

Is Another World Possible?

Queerness, Blackness, and the Future

ABSTRACT

This article considers the question of world and strategies for unworlding. I argue that there is a multiplicity of orientations vis-à-vis world (e.g. Black, Indigenous, Queer, Animal, wild, feral) that must be properly differentiated in order to understand what is meant by world or unworlding. By disaggregating these through Heidegger's tripartite thesis on being and world as read through Black nihilism and Afro- and queer pessimisms, I argue that Blackness and queerness are fundamentally distinct existential residues of world; each has its own mode of refusal and role to play in the task of unworlding. To avoid the nothingness that would result in unworlding *tout court*, I consider Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-imperceptible as a dual form of unworlding – both destructive and creative. It offers at once a total annihilation of world and a vast potentiality for reimagining futures otherwise. I conclude by suggesting that it is only in telling stories from and of the residues of being – those inchoate or outside in relation to world – that we may be pessimistically optimistic that the end of the world is not the end of *the* story but the story of their beginning.

Keywords: World, unworlding, Black, queer, ontology

IS IT RATIONAL to hope and fight for another world in the face of a world of modernity's failed promises, sociopolitical and economic inequality, injustice and oppression, environmental deterioration, and violence? To Calvin Warren, hope is a vicious ruse; the mandate to hope combined with the structural impossibility of achieving another world constitutes

the world's metaphysical logic. He argues that, while each alleged step forward toward this other world dangles a tempting carrot of "progress, betterment, equality, citizenship, and justice" (2015, 217) within a sometimes-reachable distance, clinging to hope is merely an interminable whac-a-mole tournament that allows the world to whitewash the brutal fact of its existence: that the world could not have come into being as such nor continue to project itself into the future without Black suffering. The history of the transatlantic slave trade, colonization and the dispossession of indigenous lands, and the ongoing manifestations of their legacies are woven into the world's fabric such that without this constituent outside, the world would wholly unravel. The outside, thus, stands both as evidence against the world and justification for its validity, since its outside secures its inside, its very worldness. For this reason, hope can only be asymptotic: it allows for 'victories' with the pretext that overcoming each challenge will move incrementally closer to that other world, but total success remains ever out of reach. Warren, echoing Lauren Berlant's 'cruel optimism,' ultimately determines that the only way to short-circuit the game is to refuse to play. However, while unworlding is necessary, and total annihilation might be the end of *this* world's story, it may not be the end of all possible worlds. Accordingly, I remain convinced that even in a rigged world there is value in what Berlant describes as "the ongoing work of storytelling in the making and mediation of worlds" (8). The problem is: who can tell these stories?

To imagine worlds otherwise, it is useful to have otherworldly figures from which to orient. To that end, Jack Halberstam's lexicon of "the wild" might offer a fruitful starting point, as it is meant to designate all those who are discarded from the binary logics of world (2020, x). As he figures it, "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" (2020, 7). It is from this concept of the wild that he shepherds the myriad forces excluded from world toward the process of unworlding; more precisely, *thinking wildly* sets unworlding in motion, since "the wild limns our experiences of time and place, past and present, and beckons us to a future we know will never come"

(2020, xii). In recent lectures and in *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, Halberstam insists on a teleological formulation of unworlding – meaning he both advocates world collapse, ruination, and destruction *tout court* and eschews world-building or reworlding projects. He professes that *Wild Things* is “all about tearing down but there’s no building up, making things nice. [He’s] just in the business of destruction and ruination” (2022). This approach follows theorists like Warren, Frantz Fanon, Frank Wilderson, and others – often called Afropessimists or Black nihilists – who attend to the ontological frameworks that regulate Black being, which they trace through the impacts of enslavement, racism, colonialism, and capitalism on the structural conditions that established and still hold sway in the world of modernity. In other words, they retheorize Blackness as an effect of this structural and ontological violence. As such, the teleological formulation emerges from the recognition that another world is, contrary to the popular rallying cry, *not* possible; the world is what it is because it requires the unintelligibility of Black being for its intelligibility, as its constituent outside or negation. As such, dismantling the structures of anti-Black racism and white supremacy would be an existential crisis to the world as we know it – since it cannot continue to be ‘The World’ without Black abjection. For some, this also means that even thought is too entrenched to enable thinking something other, outside, or beyond. Likewise, the only option is unworlding *tout court*, refusal full stop, with no solutions, alternatives, or hope for the future – the teleological form of unworlding.

I, too, have been grappling with the seeming impossibility of positive transformation and escape or, at least, my own atrophied capacity to imagine futures, worlds, or forms of life outside, uncontained by, or in excess of existing imaginaries. In moments of utter frustration and, admittedly, fright at what ‘our world’ has become of late, I find myself wondering whether we have not exhausted the intellectual and metaphorical resources, visions, symbols, and images necessary to conceive or dare enact something radically new. Thinking beyond the fever pitch of rhetoric and mind-numbing, divisive, and self-perpetuating world-reinforcing propaganda circulating in the media ecosystem is nearly

impossible; especially given its dual strategies of either absorbing perceived threats into its grammars or silencing and erasing them from world. Mere existential survival, read as world-inclusion, has long been the full-time occupation of so many. This is, of course, by design. The world, like conspiracy theories, is systemically falsification resistant, making its end, dissolution, or refusal appear logically or conceptually impossible. As such, world collapse becomes the limit of thought, the unimaginable, the unthinkable, the unbearable; since, its outside secures its inside, its worldness, and, therefore, stands both as evidence against the world and the justification of its validity. This is certainly the case for those afforded comfortable membership in world and who also recursively possess the privilege to design and reinforce its logics and vision of the future. Moreover, this circular thinking amounts to a genocidal practice, or mass extinction event – since, anyone or anything deemed undomesticatable, untamable, or uncivilized is stripped of their very recognition as beings and cast out of existence. However, since the meaning of ‘outside’ can be figured in various ways, the diverse pressures exerted on the world’s boundaries and degrees of inclusion within them must be carefully considered. Indeed, these excluded others are gathered under Halberstam’s big tent of the wild.

While I am persuaded about the vital imperative of unworlding, I am less convinced that a teleological version tells the whole story. Unworlding strategies are inexorably encoded with prefigured imaginaries of world and camouflaged worlding or reworlding missions. Teleological unworlding is, thus, a synecdoche of the ‘world, unworlding, worlding’ constellation, mere shorthand for a mesh of simultaneous relations to world that, if unacknowledged, expose it to the charge that it is myopic or antithetical to its original intentions. Further, this intricate relation among worlding praxes overlaps with ontologies and epistemologies of time, since the meaning of world is anchored to a monumental snapshot of history that has systematically erased the histories of so many. This erasure summarily creates specific conditions of possibility for the future – a temporal framework that must be dismantled, refused and reconceptualized in order that we might think otherwise about the future. After

all, the future *as we imagine it* is inescapably connected to the history of the world *as we know it*. Thus, unworlding can be translated as a temporal upending or reversal that alters the relationship of history and the future such that this world's future imaginary becomes one history in an infinite set of histories that operate on the present.

To make sense of the various figures that comele in Halberstam's wild menagerie, notions of wild and feral and their intricate relations to world must be properly articulated, disentangled, and differentiated; for, Halberstam's imperative to unworld is mined from the unintelligibility of the world's liminal or negative others. To accomplish this, I will lure in Heidegger's ontologies of being and world and revisit Deleuze and Guattari's *becoming-animal*. The subsequent sections, thus, unfold what I maintain are vital distinctions between Black and queer being and, in turn, those between feral and wild – notably, in their respective orientations toward world. The wild, in Halberstam's lexicon, can be thought to include all these forms of being but, as we will see, overabundantly populating the wild raises a problem that renders its unworlding force ineffective. What is helpful about reading world and unworlding through Heidegger and Deleuze and Guattari is that we can excavate the artifacts of being buried beneath modern thought and, thereby, capture a mode of reimagining that resists the sort of hope that cruel optimism diagnoses as impossibly asymptotic – which theorists like Halberstam and Warren legitimately refuse in their brands of anti-utopian, nihilistic unworlding. In other words, it will unearth existential residues that possess potential to reimagine future worlds beyond total annihilation. As Kara Keeling observes: “every now harbors chaos and, therefore, a capacity for change. When survival is posed as enduring as such, we miss how that task calls for its own undoing in time” (ix). In other words, I will argue that the residues of world and being, thought in its differentiated multiplicity, transforms unworlding from a merely world-ending force to an engine for worlding otherwise. While this exploration may result in ‘the wild’ losing some of its capaciousness, it will suggest that unworlding need not be the end of the story. As such, I will conclude by promoting a non-redemptive, non-reparative, untimely,

worldless form of worlding that contains an immanent dual mode of operation – both destructive and creative – and, thus, the capacity to imagine worlds otherwise.

HUMAN | BEING | WORLD

First, consider the notorious classification of being in Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*: the stone is worldless, the animal is poor in world, man is world-forming (1995, 177).¹ By the latter, he means that Man, or *Dasein* (being-there), possesses the exclusive capacity to have world and be world-forming – his being is *being-in-the-world*. It is a striking claim for a host of reasons but what is most salient is that Heidegger positions *Dasein* as the sole creator, possessor, and inhabitant of world. This produces a closed, self-reflexive loop, a hermeneutic circle whereby any other being must be thought against or in terms of what is intelligible to *Dasein*'s world; that is, he flattens *Dasein* and world into a singularity and establishes it as the benchmark by which the locus of various forms of being *vis-à-vis* world can be determined. Since, to Heidegger, the issue of the stone is obvious or, one could say, the 'control group' of his thought experiment, he focuses more on the riddle of animal's poverty, musing that:

The animal is poor in world, it somehow possesses less. But less of what? Less in respect of what is accessible to it [...] of whatever it can be affected by as an animal, of whatever it can relate to as a living being. *Less as against more, namely as against the richness of all those relationships that human Dasein has at its disposal* [...]. [It] is limited to a specific domain and is strictly circumscribed. (1995, 193 emphasis added)

He later wonders if this poverty could mean *deprivation*, explaining that “the animal is deprived of world”, ‘the animal has no world’ [...] Being worldless and being poor in world both represent a kind of not-having of world” (1995, 196). By contrast, he continues, the stone is worldless “in the sense that the stone *cannot even be deprived of something like world*. Merely not having world is insufficient here” (*ibid.*, emphasis added).

“The animal thus reveals itself as a being which both has and does not have world,” which he finds “contradictory and thus logically impossible” (1995, 199). In his comparative study of being in relation to world, it becomes clear that Heidegger sees world as uniquely Dasein’s (the Human’s) creation and domain. Even as he entertains the possibility that animal could, in some limited way, have world, it is world as defined from the perspective of his archetypical Human-world. Animals are, thus, somewhat intelligible liminal figures, whereas stones, or material objects, are utterly incoherent in relation to world.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger couples each mode with its respective relation to death. His decidedly enigmatic formulation can be distilled to: Dasein both *demises* and *dies*, animals *perish*, and stones simply *cease to exist*. Because Heidegger renders “the *living character of a living being*, as distinct from the non-living being which does not even have the possibility of dying,” he concludes that “a stone cannot be dead because it is never alive” (1995, 179). Since animals can only have world in a highly contracted sense that correlates to the ways world fulfills its biological requirements, the cessation of metabolic function, or perishing, is their form of death. With Dasein, the question of death becomes tricky, as it is the only genre of being that can *die*. By this he means that only Dasein can experience death as part of its being. This phenomenal experience, *dying* or *death*, is what Dasein *is* – its innermost essence of life. Although he acknowledges that “*Dasein*, too, ‘has’ its physiological death of the kind appropriate to anything that lives [...] it does not simply perish” (2010, 238). Accordingly, he names Dasein’s biological ending *demise*, since it exceeds perishing in its connection to the phenomenal mode, which he calls *dying* or *death*. He, thus, envisions Dasein’s death not as a “being-at-an-end” (an ontological perversion that would characterize Dasein as a thing) but, rather, as a “*being towards the end*” (2010, 236) – the “peculiar possibility of being” in which Dasein’s own being is at issue *for* Dasein (2010, 231). Death is an *imminence* (2010, 240). Thus, by hitching being to an indeterminate future temporal horizon of *not-being*, Heidegger paradoxically casts death as a phenomenon of life (2010, 237).

Therefore, in the case of Dasein, who has both death and world

imbricated in its mode of being, existence becomes inseparable from contingency, or the awareness of the impending potentiality of not having world. Death so figured entails a loss of possibility, the not-yet, the future of world, since the world's temporal horizon is tethered to Dasein in its ontological death *qua* death of world-formation. So, if a genre of being cannot have or is poor in world, it also is not (or not properly) oriented toward the future and cannot experience a phenomenal death. This adds a temporal dimension to Dasein that Heidegger's other classes lack, rendering being the limit of the future, or "the possibility of [its] absolute impossibility" (2010, 241). Given this, the indeterminacy of the future time at which Dasein will encounter demise is woven into the very fabric of being as a form of radical contingency. Yet, if contingency is located at the core of being, there must be a complementary historical mode of being as that which can be lost. To that point, Heidegger addresses what he calls Dasein's *historicity* (its being in a historical way), claiming both that Dasein's being "finds its meaning in temporality" and that temporality makes "historicity" possible "as a temporal mode of being of Dasein itself, regardless of whether and how it is a being 'in time.'" (2010, 19). Crucially, he places Dasein's historicity prior to "what is called history (world-historical occurrences)" (*ibid.*); this locates Dasein as the prehistory of its own world – the world that, once thrown into it with Dasein's given limitations and potentials (*facticity*), is Dasein's exclusive privilege to form. This marks both Dasein and world as *a-* or *unhistorical*, since it is only on the basis of Dasein that "something like 'world history,' and belonging historically to world history, is possible" (*ibid.*). Heidegger's discussion of being and death, thus, establishes world and time as Dasein's "primordial totality of being" (2010, 177). Moreover, this claim becomes a thinly veiled admission that both temporality and world are manufactured artifices of being that cannot be excised until Dasein lives out his life and his world comes to its consequent end. This profoundly radicalizes time and world by sequestering them as a totality from past to future in a highly specific form of life: Man/Human being, making it urgently political for those forms of being that are excluded *a priori*, as existential remainder, from world.

Franz Fanon reflects this, insisting that “the sense of time must no longer be that of the moment or the next harvest but rather that of the rest of the world” (135), underscoring that the process of decolonization and, thus, reworlding, intricately involves a revaluation of temporality as other than the time of world. Achille Mbembé, similarly, explains his “zero world” as “a world in which becoming is difficult to figure because the time of which it is woven cannot be captured through the traditional categories of the present, past, and future” (169). It is this very position outside of world, time, and history that Nietzsche names the *untimely* or the *suprahistorical* (120). What these theorists unearth within this ontological schema is the unintelligible and world-disruptive residue that, I will suggest, heralds the possibility of other worlds – untimely future worlds to be found elsewhere and understood otherwise.

Heidegger’s formulation of being has troubled theorists for many reasons, not the least of which owes to its anthropocentric assumptions and its ethical and humanist implications – despite his protestation that “this talk of poverty in world and world-formation must not be taken as a hierarchical evaluation” (1995, 194). Indeed, it remains a challenge to comprehend how his figure of Dasein can be anything but a closed and highly exclusive circle that relegates forms of life deemed illegible to the edge of or outside its bounds, especially given Dasein’s formulation as both the exclusive world-forming occupant and possessor of time and world and, by extension, the sole legislator of the conditions by which world and being are demarcated and made legible. His assessment of animal being, for example, evidences the ways that world is defined through crystallized ontologies that have profound moral implications, which curiously mimic the hierarchy he so swiftly dismisses. Dismantling his metaphysical foundations of world would entirely unravel it. For this reason, Heidegger might be a strange bedfellow to lure into this discussion. Yet, vestiges of his framework still occupy a comfortable position of influence in Western ontological thought and its attendant conceptualization of the world. Hence, I raise his formulation not to rate its merits as a theory of being but, rather, to adapt and deploy it as a potentially helpful tool for interrogating what we mean

when we think the contours of Black and queer being in relation to world. It also has explanatory value in its capacity to reveal the problems encountered either when leveling the categories of wild and feral too quickly or extending the wild umbrella too widely; these gestures risk erasing essential differentiations that ought to, instead, be well carved out, expanded, and multiplied if a concept like the wild is to have force.

Several questions emerge in juxtaposing Heidegger's triad against the telos of world ruination: Exactly what world must end? For whom will the world end? and Who will bear the burden of its destruction? Heidegger's triad only makes sense in the totality of relations among the three figurations of being, for without a constitutive outside and a liminal inside, the world bounded by Dasein's hold on time through his historicity and phenomenological death would be meaningless. The upshot is the realization that *the triad*, in its entirety, is the world's full spectrum of signification. The world is universal in the strict sense of being a *universe* that necessarily comprises all three orientations; the world *is not*, without those who push on its internal boundaries and those forced to uphold it from their location outside. It is, therefore, vital to disaggregate Black and queer orientations to it if we wish to productively mobilize their collective, differentiated multiplicity as a catalyst for unworlding. Smoothing out their differences will merely reproduce the world's fundamental ontological erasure anew; it also risks eclipsing their separate powers of, and resistances to, imagining worlds otherwise.

ANIMAL | QUEER | FERAL

Queer is an infraction, disruption and, moreover, an expansion of the oedipal and bourgeois family constellation that has primacy in modernity's strictly circumscribed human world. Queer, thus, pushes at the boundaries of world by rejecting the absolute privilege of the organizing logics of heteronormativity and its co-extensive reproductive futurism (Edelman 2004). Queer existence, as outside these logics, is unthinkable and summarily excised from the sociopolitical world. However, the queer disturbance emerges from inside world; it does not, as we will see in the case of stone or Blackness, originate from outside. Queer exerts

its unworlding pressure on the boundaries of the Human and world, coupling it with the Human's established futuring, worlding mode. As José Muñoz argues, queerness is a "not yet here [...] an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. *The future is queerness's domain*" (1, emphasis added). Although queerness is contained within the horizon of world, queer has a disordering, reworlding capacity. While Lee Edelman argues that this disruption should be a refusal *tout court*, queerness is, Muñoz counters "imbued with potentiality," that incites us to "dream and enact [...] *other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds*" (*ibid.*, emphasis added). Thus, the queer excess within the sociopolitical organization of world morphs queerness' unworlding capacities into a futuring engine.

Halberstam cautions "against investments in a wildness that lies in a distant past never to come again or in a future of restored wildness," and, simultaneously, "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" (2020, x). As shown above, Indigenous and Black being are primordially expunged from world through colonialism, slavery, and capitalism – the same gesture that bestowed the exclusivity of world to the (white, Anglo-European) Human. Since this locates Black being as the absolute negation to the domesticated modern world it would, as argued, be inimical to merge these with queerness into the single category of wild. They are ordered differently vis-à-vis modernity and, therefore, resist that order differently. So, if we are to retain the category of the wild, it ought to be reserved as the rearticulation of being excluded *a priori* from world and, instead, consult Halberstam's lexicon for better term that properly differentiates queerness. I propose *feral*, as it captures the liminal, partially intelligible genre of being queerness is.

Animal being is only discerned by comparison – it is somewhat like stone in its incapacity to experience phenomenal death, and somewhat like Dasein in its limited ability to form world. This makes animal, like queer, an interstitial figure against axiomatic world-time-being; they are contained narrowly in world as aberrations of the archetype Human,

unlike stones that are exiled to non-being. I would expand this picture, following Derrida, by signaling that the totalizing apparatus that compresses the plural *animals* into the singular *The Animal* is analogous to the mechanism that establishes the human as Human *by negation to* — (fill in the blank). Playing on the homonymic character of the French plural *animaux* and his neologism *animots* (*mots* translates as *words*), Derrida illustrates the ways that *The Animal* is a mere lexical device that elides the innumerable multiplicity of beings that, in various ways, inhabit its epistemological and ontological terrain. Likewise, he explains: “The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to another living creature” (392), “as if all nonhuman living things could be grouped” (403). Indeed, this is the same monologic I resist in the term wild.

Therefore, when disaggregated and properly differentiated we can see that *The Animal*’s incoherence stems, in part, from its multiple location both in and outside world. For example, in breeding, milk and meat production, or in laboratory testing, animals bodies become exchangeable commodities that are manipulated or exterminated at will; as such, they cease to be intelligible as beings even in a limited way. Their deaths or suffering do not register as such. Animal abolitionists argue that these industries colonize, enslave, and torture animals in quite the same way as the Human exacts this violence upon other humans, thus, appealing to an ethical obligation that would be valid only by index to the Human. The problem with this analogy is equivocation, the slippage between the ‘Human’ (whose death/suffering registers as such) and ‘human’ (whose does not); lowercase humans cannot properly register as Human precisely because they have been expunged from the category – not unlike the animal in this analogy. While this analogy does illustrate a certain rapprochement between animals and stones, it is more complicated than it seems; as, there are policies concerning animal welfare and cruelty with punishments for infractions (however anemic). The presence of this ethical terrain within world discloses the hidden premise that animals are not mere stones; so, the question of their suffering can be posed

intelligibly within world and the ontological order would remain largely intact. On the contrary, the question of Black suffering cannot be posed intelligibly because of its necessity to upholding the world's ontological order; affirmatively acknowledging Black suffering or death as such would be an existential threat to world.

On the other side of the picket fence are animals that inhabit the domestic realm. In some cases, Deleuze and Guattari argue, these human-animal relations can mirror an oedipal, paranoid constellation (240) that transforms them into “furry children,” as Donna Haraway remarked (11). Haraway argues that these “beliefs are not only based on mistakes, if not lies, but also they are in themselves abusive – to dogs and to humans” (33). The companion species figuration she offers, bypasses this oedipal picture and returns us to an inchoate relation of animals to world that is altogether different than Heidegger's. Companion species, she argues, “is about a four-part composition, in which co-constitution, finitude, impurity, historicity, and complexity are what is” (16). Notably, companion species are not singularities but are fundamentally co-contaminating, differentiated, temporal relationalities without pretense to an equality that references a Human standard – suggesting a form of animal being that is not limited in world any more than the Human is. On the contrary, her gesture to grant dogs the capacity to be world-forming – as an adult of another species (41) – in fact, delimits the sphere of Human world in turn. The unholy alliance I am making between Haraway and Deleuze and Guattari here is forged only on the logic that the companion species reveals – the way the process of dog-human co-becoming alters the being and worlds of both dogs and humans. This logic will unfold in greater detail in the discussion of becoming-animal below.

As Halberstam and Tavia Nyong'o muse: “While wildness itself continues to play its part in the ongoing project of propping up a thoroughly corrupt and barely legible understanding of the civilized, the real question to parse is, how might we become feral?” (2018, 455). The above exploration illustrates the various ways in which animals swerve in and out of intelligibility and, thus, disrupt, contaminate, and stretch

the world's ontological and epistemological order. In this this interstitial, liminal, inchoate orientation to world we can also locate queer-ness' boundary agitations – its power to simultaneously dismantle and expand the prototype Human and its sociopolitical, epistemological world. The feral better captures this profoundly uncapturable genre of being in its necessary relational character. Feral is not wild nor tame. Though it may veer toward both wildness and domesticity, it can never properly settle because it is, at core, untamable, undomesticatable, mutant, nomadic, stateless, and epistemologically and ontologically vampiric. This fluidity renders the feral, as Halberstam claims, both a “becoming and unbecoming [...] situated beyond human language [...] approximated only by using the grammars available” (2020, 79). Queerness, too, distorts the temporal logics of reproductive time, bends and disturbs the edges of social norms, and glitches the biopolitical logics that regulate bodies and lives. Like all inhabitants of the borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987), queer and feral have the capacity to shapeshift – vacillating between being lost in translation and being reappropriated into the grammars of order. This is evidenced, for example, in homonationalist discourses that leverage the pretense of LBGTQ+ inclusion and legibility in the sociopolitical order to redraw the axes of exclusion elsewhere. The façade of epistemological elasticity masks the ruse that LBGTQ+ existence, considered disordered, gets appropriated and incorporated into the body politic *as its own*. This exposes the fascistic tendency of the sociopolitical order, which re-encodes and reabsorbs the feral (queer) into its grammars only to reinforce the notion that its original logics and meaning are immutable. This maneuver intentionally diffuses the feral's power, which can otherwise undo the fragile order by stretching it beyond its limits of intelligibility. The system is, thus, conspiratorially self-reinforcing. What I am suggesting, based on this assemblage is that queerness as animal, coded as feral, can at once refuse to be disciplined into the world order and mobilize this boundary-expanding tension in the service of an unworlding that reimagines sociopolitical logics.

STONE | BLACK | WILD

It has always struck me as strange that Heidegger bothers to consider stone being and the relation it has to world or death. Apart from radical animists, we would all agree that his stone arguments are trivially true. Hence, I called it his ‘control group.’ But, recalling that stones “cannot even be deprived of [...] world” (1995, 196) as they are, ontologically, the absence of world, and that they “cannot be dead because [they were] never alive” (179), perhaps it would make sense to reconceptualize the stone not literally as representative of material or inanimate objects but, instead, as a placeholder for forms of being neither contained in nor possessing world in the thick sense. This reading is inspired by Calvin Warren’s world-shattering theorization of “Black **being**,” where he repurposes Heidegger’s model to reveal Blackness as an ontological erasure from the structures of both thought and world – akin to the stone:

The Negro is invented, or born into modernity, through an *ontometa-physical* holocaust that destroys the coordinates of African existence. The Negro is not human, since **being** is not an issue for it, and instead [...] [serves] the purpose of supporting the existential journey of the human being. Black **being** is the evidence of an ontological murder, or *ontocide*, this is irrecoverable and irremedial. (2018, 27, emphases added)

On his account, Black **being**, styled as strikethrough, is shaped exclusively by Dasein’s (read: white modernity’s) world-time totality of Being. That is, white supremacy and anti-black racism are baked into the structures of modernity *and* being, which renders Black **being** not only modernity’s prehistory but also the prehistory of Dasein’s prehistory. Considering the foundational place that Dasein *qua* exclusively time/world-forming occupies in Anglo-European ontological thought, and that this figure of the Human is the universal standard through which modernity justifies colonialism, slavery, and their legacies, Black **being** becomes *not-being*. This reveals why some deaths are grievable and others are merely collateral damage in the making and upholding of worlds and, thus, why some lives or some deaths, like the stone’s, fail to even

register as such. Warren coins the neologism “ontocide” to convey Black death; he also uses it to parse Blackness from white queerness in relation to the intelligibility of their respective deaths. As not-being, ~~Black queer death~~ (my erasure) enters modernity’s calculus as mere cessation of existence and, therefore, not death proper. By contrast, white queer death registers but in a qualified way in relation to the Human standard.

This distinction is crucial for thinking about the dangers of an overly capacious inclusivity. As Warren explains, collapsing Black queer death into queerness in an attempt to make it legible is a category mistake. Doing so masks the racialized, humanist modes of thinking that quarantine Black being outside thought and world and render Black suffering illegible. Following Wilderson, he contrasts queerness (in its white formulation), “an experience of unfreedom,” to Blackness (even if queer) as “a structural position of non-ontology” that is the “negative axis of being [...] ontology’s necessary exclusion” (2014, 6). Expanding this, he argues that unfreedom “brings the subject to the limit of subjectivity, but it is a limit, nonetheless [...] the ‘liminal *subject*’ is not the *object* denied symbolic placement, differentiating flesh, and a grammar of suffering” (2017, 403). Hence, Black and Indigenous being are the byproducts of modernity’s ontological manufacture of Human Being. Avoiding this conflation is, thus, vital; for, hasty inclusivity risks a new ontological erasure of “the black-as-object [...] situated out of space, time, and the world itself” (2014, 8) and, thereby, unwittingly retrenches the metaphysical structures and bounds of world it aims to dismantle. For this reason, I am resistant to adopting the wild in its big banner formulation.

Blackness and, I would add, Indigeneity, comprise the constituent outside of world. As established above, without the primordial erasure, the world as we know it would cease to exist. Hence, Black and Indigenous being become the byproducts of modernity’s ontological manufacture of Human Being. As unconscionable as this ontogenocide is, Kara Keeling identifies in it a double operation: while Blackness in this formulation becomes the “residue of white Being, [the] temporal and ontological ‘impurity’ expunged from the (European) human for it to cohere as such, and [is] violently ordered into racial difference,”

as residue, it reconfigures as potential for “creative invention [...] that escapes [the world] trajectory’s orderings and exclusions” (36). Like Paul Gilroy and others, Zakyyah Iman Jackson clarifies that we must reject strategies that seek “inclusion into liberal humanist conceptions of ‘the human’” (1). Instead, she proposes to shift focus to the ways that Blackness, “frequently alters the meaning and significance of being (human) and engages in imaginative practices of worlding from the perspective of a history of blackness’s bestialization and thingification” (*ibid.*). Yet, it is by leveraging this discarded excess of being, what Jackson describes as “the process of imagining black people as an empty vessel, a nonbeing, a nothing, an ontological zero, coupled with the violent imposition of colonial myths and racial hierarchy” (*ibid.*), that Blackness’ “statelessness” and “otherworldliness” can be rendered a potent, innovative worlding force. These dual modes, Keeling argues, “coexist [...] and contaminate each other” (36).

So, what does this rereading of Heidegger mean for the lexicon of the wild? Warren’s comingling of stone and Black in explicit contrast to (white) queerness signals that their potentialities spring from incongruous alignments to world and different degrees of inclusion in its ontological and epistemological structures. Thus, to avoid the ontological flattening that iterates the erasure of those who already inhabit the existential void, which would be counterintuitive to the rationale for unworlding, it is vital to recognize that these forms of being are incommensurable; each constitutes a fundamentally distinct existential residue that has its own strategy and role to play in the tasks of unworlding and reimagining being and worlds. Decoupling them properly, thus, allows us to differentiate their respective unworlding-futuring potentialities. So, while it is tempting to include feral under the wild umbrella, the wild must be formulated as a properly differentiated multitude. Moreover, we must call into question both the need for new terms to parse differences between Black and queer and the critical value of the wild as all-inclusive. Let us consider Deleuze and Guattari’s oft discussed becoming-animal to nuance these concerns.

BECOMING-IMPERCEPTIBLE | UNWORLDING, REDUX

The focus here will be on the role becoming-animal plays in the overarching trajectory ‘becoming-imperceptible,’ which, I argue, provides a framework for wresting unworlding from its teleological, synecdochical mode. Becoming-animal is at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the mechanisms of psychoanalysis and capitalism that seek to schematize and control being, both sexually and politically. The Introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, provides a *mis-en-scene* in the “becoming-horse” of Freud’s Little Hans, which they claim is “a truly political option” (14). Importantly, becoming *like* a horse or becoming *a* horse would not be similarly political because “becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification” (237) despite being “perfectly real” (238). Becoming as mimesis or analogy falls into the methodological trap of organizing, stabilizing, and neutralizing immanent “multiplicities according to the [existing] axes of significance and subjectification” (the grammars of world). Ergo, rather than “reproducing something else it is in fact only reproducing itself” (13) – it merely rearranges and reinforces the original taxonomies. It is important to avoid replicating “the very formations their function it was to dismantle” (13). The reason such efforts fail dovetails with Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding that terms like human and animal are not totalizable singularities, as in classic metaphysics, but instead “multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage” (34). Thus, they wish to capture a sense of becoming-animal that exceeds duality, lest it be “an obstacle or stoppage” (233) – a taming that incorporates animality into the world’s identitarian logics (as the logic of homonationalism demonstrates).

What Deleuze and Guattari envision as counterpoint to the world’s fascistic tendency to enfold counter-world forces within itself, are “very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human” (237). Therein lies the crux: the logic of becoming entails a multidirectional processual phenomenon that, when properly enacted, erases both ‘poles’ of the presumed linear trajectory. Meaning, the process does not go one way from

Human *to* animal but that, because of the move from Human to animal, there will no longer be categories like Humans or animals as such – their original framing dissipates. Accordingly, a genuine becoming-animal would disrupt the formally relational category of animal in its mode as limit and boundary to the human (i.e., ‘The Animal’) and, in tandem, topple the category Human, since it depends on the animal negation for its existence. Thus, we can say that becoming-animal operates as both an unworlding and worlding force. But to what end?

The aspiration of becoming-animal is what they call “involution,” a form of evolution “between heterogeneous terms” that traffics from less to more differentiated forms (238). It creates and multiplies entities that bear “witness to ‘*an inhumanity immediately experienced in the body as such*,’ unnatural nuptials ‘outside the programmed body’” (273), not newly differentiated, singular, bounded entities. What interests them are “modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling” and, as such, they declare “I am legion” (239) to evoke the multitude of being as decoupled from polarized identity formations. This is also exemplified in their challenge to “use the *I think* for a becoming-animal” so as to “desubjectify consciousness” (586), shifting the stakes with a stab at Descartes’ *cogito*, which becoming-animal undermines anew. The result of this nearly endless differentiation is that what were formerly organized and scripted into singularities (through the conspiratorial machinations of psycho-political ontologies), become *imperceptible* – differences from differences without reference or hierarchies. Becoming-animal, thus, serves as both a key step in the onto-epistemological unworlding of both the Human and its attendant world and as a framework for modes of unworlding that are at once a total annihilation of the structures, organization, and logic that constitute world and open to an albeit unintelligible future through that very ruination. Noting, of course, that “the imperceptible thus remains all the more imperceptible because it is opposed to the perceived in a dualism machine” (284). Since the binary logics that made identity legible dissipate, becoming-animal “haunt[s] the fringes” (246) as an “anomalous [...] a phenomenon of bordering” (245) – as we saw with queerness/ferality.

The case for becoming-animal as an unworlding force grows stronger when we realize that it is but one becoming among many, like becoming-woman, becoming-Black, becoming-Jewish, etc., which raises the specter of “becomings molecular of all kinds” (272). Becoming, however, must always proceed from majoritarian (molar) to minoritarian (molecular). It is, thus, impossible to undergo becoming-man because “men necessarily (analytically) form a majority” (291). By majority, they mean that it universally determines the “state or standard in relation to which [others] can be said to be minoritarian,” making man, “majoritarian par excellence” (291) – not unlike Dasein and his world. Moreover,

becoming-minoritarian is a political affair [...] an active micropolitics, that is the opposite of macropolitics, and even of History, in which it is a question of knowing how to win or obtain a majority. Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future [...] There is no history but of the majority, or of minorities as defined in relation to the majority. (292)

Their refusal of world and history is but a thinly veiled critique of Dasein’s metaphysical foundation that pivots instead toward the untimeliness of becoming. It is, thus, important to reiterate the distinct form this unworlding takes: Deleuze and Guattari ask “what are [these becomings] all rushing toward? Without a doubt, toward becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming” (279). The imperceptible can only obtain, however, after all becoming-minoritarian processes have been undertaken. In other words, it is through becomings that both majoritarian and minoritarian identitarian loci evaporate and imperceptibility ensues, which renders the world’s organizing logics vacuous (unworlded) and supplants them with a vast, differentiated, disordered assemblage of forces. Imperceptibility is, thus, the “cosmic formula” (279) for the dual modality that, at once unworlds and makes possible worlds *disordered* and *otherwise*.

Residues | ...

"Posing the end of the world [...] renders explicit our attachment to quite specific modes of existence," according to Claire Colebrook (xiii). Some unworlding projects, thus, act as a catalyst to generate a better world, while others argue either that another world is not *possible*, owing to its irremediable structural failures, or not *thinkable* from the context of the world as we know it, since thought itself is poisoned by these structures. But are other worlds really so unthinkable? As seductive as the scorched earth futurelessness of apocalyptic forms of unworlding is, thinking the end of world is a moment ripe for questioning the intelligibility of sociopolitical norms and ontological facts; it is the moment of critique, which "places us in relation to the limits of the frameworks that sustain our forms of life and, therefore, in relation to a world that is not immune to questioning" (Cordero, 1). In other words, confronting the world reveals that presents, and by extension futures, are contingent and never attained once and for all. The proper force of unworlding, then, is found not only in its capacity for multi-directional refusal but also in its vast potentialities for reimagining futures beyond world – especially *from* the unworlded, the residues, vestiges, relics, and artifacts of being, the inhabitants of Mbembe's zero world. The thinking I wish to ignite originates from that place and, thus, evaporates the world's organizing and stabilizing logics and ontological structures of thought.

Liberatory potential emerges by deradicalizing temporality, unmooring history from its monumental instantiation, and summoning histories elided by time-world-being. By implementing a differentiated historical multitude and, thereby, rejecting the singularity, veracity, and stability of the history that upholds the world, we open potential for alternative futures. Like many theorists, Tavia Nyong'o and Saidiya Hartman reconsider memory, trauma, pre-drawn genealogies of Blackness, and time to fabulate an archive of precisely this sort of historical excess. Hartman observes that "the 'time of slavery' negates the common-sense intuition of time as continuity or progression, then and now coexist; we are coeval with the dead" (759) – bestowing proper being and death to

the once ~~being~~ and ~~dead~~; while Nyong'o recommends the "tactical fictionalizing of a world that is, from the point of view of black social life, already false" (20), which he says is a way of "reading temporality contrapuntally...both tensed and tenseless" (26). The illegibility of this archive against the backdrop of structures that insist upon a specific historical rootedness of world is the force of transformation. It is what Nietzsche calls the *critical historical* mode, or "the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past" (75) and see the past as both multiple and imbricated with presents and futures. By releasing the future from its grip on history, the world is rendered *worldless* and time becomes *untimely*, allowing for the possibility of a genuinely other world. As Colebrook frames it, "the end of the world might be thought affirmatively as the end of us, the end of an absolute right to life and the beginning of the thought of what other lives might matter" (145). The various forms of pressure that the existential residues exert on world, thus, innovate by way of their world-destructive forces – they shatter both world-bound limitations and the absolute limits of world.

I want to imagine these unimaginable worlds, the worlds of the worldless, untimely, illegible surplus residues of being brought to life in these pages. But to do so, we must refuse the world as we know it, since its sociopolitical, epistemological, and ontological structures are thoroughly infected with a toxic allergy to being in its multiple dimensions. Admittedly, I am captivated by the magnetism of notions of collapse and destruction found in Halberstam and the important work of Afro- and queer pessimists. But I see that pessimism, following Sara Ahmed, as "a certain kind of optimism...a refusal to be optimistic about 'the right things' in the right kind of way," which springs from "a critique of the world as it is and a belief that the world can be different" (161). Indeed, Halberstam and Nyong'o claim that "wildness has a history, a past and, *potentially, a future*" (453, emphasis added). It is in these residues and their differentiated powers to unworld that we find formidable potential to imagine future worlds – allowing us to retain the belief, even hope, that another world *is* possible.

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NOTES

1. References to Heidegger correspond to page numbers of the English translation.