and the aesthetic, the normal and the aberrant, the domestic and the wild. By the end of the nineteenth century, various writers had taken the "against nature" charge of perversity and turned it from a sin into an indulgence to the point that a dandy like Wilde could quip to a knowing audience: "To be natural is such a very difficult pose to keep up."[30] If by 1895, the year *An Ideal Husband* hit the London stage, Wilde could both entertain the theatergoing public with the poses assumed by husband and wife *and* be put on trial for posing as a natural and indeed ideal husband, then it is reasonable to propose that the natural and the antinatural entered the twentieth century together, tethered at the waist or connected in some more intimate way, and with one forever destined to pull the other behind it within a new regime of truth. As a consequence, by the end of the twentieth century and into the first few decades of the twenty-first century, the idea of a sexuality that is against nature is both an assumption and a constant site of struggle. And of course, this charge of unnaturalness has shaped certain forms of resistance. While aesthetes from Oscar Wilde to RuPaul have presumed that nature is man-made and therefore subject to alternative discursive constructions, scientists from Simon LeVay to Dean Hamer insist that homosexuality is coded into the body and thus part of an eternal and unchanging natural order. The more some insist that nature has nothing to do with modern formulations of desire and embodiment, the more others offer proof of a *natural* blueprint for desire. Ultimately, however, the die was cast in the late nineteenth century for the end of nature altogether, and the gay science community's insistence on gay genes, gay seagulls, lesbian ducks, transgender fish, and so on is a mere afterglow of an argument settled long ago.

The argument was staged and resolved moreover not in terms of a divide between nature and postnature, but in terms of an order of things that was resolutely *against* nature. And so, in addition to the various quips on the subject by Oscar Wilde, we can also look to such gloriously decadent, lush, and louche treatises as *À rebours*, by J.-K. Huysmans, in which nature becomes not the site of hideous transgression, but the object of arch critique.[31] If earlier sexual dissidents had feared to find themselves on the wrong side of nature, now they situated themselves against it. *À rebours* deserves a closer look because it has established, more or less, the terms of an antinatural discourse that is associated with modern homosexuality, on the one hand, and with an emergent model of a prosthetic self, on the other.

Against Nature

À rebours, which has been loosely translated as *Against the Grain* or *Against Nature* but more literally means "in reverse," is probably best known as the little yellow book carried around by Dorian Gray in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and can be read as a kind of anti-Thoreauvian text that nonetheless takes up a similar relation to nature if from an opposite position.[32] In this book, Huysmans smuggles what amounts to an antinaturalist manifesto into a shaggy dog tale about a dissolute young man, Des Esseintes, who tires of "human stupidity" (chapter 1) and withdraws from the metropolitan life of Paris to a house in the country. He lives in his mansion occupying his time by making interior design decisions and offering sermons "on dandyism" (chapter 2) to the tradesmen who come to do his bidding. The style of clothes he wears and the way he furnishes his home are part of the unfolding narrative of a man *against* nature, someone who, moreover, contrary to the developing logic about the urban as the "natural" habitat of the homosexual, reverses out of the city but does not do so to make a return to nature. Instead, he sets out to establish himself against nature *in* nature.

Returning to *À rebours* from the contemporary vantage point of what I am posing as a period "after nature," we can find the hallmarks of late nineteenth-century constructions of the dandy and the gay aesthete in the elevation of form over function, which remain the mainstay of queer critiques of nature. The antihero of *À rebours*, Des Esseintes, offers an homage to artifice, "the distinctive mark of man's genius," and proposes that "Nature had had her day" (48). He continues: "By the disgusting sameness of her landscapes and skies, she had once and for all wearied the considerate patience of æsthetes. Really, what dullness! the dullness of the specialist confined to his narrow work. What manners! the manners of the tradesman offering one particular ware to the exclusion of all others. What a monotonous storehouse of fields and trees! What a banal agency of mountains and seas!" (48). This hilarious and counterintuitive rant against nature's banality and homogeneity, especially if read against romantic odes to the unknowability of nature (think Shelley's *Mont Blanc* and its "everlasting universe of things"[33]) situates the lethargic, bored, unimpressed dandy as the vector for a playful inversion of art and nature. Here art replaces the exhausted and inadequate creations of nature, figured in the text as a driveling old woman, and technology replaces the exalted beauty of human, here figured as a desirable young woman. Huysmans writes of nature: "Closely observe that work of hers which is considered the most exquisite, that creation of hers whose beauty is everywhere conceded the most perfect and

original—woman. Has not man made, for his own use, an animated and artificial being which easily equals woman, from the point of view of plastic beauty? Is there a woman, whose form is more dazzling, more splendid than the two locomotives that pass over the Northern Railroad lines?" (49). The passage builds bathetically to the anticlimactic substitution of woman with the railroad and leaves contemporary readers in the dark as to what kind of man prefers a locomotive (or two) to a woman. One answer, of course, is a perverted man, a man for whom nature has been replaced by machinery and reproduction by invention. But another would be the postnatural man, a defiant figure who finds himself outside nature and therefore against its most spectacular displays as exemplified by heterosexual love.

But the locomotive signifies more than just a technological substitute for the woman. Offering the possibility of moving people quickly from place to place, the train became a figure of modernity in the late nineteenth century and has become the centerpiece of recent characterizations of our own postnatural world in terms of the time of the Anthropocene. Tim Morton, in a book also interested in the aftermath of nature ("I capitalize Nature precisely to denature it," he writes), dates the Anthropocene, or the era within which humans began to do irreversible damage to the earth, back to 1784 and to the invention of the steam engine by James Watt.[34] And yet while Morton and others do the important work of offering us ways of understanding the new meaning of the human in a world in which human agency depends on the destruction of all other forms of life, the dating of the Anthropocene to the invention of the steam engine is misguided in that it presumes a division between humans and technology, which is precisely in question at that time. And, of course, as Macarena Gómez-Barris and others have pointed out, this date for the onset of the ruination of the earth ignores the context of colonial capitalism, which, as she argues, was "the main catastrophic event that has gobbled up the planet's resources."[35] In keeping with this more precise dating of the Anthropocene in relation to colonialism rather than to European invention, we can read the train in Huysmans's text not as the beginning of a new phase of human endeavor, but as the beginning of the end of a colonial version of the human. If *Against the Grain*, among other texts we will look at, marks the onset of a form of subjectivity that we might call postnatural, it is hugely significant that postnatural man (and the postnatural subject is clearly gendered here as male, perhaps problematically) in Huysmans's *Against the Grain* is obviously, if not explicitly, queer.

The bored, fatigued, jaded, campy narrator's desire for the railroad, after all, replaces his desire for woman but does not simply replace it with a de-

sire for men. Queer desire here, as in Thoreau oddly enough, is not simply same-sex desire: for Thoreau, queerness situates human desire within a wild world of other desires and pleasures; for Huysmans, queerness attends to a machinic eroticism, an antinatural force of motion, a desire, in other words, not to be *on* a train nor a deep admiration *for* the train, but a desire directed *at* the train. Strange as this may sound, if we glance at avant-garde films like Kenneth Anger's 1964 film *Scorpio Rising*, we can find echoes of this early fixation on the machine in later queer imagery. While the train is the object of Des Esseintes's desire, in *Scorpio Rising*, a queer visual erotics wraps itself around motorcycles, leather jackets, and the paraphernalia of biker worlds. And, more recently, in Preciado's *Countersexual Manifesto*, the discourse of nature disappears altogether with the presumption that the history of sexuality is a history of technology. Preciado uses another symbol to represent new technosexuality, though, and he attaches his theory of prosthetic desire to the silicon dildo. The dildo, like the train and like the motorcycle, represents the postnatural fusing of human with machine and an understanding of the body as always supported and extended by necessary prosthetics. This too is the end of nature.

But the antinatural stance of Des Esseintes is not simply fetishistic nor merely the preference for the made over the born; rather, it serves as a deep critique of the concept of nature around which a moral order was taking shape at the turn of the past century. This concept, which takes legal root within sodomy laws and which guides all kinds of interventions, medical and psychological, into the lives of perverts, sets up the unnatural as a domain of criminality and pathology and invites those who reside there to either agonize over their fate and strive to be recognized as natural or cleave to the attack on nature and make the artificial into a style, a preference, a new orientation to wildness. Like Dorian Gray, Des Esseintes is firmly in the camp camp, and he makes the natural into a deeply gauche and unpleasant set of aesthetic choices. Accordingly, he eschews not women and marriage per se, but the world in which they appear as the right and true, natural, and inevitable match for men. As in the works of Oscar Wilde, for Huysmans, the natural is always presented as a pose, a front, a surface—Wilde proposed: "Being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know."[36] But more than this, in *Against the Grain*, nature is an anachronism, part of a past to which the narrator does not wish to return and a hallmark of the morality to which he is indifferent. For Des Esseintes, the world is better experienced in its mechanical and aesthetic forms—why go to the ocean when you can look at mechanical fish in an aquarium, as he does, and why swim in the sea if you can take a salt bath in Paris? Why leave your house to travel abroad when you can read about distant lands? When he finally

leaves Paris for seclusion, Des Esseintes remarks: "He hated the new generation with all the energy in him. They were frightful clodhoppers who seemed to find it necessary to talk and laugh boisterously in restaurants and cafés. They jostled you on sidewalks without begging pardon. They pushed the wheels of their perambulators against your legs, without even apologizing" (54). Anticipating the link made by Lee Edelman between queerness and the death drive, Des Esseintes despises not just the "new generation," but generation itself, and here the pram, its contents barely worth mentioning, becomes the very opposite of the train. While the pram holding the baby should represent a glorious future, here it holds only the promise of more of the same. It is the train that represents motion itself, a propulsive force that, unlike the perambulator, is weighed down by neither destination nor origin.

But my purpose here is not to hold up *À rebours* as some kind of proto queer marvel, nor to place it in the pantheon of early queer literature. It is, after all, a text as despicable as it is seductive. Like the spectacle of the bejeweled tortoise Des Esseintes orders for his living room, hoping that the dullness of the animal's color will take the edge off a carpet that strikes him as too loud, the novel both satirizes and invests in an aesthetic for which all must be sacrificed.[37] I linger on *À rebours* not to enshrine it in a new queer postnatural canon, but to notice that we can catch a glimpse of the end of queerness at the moment of its emergence. The ennui of a Dorian Gray and a Des Esseintes, like the angular oddness of Nijinski's dances just a decade later, speak to the emergent discourse of a queerness that we have established as against nature even as it marks, and becomes the maligned figure for, a period that we recognize with alarm as *after* nature.

Before Nature

While Huysmans and Wilde defiantly pose their languid and anti-virile queer characters against nature, occupying the edgy terrain of a literary avant-garde that is ahead of the game by declaring the game to be over, there were other authors in that same decisive period whom we have characterized as "beginning" the modern era of sexuality, who tried to grab the reins of nature before it bolted the stable. Take Radclyffe Hall's work, for example, with its embarrassing treatises on nature and its love affair between the masculine invert and a succession of horses that hold and carry her, protect and love her in a way no human will.[38] Hall's justifications for her hero, Stephen Gordon's, existence is not that she defies nature, but that, like all living things, she has her place within it. While Hall and others desperately tried to jam their mascu-

line but not male protagonists into an extended conception of nature, Wilde and Des Esseintes found nature itself to be the problem. For this reason, perhaps, modern readers prefer the arch dandy to the dowdy and gender-inverted dyke—Wilde's work remains part of a tried and true canon of Western literature, in other words, while *The Well of Loneliness* is and remains a slightly embarrassing, if necessary, literary experiment. The dandy hates the system that hates him and is bored by that which demands meaning, indifferent to that which intends to invoke passion, and poses himself ahead of the modern, disdaining to look back. By contrast, the dyke is hurt by the order that names her as its problem and wears her sense of injustice like a badge, a scar, an open wound. She is not ahead of a curve looking back; she realizes that she is always behind in a world governed by notions of "sequence," which add up, as Annmarie Jagose proposes, only within a system of valuation that ascribes "consequence" linearly and sequentially.[39]

In *The Well of Loneliness*, Hall's antihero, Stephen, longs to be admitted to the fraternity her father represents but instead recognizes herself as monstrous to that community. Only her tutor, Puddle, offers her the explanation for who she desperately desires to be: "You're neither unnatural, nor abominable, nor mad; you're as much a part of what people call nature as anyone else; only you're unexplained as yet—you've not got your niche in creation."[40] It is this notion of existing without explanation, without a niche, outside of an orderly and inevitable scheme of life, and not simply the antinatural poses of the dandies that captures what I am calling *wildness* in this book. While Thoreau found this lack of explanation to be a source of comfort, and while the dandy opposes the system altogether, the dyke, the symbol of negation against which the whole order of nature is levied, cannot shrug off the insult for which she is the primary symbol. The dandy is not wild because he gives the system he opposes meaning. And within that system, he also has meaning, even if it is negative. But the dyke, or the gender-variant subject, then and now, is a wild card, a slice of disorder, a source of bewilderment and an anachronism even in her own time or, rather, because she has no time that is hers. The gender-queer person, however, Stephen Gordon for one, inhabits an odd temporality too—not a future that will never come, but a past that is always already over.

Such a figure, for example, makes an appearance in a recent queer historical novel, *Confessions of the Fox*, by Jordy Rosenberg. Set in eighteenth-century London, *Confessions of the Fox* defines its gender transient hero as a "sexual chimera" but as unclassifiable in the terms of the day. Rosenberg writes of Jack in terms that echo Hall: "And something clarify'd itself to him, as if out of a Fog. He was something—just as his mother had said—that existed only as a

Scrawl on the world's landscape—as if someone had come along and stepped on a beautiful painting of sunflowers with a jackboot full of Shite—and that monstrous blob of shite splatted in the middle of a field—that blob, Jack considered, was he."[41] A blob, a scrawl, a monstrous being that is both natural, as in part of nature, and monstrous, as in exceeding the natural order, Rosenberg's character occupies precisely this space of transit between a *before* and an *after* nature. As I have written about before under the heading of "female masculinity," and, more recently, "trans*," the gender-queer subject represents an unscripted, declassified relation to being—s/he is wild because unnamable, beyond order because unexplained; s/he has no place in creation and as such escapes and defies the regimes of regulation and containment that shape the world for everyone else.[42] You are not unnatural, nor abominable, Puddle assures her masculine but female charge; you are part of nature but *unexplained*. What is this odd corner of nature? Where is it? Who lives there? Who leaves there? Who is made legible to the system of classification by rounding out the category against which classification makes its claim on knowledge? Perversely, however, my archive in *Wild Things* is more often than not made up of people and characters born male, not female, recognizably gay, not lesbian, and disordered according to logics that lie beyond the gender binary. *Wild Things* presumes that the masculine lesbian is always already wild, to use a by now quaint deconstructive syntax, and so we leave her in her spectacular ruination where the wild things are and go in search of the other forms of wildness, lostness, and misshapen hope that linger on the margins of early modern aesthetic and scientific knowledge. The weird white male loners who keep popping up in these chapters in the location I am calling "wild" are not there as a personification of that which escapes knowledge; rather, they are the beginning and the end of definitions that were, at that time, under construction. Like T. S. Eliot, the Roger Casements, T. H. Whites, and Nijinskys who wander in and out of these pages are not the heroes of those "untamed ontologies" that Foucault tried to locate outside an "order of things"; they are, rather, the still center of a storm, the question mark left in the wake of a morality organized around the natural; they are, indeed, like the zombies of my final chapter, not good or bad, not heroes or goats; they are simply the sites of struggle that the canon has retained. They are the wild things who survived precisely because so many others did not.

Modernism indeed offers many of the texts for the archive I have assembled here not because it offers us a group of wild thinkers or wild revolutionary poets and dancers, but because the very classifications that seemed established and right in the nineteenth century begin to wobble and topple over in the

modernist period. Accordingly, a novel such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) can serve both as the master text of a civilizing and colonial order and the narrative of its undoing. A poem such as W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1919) may offer the iconic images for the unfolding of European fascism as well as provide the language for Chinua Achebe's classic postcolonial novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). And, as I claimed earlier, *The Rite of Spring* both snatches the rhythms of folk music and becomes a reference point for jazz music built on those same sequences later in the century. The archive of wildness I have assembled here, accordingly, is neither a new canon nor an alternative canon; it is the canon read against canons, the great tradition read against greatness and tradition, the disorder of things read through the marks of their violent submission to order.

But the disorder of things speaks not only of chaos but also of the reduction of bodies to things. In other words, the archive of wildness is also an archive of *things*—wild things, things that fall apart. The thingliness of this archive references the indeterminacy of bodies and beings outside of what has been understood as order (the order of things) but also conjures the life of objects, the racial cleaving of subjects from objects, and what Fanon calls the facticity of racial fetishism. In "The Fact of Blackness" (1952) (chapter 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks* [1967]), Frantz Fanon writes that he entered the world "with the will to find the meaning in things" but then discovers that "I am an object among other objects."[43] This discovery that the meaning in "things" is denied to one who must take his place among them, within that order of things, leads Fanon to claim that Blackness "fixes" him, makes him a casualty of the white need to own life, occupy subjectivity, and make worlds. "The white man," wrote Fanon, "wants the world; he wants it for himself alone" (128), and because the white man must be master, Fanon comments, "he enslaves it." The white man enslaves the world. He renders the world his and his alone and reduces Blackness, in Fanon's words, to "savages, brutes, illiterates" (117). From such a position, the position of the object, the thing, the savage, there are a few possibilities—the racialized other can demand recognition by presenting himself as human in the terms proffered by white society, or they can refuse the category altogether and twist the terminology of otherness into a rebuke, use it to unmake the world of white mastery and make a virtue out of what Fred Moten calls "the resistance of the object."[44]

This is, at least in part, Fanon's strategy, and it is certainly a part of queer critiques of normative ideologies of sexual comportment. While late nineteenth-century science, psychology, and literature found ways to classify new forms of human behavior and interaction, some bodies, many bodies, fell outside of

those classifications and remained in the wild, so to speak, beyond the human zoo, inexplicable, discomforting, shocking, exploitable, displayable. This language of wildness, zoos, expertise, scientific observation, and the definitional capture of forms of embodiment, however, describes a larger orbit of exclusion and fetishistic fixing than that of the genteel and aristocratic worlds of Stephen Gordon and Oscar Wilde. Wilde may have been, like Huysmans, against nature, and Hall may have been before nature or, possibly, like Jack Sheppard, in excess of nature, but the language of wildness was used then as now not to type degenerate elites, but to draw attention to the danger of those outside of classification itself. When *wildness* was used by elites as a rhetorical device in the early years of the twentieth century it was often as a disastrous and lawless precursor to fascism. And so, like so many of the terms in our critical vocabulary, we must drag wildness through its masculinist and gloried projects if only to find out what lies on the side.

Beyond Nature

The wild, when not figured as either a glorious unspoiled past or an exciting machinic future, when not a prefascist cleaving to war and masculinity nor a postliberal, postpolitical regime of anything goes, can, under certain circumstances, and on account of its now intuitive set of associations with the nonhuman, the animal, the queer, and the subordinated, be available for the exploration of subaltern and subterranean and particularly racialized forms of queer or perverse desire and embodiment. Certainly, this is how Jordy Rosenberg deploys the wildness of Jack Sheppard in *Confessions of the Fox* where Jack becomes part of a seething underworld of prostitutes, workers, revolutionaries, and even objects. The association of wildness with dynamic forms of life outside the human has also been called "animacy" by Mel Chen and used to indicate racialized hierarchies of liveliness and inertia.[45] But the an/archive of the wildness that lies beyond nature is, above all, a record of stolen life, Black life, Indigenous life, Brown life and death, lives lived well beyond the purview of recognition, respectability, and so on. For this reason, C. Riley Snorton, in *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, describes his book as "principally concerned with the mechanics of invention by which I mean that I am seeking to understand the conditions of emergence of things and beings that may not yet exist."[46] Snorton's comment recognizes the very different temporalities of emergence for Black bodies and situates his work as a search for "a vocabulary for black and trans life" (xiv). This book too assumes that queer of color and trans forms of otherness remain without a vocabulary. The ter-

minologies that have been levied against them have sometimes included the notion of wildness in their lexicons. Here I want to explore that same term as part of its ongoing emergence.

Take, for example, the resurgent interest in the speculative fictions of work of Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany. In such novels as *Wild Seed*, *Parable of the Sower*, and *Parable of the Talents* by Butler and in fantastical stories of desire like *Dhalgren* and *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* by Delany, fantasies of immortality, new forms of community, alternative systems, and sexual difference and lingering threats of slavery and incarceration form the backdrop to thorough reimaginings of the relations between bodies and nature. The return to these works now and the resurgent interest in the archives of Afro futurism in work by Kara Keeling and Jayna Brown, among others, coincides with new episodes of anti-Black, state-authorized violence committed by the police and then refashioned by the media into narratives of defense and justifiable homicide. The science-fictional conjuring of life otherwise and elsewhere, of wild life beyond the multiple forms of containment that contemporary life imposes on Black embodiment, operates in the shadow of a seemingly inevitable set of cultural algorithms that make Blackness equivalent to and the very form of wildness.

As Fanon articulated, Blackness, on account of its very specific relation to property, has been situated as a realm of "value," to use Lindon Barrett's terminology, that limns enlightenment principles with their negative reflection.[47] Not simply the slave to a master nor darkness to light, Blackness, within a white imaginary, must be pressed into the service of negation itself. But negation is a wide and deep terrain and has reappeared in Black radical thought as the unknowable, the unthinkable, straying (Saidiya Hartman), flight (Keeling). Being beyond order, Blackness has been written as disorder and as the definition of wildness itself. Having been defined as such, Blackness is structurally positioned, qua Frank Wilderson's reading of Fanon, to desire the "end of the world" through decolonizing violence.[48] The order of things as it emerges through a mania for classification and identification recognizes the wildness proper to racial otherness and is part of the structural machinery designed to render racial antagonism as unthinkable. If nineteenth- and early twentieth-century expert knowledges tried to rationalize a colonial order, the wildness that it ascribed to Black otherness becomes a disordering force of opposition greatly feared and often conjured in order to be foreclosed. It was, for example, the language of wildness and wilding that helped condemn five young men of color to prison terms in 1990 for a crime they did not commit. The case of the Central Park Jogger, and the subsequent conviction of four Black teenag-

ers and one Latino teenager for the crimes committed against her, shows how intuitive the connection between wildness and Black criminality had become by the end of the past century.[49] It also demonstrated how necessary an intuitive connection between Blackness and wildness might be for the legitimation of state violence.

Blackness has been used as a synonym for a colonialist and racist understanding of wildness, but Blackness has also occupied the space of wildness in order to flee the "world" in which it can only function as the not-subject. Along those lines, Saidiya Hartman has defined "waywardness" as a form both of early twentieth-century criminality and of wild mobility outside of liberal structures of rule. In the chapter titled "A Short Entry on the Possible," in her book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, Hartman defines "waywardness" as "the practice of the social otherwise, the insurgent ground that enabled new possibilities and new vocabularies. . . . It is a queer resource of black survival. It is a beautiful experiment in how to live."[50] For Hartman, waywardness is a mode of escape, an activity by which the Black body slips out of the trap of liberal personhood and falls into a wild and extravagant relation to beauty and freedom. Histories of the medicalization and criminalization of desire abound within queer studies, but Hartman's book reminds us that the life of desire is multifaceted. It lives in the joy of assembly, in the longing for beautiful things, in fantasies of surplus, in "moments of tenderness" (156), in experiences of Black girls and women in "open rebellion" (62) to systems of management, control, and incarceration. In the stories that Hartman gathers in *Wayward Lives*, desire spills over the categories designed to manage it and emerges as a kind of wildness within "practices of intimacy and affiliation" (221). The book is full of promiscuous scenes of sexual abandonment, flirtations expressed in song, scenes of erotic assembly. In other words, desire in this book is not the expression of identity, but rather a term for the extravagant acts of wayward Black bodies committed to "experiments in living free" (34). That notion of "extravagance," a term Coviello also uses to explore unsorted terrains of libidinal uncertainty, conjures within it an excess, a form of wanting that reaches beyond the necessary, a relation to being that extends to what Wilderson terms as "freedom from the world, freedom from Humanity, freedom from everyone (including one's Black self)."[51]

Few texts conjure this relation between wildness and Blackness better than Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1989), where wildness is both a relation to fugitivity and a refusal of the world within which Blackness must take flight. At the end of the film, for example, a mixed group of Black and white gay men are dancing in a warehouse. As the music speeds up and the dancing

becomes wild, Julien's camera moves back and forth between the space of the nightclub and scenes of a white male mob gathering outside. Julien's montage sequence brings inside and outside closer and closer together and creates a fearful anticipation of a violent confrontation. The spectator fears for the gay men who have gathered together at a memorial to dance in the face of death and to love in the midst of crisis. But at the climax of this montage, the police and the white thugs enter an empty space and encounter only traces of the dancers. The dancers, who have engaged rituals of joyful mourning that exceed conventional religious practices, have now left the space for an elsewhere that we do not see and on behalf of a practice of evacuation that eludes theory. They are elsewhere and will remain elsewhere. The dancers, as T. S. Eliot puts it, "are all gone under the hill" ("East Coker," 27).

The practitioners of queer and Black leisure, who leave by the back door to avoid confrontation, refuse the oppositions of right and wrong, Black and white, the law and outlaws, straight and gay, in favor of the destitution of the space of encounter. Julien's dancers, an undercommons of sorts, have not simply disappeared. As the police look around for the "deviants" they came to discipline, they see only smoke and mirrors, but the dancers live on in a place we cannot yet see and in a time that Keeling has described in terms of multiple "black futures."[52] Julien's sleight of hand here, a result of rapid crosscutting that puts two incompatible temporalities and ideologies in dialogue, conjures the utopian, the dystopian, queer nightlife, and fugitivity all in one sequence. By the end of the film, we have not located Langston Hughes or his queerness; instead, we have entered into a representational maelstrom within which queerness, along with white normativity, disappears into the night. In its wake are emptiness, wildness, and irreversible disruptions of time and space.

The emptiness Julien offers viewers in place of a scene of confrontation is not a scene of nothing; it is, rather, a void, an empty space wild with meaning. Wildness inheres to the void, as Karen Barad might put it, because, as she writes, "nothingness" is the "scene of wild activities."[53] Just as the vacuum, in her account, seethes with particles that are both there and not there and, in so doing, creates deep indeterminacy, so wildness represents an abundance *and* an absence of meaning. The space that the gay men abandon in *Looking for Langston* is not just empty; it teems with their absence and is not so much vacant as evacuated. The evacuation of space here can be read through Wilderson's articulation of "the impossibility of black ontology" and understood as a gesture of refusal within which Julien sets up a confrontation between whiteness/law/violence/normativity and Blackness/criminality/opposition/aberration only to flag the dependence of the first set of terms on the second set.[54] As such, the

cinematic erasure of the scene of Black queer pleasure is also part of a Black cinematic conjuring of wildness where wildness seeks to leave the encounter between white subjects and Black objects behind. The empty ballroom visually captures Wilderson's pithy formulation of a humanism dependent on anti-Blackness: "No slave. No world" (11). Julien looks into the void here, a void created by the illegibility of Langston Hughes's sexuality and the withdrawal of Black gay desire and an evacuation and silence that indicates without revealing other worlds. Rather than seeking out stray bodies within a history of sexuality and wrangling them into legibility, this book recognizes the motion of straying itself as a disorderly relation to history and desire. The dancing bodies that disappear in Julien's film retreat from the oncoming charge of the police—they do not stay to be counted or to be arrested; instead they spin out of the space of history altogether, angels in tow, tuxedos flying, leaving behind a lone disco ball and a space teeming with their absence. Julien's film resists the urge to pull its subject firmly into the category of *gay* and instead joins forces with the illegibility Langston represents, which all kinds of bodies represent, and offers a poetic meditation instead on loss, love, and the disorder of desire.

The Disorder of *Wild Things*

As befits a book about wildness and disorder, chaos and mess, this book locates conversations and narratives about the wild in a sprawling an/archive—where the an/archive becomes a space of the unrecoverable, the lost, and the illegible—of canonical and ephemeral texts, images, and performances. Sexuality is a central component to most definitions of wildness, and so archives of sexual otherness must be central to the effort to enter its orbit. As I have shown, scholarship and writings on sexuality in the twentieth century set up claims about sexuality and desire that were for or against nature. In premodern discourses, nature was God's work, but by the nineteenth century, as Foucault proposes in *The Order of Things*, nature was man's work. Scientists and humanists invented and explored the natural world in order to challenge or validate various man-made systems of morality and to create, by the end of that century, a new system of norms. What grounds our conception of sexuality, desire, and sexual conduct after nature? As much as this book traces a genealogy for wildness, it also offers an alternative history of sexuality within which the so-called natural world is neither the backdrop for human romance nor the guarantor of normativity. Wildness indeed seeks the unmaking of that world and represents its undoing. While I take up the whole project of unbuilding, unmaking, and unbecoming, or the anarchitectures of wildness, in a companion volume, *The*

Wild Beyond, this book traces the unruly passage of wildness through modernism and into and then out of the canon of modernist thought. One could easily write a book on wildness that only trafficked in the speculative fictions of a utopian relation to disorder. And while *The Wild Beyond* registers much of that utopian energy, this book must, to use Donna Haraway's apt phrase, "stay with the trouble" of the terminology in order to hold back from the romance of opposition and in order to register the violence that has expelled wild things from the world in the first place.[55] Accordingly, an array of desires and desiring characters occupy the modernist landscape of wildness. Many, like young Max from *Where the Wild Things Are* but also like Henry David Thoreau, T. H. White, and Helen Macdonald, have withdrawn from human-to-human contact altogether and find themselves inspired and excited by wildness itself. Still others, hoping to find an intimate passage to wildness or, conversely, to erect a boundary against wildness, invest in libidinal relations with animals. Some of the figures in this book are oddly reclusive; others go in search of companionship; all exceed the classifications we have created for a realm of natural and orderly desires. Queerness and wildness in this project are not synonyms, nor does one extend the other; rather, wildness takes the anti-identitarian refusal embedded in queer theory and connects it to other sites of productive confusion, taxonomic limits, and boundary collapse.

In my first chapter, "Wildness, Loss, and Death," I retell the story of Roger Casement by locating it within Michael Taussig's ethnography of wildness and alongside an ethos of bewilderment that emerges out of colonial contact. In the second chapter I extend this theme of precontemporary sexual definition and colonial production but also connect the wildness of pre-homosexual life to aesthetic wildness and to the antilogic of queer Indigenous bewilderment. I begin the chapter by focusing on an infamous but ephemeral performance event from 1913 in which the performance itself was overwhelmed by the material it was supposed to channel. The one and only performance of Stravinsky/Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in Paris that year created a riotous mood in the theater, and critics identified in the ballet a sense of wildness that was new and unforgettable. The chaotic force field generated by *The Rite of Spring* and inhabited by those who created it and those who witnessed it can be linked to other, more recent, forms of queer art that both engage the awkward choreographies of *The Rite of Spring* but also replace the incorporative relation to the Indigenous in the ballet with a queer Indigenous aesthetic of cacophony and bewilderment.

The next chapter of *Wild Things* examines the sexuality of pre-homosexual subjects who fantasize about becoming feral. "The Epistemology of the Ferox: Sex, Death, and Falconry," links Thoreau's writings on wildness to an odd

series of twentieth-century queer memoirs about human loneliness as confronted through the authors' attempts to train wild birds. Authors as different as T. H. White, Glenway Wescott, Barry Hinton, Langston Hughes, J. A. Baker, and most recently, Helen Macdonald have written recollections of their experiences of falconry filled with sexual longing and isolation.

In the second part of the book, I take the focus on the wildness of the hawk from chapter 3, along with its epistemology of the ferox, and ask about the relations between humans and animals that ferality implies. Chapter 4 turns to the "wild things" of my book's title and explores relations between animals, children, and wildness in the popular imagination. Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* is perhaps the best-known contemporary book on wildness. Sendak identified wildness with childhood enchantment but also, as I proposed earlier, with ruination and despair. I pair this book with Martel's *Life of Pi* to draw out the connections that both authors make between the child and the animal, the beast and the sovereign, wildness and freedom. The relations to animals that humans cultivate in the household turn away from wildness and use techniques of domestication to bond with animals, to tame animals, and to turn them into pets. Chapter 5 looks into the process of domestication and asks whether, in blurring the boundaries between human and animal, pet and child, we might, unwittingly, blur the boundaries between life and death—the figure of the zombie representing this confusion.

Like many explanatory systems that we use to justify our particular modes of classifying bodies and types of persons, wildness contains histories that are at once discriminatory and liberating, revelatory and incriminating, surprising and all too pedestrian. Wildness does not promise freedom, nor does it name a new mode of identification; rather it offers a rubric for passions, affects, movements, and ways of thinking that exceed conventional oppositions between animal, vegetable, and mineral. Wildness also lays waste to oppositions that structure modern life.

If we return to the space opened up in *Where the Wild Things Are* for reverie and dreams, night journeys and escape, and we return to Max on the stairs of the family home, suspended between the world and freedom, the order of things and extravagant desires, beauty and the inexpressible, heaven and hell, we enter the space of the wild: "and the walls became the world all around." But we cannot stay there. Bewilderment, the process of becoming wild by shedding knowledge (as opposed to becoming civilized by acquiring it), offers both escape and madness, desire and disorder. In the panels toward the end of Sendak's book, the wild creatures hang with Max from the trees, repeating the image from the beginning of the book when Max's stuffed toy hung from

the makeshift clothesline and Max held the line suspended. Now he takes his place among the wild things—creatures, children, stuffed toys, prosthetics—and hangs with them from trees, a crown on his head and his feet kicking the ground away. There are no words in this section of the book, only gorgeous images of revelry and chaos. When the words return, it is to articulate Max's new authority, " 'Now stop!' Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper" (28). Max has become the parent he once opposed. He has wielded the authority he once rejected. He has wrangled the wild into a state of stillness. He is now ready to enter the world created for him and to leave the wild things to their ruination. Can we, unlike Max, enter the wild rumpus, the disorder of desire, not to tame it nor to perform wildness with it, but to eschew the order of things with its private property, its cooked meals, and its family homes? Can we instead live with the bewilderment that accompanies the desire to end that world without knowing what comes next?

Introduction to Part I

1 Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*, 50th anniv. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2013).

2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985), 101.

3 Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, "Introduction: A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies," in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, ed. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1–50.

4 Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, "Genealogy of Queer Ecologies," 21.

5 Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 41.

6. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument," *New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 257–337.

7 J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "'Savage' Sexualities," in *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 153–93. Kauanui writes: "A range of sexual practices drew sustained attention and caused alarm among missionaries and eventually Hawaiian chiefs. . . . Prior to Christianization, Indigenous practices were diverse and allowed for multiple sexual possibilities." Missionaries "also crafted severe penalty regimes for those caught 'backsliding' into 'heathendom.'" Although Kauanui reads a very different archive than I do—she is concerned with the legal archive of Anglo-American colonization in Hawai'i, and I am drawing on Anglo-American modernism, the language of the wild, the heathen, and untamed possibilities abound in both contexts and around the same time.

8 Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness: An Archaeology of an Idea," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 151.

9 Patrick Jarenwattananon, "Why Jazz Musicians Love 'The Rite of Spring,'" NPR's *Deceptive Cadence*, May 26, 2013, https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2013/05/26/186486269/why-jazz-musicians-love-the-rite-of-spring.

10 See Kent Monkman, "The Casualities of Modernity," lecture for the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design, University of Michigan, streamed live April 2, 2015, accessed October 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDFAKcptgZA.

11 Macarena Gómez-Barris, "A Fish-Eye Episteme: Seeing Below the River's Colonization," in *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 91–109.

12 Jane Bennett, *Thoreau's Nature: Ethics, Politics, and the Wild* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002); Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 94; Branka Arsić, *Bird Relics: Grief and Vitalism in Thoreau* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

13 Bennett, *Thoreau's Nature*.

14 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1996; reprint, London: Routledge, 2002).

15 T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1943), 23. Hereafter, the names of poems from this source and the pages quoted from them are presented in parentheses.

16 For more, see Carole Seymour-Jones, *Painted Shadow: The Life of Vivienne Eliot* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), and Louis Menand, "The Women Come and Go: The Love Song of T. S. Eliot," *New Yorker*, September 22, 2002, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/09/30/the-women-come-and-go.

17 See Eve Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and David Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), among others.

18 On these other models of sexuality, see Benjamin Kahan, *The Book of Minor Perverts: Sexology, Etiology, and the Emergences of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). Kahan goes so far as to propose that we may have focused too much on sexual epistemology in our efforts to provide a history for sexuality, and in so doing, he claims, we have ignored other, often racialized, histories of the body that are less easily located in the abrupt and decisive turn to personage that Foucault narrates ("the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage"). Kahan turns to etiology, or the examination of the causes of certain sexual orientations, to reveal a far less clear shift from behavior to personhood and shows "how an explosion of 'unrationalized'—which is to say multiple and conflicting—explanations of sexuality came to exist simultaneously." The minor perverts of Kahan's title are the thousands of behaviors that doctors and sexologists diagnosed and then rushed to treat in the nineteenth century.

19 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 43.

20 Peter Coviello, *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 3.

21 Foucault, *Order of Things*, 303.

22 The noted exception, Paul Preciado's *Countersexual Manifesto*, was translated into English and published in 2018 by Columbia University Press with an introduction by me. Preciado begins his manifesto with the following line: "Countersexuality is not the creation of a new nature, but rather the end of Nature as an order that legitimizes the subjection of some bodies to others."

23 See Joan Cadden, *Nothing Natural Is Shameful: Sodomy and Science in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 4.

24 Cadden, *Nothing Natural Is Shameful*, 4.

25 Parliament of England, *Buggery Act: An Act for the Punishment of the Vice of Bugerie* (1533), accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-buggery-act-1533.

26 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 44.

27 Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 48.

28 Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," in *Intentions: The Works of Oscar Wilde*, Edition De Luxe (New York: Brainard, 1909), 7.

29 The necessity of occupying the terrain of the unnatural explains the dominance of the trope of theatricality in Oscar Wilde and other late nineteenth-century writers associated with contrary desires.

30 Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband* (London: Leonard Smithers and Co., 1899).

31 Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against the Grain* [*Á rebours*], trans. John Howard (1884; Project Gutenberg E Book, 2014).

32 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Edition De Luxe (New York: Brainard, 1909).

33 Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni* (1861), excerpted, accessed January 14, 2020, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45130/mont-blanc-lines-written-in-the-vale-of-chamouni.

34 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 4.

35 Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 4.

36 Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, 16.

37 See new work by Branka Arsić on the popularity of stuffed tortoises in the nineteenth century!

38 Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928; reprint, Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 2005).

39 Annamarie Jagose, *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

40 Hall, *Well of Loneliness*, 138.

41 Jordy Rosenberg, *Confessions of the Fox* (New York: One World, 2018), 136. This book imagines, with historical precision, that Jack Sheppard, the notorious English thief and jailbreaker of the eighteenth century, memorialized in John Gay's *The Beggar's*

Opera (1728) and generally described as a small but strong man, was actually a trans* person.

42 Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

43 Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness" (1952), in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967), 109.

44 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

45 Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

46 C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), xiv.

47 Lindon Barrett, *Blackness and Value: Seeing Double* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

48 Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 74.

49 See Stephen J. Mexal, "The Roots of 'Wilding': Black Literary Naturalism, the Language of Wilderness, and Hip Hop in the Central Park Jogger Rape," *African American Review* 46, no. 1 (2013): 101–15. In this article on the "language of wilderness," Mexal provides a clear and historically situated account of how and why this term was affixed to the accused men and how it resonated through racial histories of Central Park, as well as Black literary discourse and hip hop. The rape, media commentators claimed, was part of a known set of practices indulged by Black youth and operating under the name of *wilding*. The men were cast by the police, by politicians, and by the media as rude intrusions on the hallowed grounds of Central Park. Having left their neighborhoods of the Bronx and Harlem, they were already out of place and were cast as trespassers, as criminals even before they were attached to a crime, and they remain criminal in the minds of many despite having been exonerated. Mexal's essay on the Central Park Five does much more than a documentary by Ken Burns on the topic to explain how and why five young Black men could be randomly arrested for rape. Mexal traces several lineages for the use of the term *wild* in this case: First, it appears within what Mexal calls American literary naturalism to define otherness in terms of savagery and brutishness. Second, it appears in African American literature by Richard Wright and others to "explore the discursive nexus of criminality and the language of wilderness." Wright's representations of Black masculinity reveal the circular logic by which Black bodies are culturally constructed using the language of wildness and then must deploy the same stereotypes in order to reveal the marks of their construction. Third, wildness conjures the fear of Black populations that drove urban planning in the 1980s and that set the stage for the mass delusion that allowed the term *wilding* to accrue meaning so quickly and with such force in 1989. Donald Trump, already a real estate mogul at this time, was so sure about the guilt of the Central Park Five that he took out full-page ads in the *New York Times* arguing for the death penalty for the men and conjured the specter of "roving bands of wild criminals." Finally, the wild, Mexal proposes, was part of the original justification for the removal of en-

tire neighborhoods in the 1840s, when Central Park was in the planning—residents of the area were cast as part of a poor and nonwhite wilderness that, like other parts of the country, needed to be razed, cleared, and settled. Given this background, it was all too easy for the media and the police to cooperate in the production in 1989 of a practice of wilding associated with lawless groups of Black and Brown men and representing a major threat to the white populations in the city who were beginning to benefit from an economic boom. Wilding entered the vocabulary of urban terror as, in Mexal's words, "a terrible word from a strange new language" (102). Mexal goes on to explain how the term *wilding* was lifted from a popular rap hit of that year by Tone Loc, "Wild Thing." But the term *wilding*, he proposed, actually appeared at least a year earlier, in 1988, in a song by Ice-T titled "Radio Suckers," wherein the rapper describes an urban scene of police surveillance and entrapment. Ice T describes his neighborhood in Los Angeles in the song in terms of "Gangs illin', wildin' and killin'" but then goes on to suggest that "guys will stop wildin' if you stop that crap." In other words, here, too, Black wildness is the product of and the response to police violence.

50 Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 227.

51 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 23.

52 Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).

53 Karen Barad, "Transmaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2015): 394.

54 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 36.

55 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

1. Wildness, Loss, and Death

1 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902; reprint, Claremont, CA: Coyote Canyon, 2007); T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Mariner, 1943), 59.

2 Eliot, "East Coker," in *Four Quartets*, 23.

3 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 7.

4 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21–79.

5 Eng-Beng Lim, *Brown Boys and Rice Queens: Spellbinding Performance in the Asias* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

6 For Roger Casement's diaries, see Jeffrey Dudgeon, *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries with a Study of His Background, Sexuality and Irish Political Life* (Belfast: Belfast Press, 2002).

7 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 18.

8 David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

9 Eliot, "Little Gidding," 50.