INTRODUCTION

A WILLFULNESS ARCHIVE

There is a story called "The Willful Child."

> Once upon a time there was a child who was willful, and would not do as her mother wished. For this reason God had no pleasure in her, and let her become ill, and no doctor could do her any good, and in a short time she lay on her death-bed. When she had been lowered into her grave, and the earth was spread over her, all at once her arm came out again, and stretched upwards, and when they had put it in and spread fresh earth over it, it was all to no purpose, for the arm always came out again. Then the mother herself was obliged to go to the grave, and strike the arm with a rod, and when she had done that, it was drawn in, and then at last the child had rest beneath the ground. (Grimm and Grimm 1884, 125)[1]

What a story. The willful child: she has a story to tell. In this Grimm story, which is certainly a grim story, the willful child is the one who is disobedient, who will not do as her mother wishes. If authority assumes the right to turn a wish into a command, then willfulness is a diagnosis of the failure to comply with those whose authority is given. The costs of such a diagnosis are high: through a chain of command (the mother, God, the doctors) the child's fate is sealed. It is ill will that responds to willfulness; the child is allowed to become ill in such a way that no one can "do her any good." Willfulness is thus compromising; it compromises the capacity of a subject to survive, let alone flourish. The punishment for willfulness is a passive willing of death, an allowing of death. Note that willfulness is also that which persists even after death: displaced onto an arm, from a body onto a body part. The arm inherits the willfulness of the child insofar as it will not be kept down, insofar as it keeps coming up,

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acquiring a life of its own, even after the death of the body of which it is a part. Willfulness involves persistence in the face of having been brought down, where simply to "keep going" or to "keep coming up" is to be stubborn and obstinate. Mere persistence can be an act of disobedience.

In the story, it seems that will and willfulness are externalized; they acquire life by not being or at least staying within subjects. They are not proper to subjects insofar as they become property, what can be alienated into a part or thing.[2] The different acts of willing are reduced to a battle between an arm and a rod. If the arm inherits the child's willfulness, then what can we say about the rod? The rod is an externalization of the mother's wish, but also of God's command, which transforms a wish into fiat, a "let it be done," thus determining what happens to the child. The rod could be thought of as an embodiment of will, of will given the form of a command. And yet, the rod does not appear under the sign of willfulness; it becomes instead an instrument for its elimination. One form of will seems to involve the rendering of other wills *as* willful; one form of will assumes the right to eliminate the others.

How can we account for the violence of this story? How is this violence at once an account of willfulness? The story belongs to a tradition of educational discourse that Alice Miller in *For Your Own Good* (1983) describes as a "poisonous pedagogy," a tradition that assumes the child as stained by original sin and that insists on violence as moral correction, as being for the child (see chapter 2). This violence is a visible violence, one that it would be very hard not to notice. In this book I aim to show how the Grimm story is pedagogic in another sense: it teaches us to read the distinction between will and willfulness as a grammar, as a way of ordering human experience, as a way of distributing moral worth.

This story, "The Willful Child," is a finding. I found it because I was following the figure of the willful subject: trying to go where she goes, trying to be where she has been. It was another figure, related, or perhaps even a relation, a kind of kin, that of the feminist killjoy, who first sparked my interest in this pursuit. Feminist killjoys: those who refuse to laugh at the right points; those who are unwilling to be seated at the table of happiness (see Ahmed 2010). Feminist killjoys: willful women, unwilling to get along, unwilling to preserve an idea of happiness. I became interested in how those who get in the way of happiness, and we call these those killjoys, are also and often attributed as willful. In witnessing the unruly trouble making of feminist killjoys I caught a glimpse of how willfulness

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can fall, like a shadow on the fallen. This book is an attempt to give my glimpse of a willful subject a fuller form.

George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* gave me an initial glimpse. I offered a reading of this novel in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) as part of a genre of female trouble-making fiction. In reflecting on trouble in Eliot's text, I wrote a footnote on willfulness: "Writing this book on happiness has sparked my interest in theorizing the sociality of the will and the ways in which someone becomes described as willful insofar as they will too much, or too little, or in 'the wrong way'" (2010, 245). It was the character Maggie Tulliver, a willful heroine, who inspired this note and thus this subsequent book *Willful Subjects*. Maggie Tulliver has been the object of considerable feminist desire and identification over time. We might share affection for Maggie as feminist readers, as we might share affection for the many willful girls that haunt literature. Simone de Beauvoir identified with Maggie so strongly that she was reported to have "cried for hours" upon her death (Moi 2008, 265). Lyndie Brimstone in her personal reflections on literature and women's studies similarly relates her own experience to Maggie's: "Maggie with her willful hair" who "made one dash for passion then went back to rue it for the rest of her truncated life" (2001, 73). Maggie's willful hair comes to express her willful character: her refusal to be straightened out by the fashions of femininity. The assumption of Maggie's willfulness seems to explain the unhappiness of Maggie's situation. My hunch (how often do we start on a trail with a hunch; if we tend to write these hunches out as we acquire confidence in our arguments, we can write them back in) in moving from the figure of the feminist killjoy to that of the willful subject was that willfulness and unhappiness share a historical itinerary. We learn from our traveling companions.

To be identified as willful is to become a problem. If to be willful is to become a problem, then willfulness can be understood as a problem of will. And it is the will that points us back in the direction of happiness, which has been consistently understood as the object of the will. The seventeenth-century French philosopher Blaise Pascal argued: "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all *tend to this end*. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will *never takes the least step but to this object*. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves" ([1669] 2003, 113, emphases added). Even suicide is an expression of the will to

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happiness. The implication of this rather extraordinary description is that happiness should be thought of not as content but form: if in tending toward something, we tend toward happiness, then happiness provides a container for tendency. Happiness must be emptied of content if it can be filled by "whatever" it is that we are tending toward.

One of our tasks might be to ask what happiness does as a container of the will, however empty. Does happiness lead us "willingly" in a certain direction? For Augustine, the fourth-century theologian often credited as the starting point in the history of the will, that is, as the scholar who first gives the will the status of an independent power (see chapter 1), happiness is not simply what motivates will, but is what follows for those who will in the right way: "Those who are happy, who must also be good, are not happy simply because they will to be happy—even the wicked will that—but because they will it in the right way, whereas the wicked do not" (*On Free Choice of the Will*, 1.14.23).[3] Happiness follows for those who will right. Those who will wrong still will happiness. To quote again from Augustine: "To the extent that someone strays from the path that leads to happiness—all the while insisting that his only goal is to be happy—to that extent he is in error, for 'error' simply means following something that doesn't take us where we want to go" (2.9.47–48). The unhappy ones are the strays, those who in leaving the path of happiness are going the wrong way. Unhappiness is thus understood as an error of will; to err is to will wrong, to err is to go astray. An error message *is* the message of unhappiness.

Willfulness too has been understood as an error of will. Let's take a typical definition of willfulness: "asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason; determined to take one's own way; obstinately self-willed or perverse."[4] Willfulness is used to explain errors of will—unreasonable or perverted will—as faults of character. Willfulness can thus be understood, in the first instance, as an attribution to a subject of will's error. Willfulness and unhappiness seem to meet at this point, a stray point. This intimacy of willfulness and unhappiness remains to be thought. And to think that intimacy is to queer the will.

A History of the Will

I turned toward the category of "the will" because the figure of the willful subject took me there. The timing of this sequence matters. Following the figure of the willful subject, making her my priority, is another way of

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proceeding, another way of writing a history of the will.[5] If the problem of willfulness cannot be separated from the problem of will, then willfulness returns us to the will.[6] We will need to ask: what does it mean to write a history of will? For some philosophers, to write such a history would be to write a history of a ghost; after all Gilbert Ryle ([1949] 2009) famously calls the will "a ghost in a machine."[7] There are those who doubt the existence of such a thing called "the will" understood as a faculty of a subject, as something you or I might have. Even if the debate over free will and determinism continues to be rehearsed as, or in response to, the development of new sciences of the mind,[8] the vocabulary of "the will" is not exercised with much regularity in either of its historically privileged domains: philosophy and psychology. But of course even ghosts have histories, even objects that are understood as illusions or fancies have a story to tell, a story that is not independent of the story of those for whom such illusions and fancies are tantalizingly real. A ghostly history may be no more or less real than any other.

In writing a history of the will, are we writing the history of an idea? Peter E. Gordon observes that a historian of ideas "will tend to organize the historical narrative around one major idea and will then follow the development or metamorphosis of that idea as it manifests itself in different contexts and times" (2012, 2). Can we approach the will through its metamorphosis as an idea? But as Brad Inwood notes, "there are few words in the philosophical lexicon so slippery as 'will'" (2000, 44). The will might be too slippery to be treated as a single idea with different manifestations. The will has indeed moved around: associated by some with activity, others with passivity, some with mind, and others with body. If the will comes up most often in a restricted debate about human nature and action (usually with the adjective "free" and with its sparring partner "determinism"), the will has also been understood as what connects humans to all other things, from atoms to amoebas and stones. The will could even be described as one of philosophy's most promiscuous terms.

It is thus not surprising that there are few attempts to offer a history of the will. Hannah Arendt's *The Life of the Mind* is singular in its explicit aim to offer such a history.[9] It is noteworthy that Arendt defines her own task in terms of writing a history of the will that is *not* the history of an idea. For Arendt the task of writing the history of will as an idea (which she translates very quickly, possibly too quickly, into a history of the idea of freedom) would be "rather easy" because it would be

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premised on a false separation of ideas as "mental artefacts" from the history of the human subject as "the artificer" (1978, 5). She argues that she "must accept what Ryle rejects, namely, that this faculty was indeed discovered and can be dated. In brief, I shall analyze will in terms of its histories, and thus of its difficulties" (5).[10] To discover something implies that thing already existed. But I think the more important implication is that once discovered, the will acquires a certain hold. For Arendt, given that the will is an idea of a subject, the history of will is also the history of the transformation of the subject who has that idea.

Arendt's history of the will can thus be related to Michel Foucault's genealogy of the subject. Foucault describes a genealogy as a history of what is usually felt as without history, including a history of the felt. A genealogy, Foucault suggests, "must record the singularity of events outside of any monstrous finality: it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history: in sentiments, love, conscious, instincts" (1977, 139). For Foucault the will might have been *too unpromising* to have been made an explicit object of inquiry. He notes in an interview, "What Is Critique?," how the thematic of power should have led him to the question of will. Foucault admits: "One cannot confront this problem, sticking closely to the theme of power without, of course, at some point, getting to the question of human will. It is obvious that I could have realised it earlier. However, since this problem of will is a problem that Western philosophy has always treated with infinite precaution and difficulties, let us say that I have tried to avoid it as much as possible" (1977, 74–75).[11] Perhaps it is the difficulties that Arendt mentions ("I shall analyze will in terms of its histories, and thus of its difficulties") that makes Foucault bypass the question of will, even though his genealogical method was indebted to Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* ([1887] 2003) which could, and indeed has, been understood as a "genealogy of the will."[12]

And it is Nietzsche who offers us not only an account of how the will becomes an idea of the subject, but how this idea does things. In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche suggests that the error of will is part of the general error of causality. As he describes: "We believed ourselves to be causal agents in the act of willing; we at least thought we were there, *catching causality in the act*" ([1889] 1990, 60, emphasis in original; see also Nietzsche [1887] 2001, 204). Perhaps we catch nothing but the sight of ourselves catching. Nietzsche offers more than a critique of the error of will. He suggests that the error of will has a purpose: the "free will" is "the

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most infamous of all the arts of the theologian for making mankind 'accountable' in his sense of the word" (64). An account of will is an account of becoming accountable, of becoming guilty: "the doctrine of will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is, of finding guilty" (64). Not only does the will allow actions to be referred back to a subject, but it is through the will that the subject is unified as an entity. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche notes that although "philosophers are accustomed to speak of the will as though it were the best-known thing in the world," the unity of will, "is a unity only in name" ([1886] 1997, 12).[13]

In following the will as a unity, we are following a name, one given to a subject. It is not simply that we need to account for this subject but that, after Nietzsche, we might need to track how this subject is held to account by being given a will. It is this model of the will that allows a philosophical idea to be translated into a social or cultural diagnostics. The will is transformed in contemporary culture into "willpower," into something that a responsible and moral subject must develop or strengthen. When the will becomes will power, then the fate of the subject becomes "in its power." And when social problems are narrated as problems of will, they become a consequence of the failure of individuals to will themselves out of situations in which they find themselves. Lauren Berlant notes: "In the new good life imagined by the contracting state, the capitalist *requirement* that there be a population of poorly remunerated laborers-in-waiting or those who cobble together temporary work is not deemed part of a structural problem but rather a problem of will and ingenuity" (2004, 4, emphasis in original). When a structural problem becomes diagnosed in terms of the will, then individuals become the problem: individuals become the cause of problems deemed their own.

A Queer History of Will

What would it mean to offer a queer history of will? Given that the will becomes a technique, a way of holding a subject to account, it could be understood as *a straightening device*. If we have this understanding of will, we would not be surprised by its queer potential: after all, you only straighten what is already bent. Even when error is treated as what must be corrected, error might be the ground covered by a queer history of will. Recall the etymology of error: from err, meaning to stray. The landscape

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of will might appear differently, might appear queerly, if we notice how it is littered with waifs and strays.

Rather than tracking the history of the will as an idea, which would assume that idea as having a consistency that it may or may not have, I offer a history of *willing associations*. A queer history of will might foreground the association between will and error and explore its myriad forms.[14] We have already noted how Augustine makes this association; and others have followed. René Descartes, for example, contrasts the object of the will to the object of perception. The latter appears before a subject: "The perception of the intellect extends only to the few objects presented to it and is always externally limited." The horizon of the will is not limited by this before: "The will, on the other hand, can in a certain sense be called infinite, since we observe without exception that its scope extends to anything that can possibly be an object of any other will—even the immeasurable will of God. So it is easy for us to extend our will beyond what we clearly perceive; and *when we do this it is no wonder that we may happen to go wrong*" ([1644] 1988, 171, emphasis added). According to Descartes, it is given this contrast between the finite faculty of the intellectual and infinite faculty of the will that subjects tend to err. As Stephen Menn explains, "The juxtaposition of these faculties does not of itself produce error, but it gives me occasion to err, since the will extends beyond the bounds of my understanding" (1998, 316). For Descartes, if to will is to will what is beyond the reach of the subject, then willing easily amounts to going wrong. Perhaps in this "easily amounts" is a firmer argument: the will is errant.

We might note the spatial and temporal aspects of the argument: we tend to will what is not present, in the sense of here as well as now. It is the futurity and distance of will that seems to render will faulty. We go wrong when we try and gather what is not within reach. Descartes's account of will and error could usefully be compared to John Locke's empirical psychology. For Locke it is will that can carry the subject away from what it wants. Even if we know what we want—happiness—we don't always aim wisely: "though all men desire happiness, *yet their wills carry them so contrarily*" ([1690] 1997, 246, emphasis added). The contrariness of the will, for Locke, is that it can carry us away from a desired future. To be carried contrarily by will is to be carried away from happiness. We can again hear the echo of Augustine: to leave the path of happiness is to be willing wrong, or going the wrong way. Willing is how we end up deviating from the right path, as well as the means for directing

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ourselves along that path. Perhaps if we follow the will we might in turn leave this path, we might even wander away from the path of the willing subject. A queer history of the will might allow the will to wander away from such a subject.

To wander away we must first recognize the path we are asked to follow. Arendt addresses Augustine as "the first philosopher of the will."[15] She is not assuming that concepts such as deliberation or preference began with Augustine (after all, these are key ethical themes in classical Greek philosophy), but rather suggesting that until Augustine, and the development of "a Christian ethics of interiority" (Ferrarin 1991, 339), the will was not understood as an independent human faculty. One might pause here and note how a queer history of sexuality might cover some of the same ground as the history of the faculty of the will. Augustine has figured prominently in queer histories, for example, in Jonathan Dollimore's *Sexual Dissidence*: *Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (1991). Augustine calls upon the will in his confessions of desire, allowing us to reflect on will and desire as sharing a historical itinerary. Indeed, Dollimore shows how in Augustine there is an intimate relationship between free will and the privation and perversion of desire. A queer history of will might proceed by investing the entangled emergence of will and desire.

I have no doubt of the queer potential of Augustine's work, and he remains a key figure in my own willful history of will. But if we are not assuming the subject of will as the only way that will becomes a subject, we might begin elsewhere. We might start with Lucretius, the Roman poet and philosopher, whose poem *The Nature of the Universe* we can inherit because of the queer thread of history, as Stephen Greenblatt has shown in his book *The Swerve* (2011). *The Nature of the Universe* is a queer poem, no doubt, queer not only for its content but queer in the very matter of its survival. A poem assumed lost for centuries only to be found again because of the dedicated wandering of a medieval humanist, a poem that survived on parchment, a material made out of the skin of sheep and goats because parchment is matter that can survive the "teeth of time" (2011, 84);[16] a poem hidden in a monastery, concealed under the mark of another's signature.[17] Greenblatt notes how the "reappearance of his poem was such a swerve, an unforeseen deviation from the direct trajectory—in this case, toward oblivion—on which that poem and its philosophy seemed to be travelling" (7). For the poem to exist for us, it must have persisted. Remember our Grimm story: mere persistence can

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be an act of disobedience. Perhaps there is nothing "mere" about persistence. Persistence can be a deviation from a trajectory, what stops the hurtling forward of fate, what prevents a fatality.

The swerve of history helps us to find the swerve in history. We can ask: how does making Lucretius a turning point in the history of will turn that history? Jane Bennett writes of Lucretius in *Vibrant Matter* (2009) and although this book has a section on the willing subject, Lucretius is not addressed as a philosopher of the will. If we address Lucretius in this way, we can bring to the foreground the perversity of will. In *The Nature of the Universe* Lucretius offers an account of the will precisely *not* as a faculty of a human subject separated from the world, one whose work is to work upon the world. The will for Lucretius is understood as the swerve, also described as the *clinamen* (this word is invented by Lucretius but derives from the Latin *clīnāre*, to incline) in order to mount a philosophical defense of Epicurean atomism. The will makes human beings continuous with atoms, made from the same stuff; stuff understood neither as shaped by a preordained purpose and design, nor as lifeless and inert, but as motion and deviation. In his descriptions of the physical universe, Lucretius offers an account of will in the form of swerving atoms: "*when the atoms are travelling straight down through empty space by their own weight, at quite indeterminate times and places, they swerve ever so little from their course,* just so much that you can call it a change of direction" (2.66, emphasis in original). To swerve is to deviate: it is not to be carried by the force of your own weight. What better way of learning about the potential to deviate than from the actuality of deviation. The swerve is just enough *not* to travel straightly; *not* to stay on course. Oh the potential of this *not*!

The beauty of Lucretius's account of the universe is that swerving atoms are a point of continuity with all living creatures, which makes continuity into discontinuity: "If the atoms never swerve so as to originate new movement that will snap the bonds of fate, the everlasting sequence of cause and effect—what is the source of the free will possessed by living things throughout the earth?" (2.67). To swerve or to deviate can *snap the bonds of fate*, understood as the forward trajectory of a straight line. It is will that allows humans too not to be pushed in a certain direction, not to travel straight by their own weight. The will is understood here as the capacity or potential to enact a "no," the potential not to be determined from without, by an external force. The "no" is what makes humans on a

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deviant line with atoms: "There is within the human heart something that can fight against this force and resists it," he suggests and "in the atoms you must recognise the same possibility" (2.68). Teresa Brennan's description of free will as "the ability not to go with the flow" (2004, 56) recalls the poetry of Lucretius's swerving atoms.

Some have challenged the way Lucretius has been interpreted as an account of the will of a conscious human subject, for example, by Karl Marx in his early Hegelian work on ancient materialism. Jane Bennett describes Marx's "too-quick translation of atoms into human beings" (2001, 121). We need to slow down if we are to be enchanted by matter. To find only the human in Lucretius would certainly be to miss the point. The point is not at the same time to expel the human from the possibility named by the will. The human subject becomes part of the will story: just a part, not the start. And indeed we learn from the continuity of humans with atoms that there is another way of thinking of will: "the will" is a name given by or in history to the possibility of deviation.

How queer is this will! As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has elaborated, the word "queer" derives from the Indo-European word "twerk," to turn or to twist, also related to the word "thwart" to transverse, perverse, or cross (1994, viii). That this word came to describe sexual subjects is no accident: those who do not follow the straight line, who to borrow Lucretius's terms, "snap the bonds of fate," are the perverts: swerving rather than straightening, deviating from the right course. To queer the will is to show how the will has already been given a queer potential. Without doubt for Lucretius this potentiality is valorized: but for others, the same potentiality is narrated as a problem or threat, the problem or threat that subjects might not follow the right path. Willfulness might be a conversion point: how a potential is converted into a threat.

If we reread Augustine through the lens of Lucretius, we discover how for Augustine too willing is what keeps open the possibility of deviation. Augustine in *On Free Choice of the Will* suggests that even if "the movement of the will" is similar to "the downward movement of the stone," the stone "has no power to check its downward movement" (3.1.72). Of course for Lucretius the stone would have its own inclinations: the stone would not be understood as without power, even a checking power, as the power not to be moved straight down in a vertical line. But we can put the matter of the stone to one side, at least for now,[18] and note how the will matters as an idea for Augustine. He seeks to explain how evil can exist in the world

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despite the goodness and sovereignty of divine will. He does not describe will simply as the potential to do evil: rather he describes will as the potential to do good. If humans did not willingly follow God, goodness would not refer to humans but to God. Humans must be free not to be good in order to have the possibility of being good; humans must be free to "turn away" from the right path if that path is to become their own. This means for Augustine it is better to leave the right path than to stay on that path because you have no will: "A runaway horse is better than a stone that stays in the right place only because it has no movement or perception of its own" (*On Free Choice of the Will*, 3.5.81).[19] In some translations this runaway horse is a "wandering horse." The will signifies that it is better to leave the right place than to stay in the right place because you are unable to move on your own. The will might even describe the relative value of not staying in the right place. It is not simply that Augustine suggests that to will wrongly is to deviate from the path of happiness. If the will names the possibility of deviation, then that possibility becomes intrinsic to will.

The will is thus called upon to resolve the problem of the will: not being fully determined from without becomes the requirement to determine from within. The will might even be willful *before* it becomes the will; before it can fulfill its own requirement. It is worth noting here that Jane Bennett's own appreciative reading of Lucretius uses the language of willfulness: "A certain willfulness or at least quirkiness and mobility—the 'swerve'—is located in the very heart of matter, and thus dispersed throughout the universe as an attribute of all things, human or otherwise. The swerve does not appear as a moral flaw or a sign of the sinful rebelliousness of humans" (2001, 81). There is a clear hesitation in Bennett's use of the word "willfulness," a hesitation that takes the form of simultaneously using and replacing the word ("at least quirkiness or mobility"). My arguments in *Willful Subjects* explain this hesitation. What happens if we assume that the word "willfulness" is the right word? If Lucretius teaches us that the will does not belong to the subject (if will names a potential that matters to all matter) then willfulness too might not reside within a subject. Willfulness is the word used to describe the perverse potential of will and to contain that perversity in a figure. Our tendency to associate willfulness with human flaws and sin would become a symptom not only of the desire to punish the perverts but to restrict perversion to the conduct of the few. If willfulness provides a container for perversion, my aim is to spill this container.

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A Willful Method

In following the figure of a willful subject, I assemble a willfulness archive. This assembling is my method: a willful method. What do I mean by a willfulness archive? We could hear in the oddness of this expression a stretching of the meaning of archive, or even an evacuation of the archive. There is no building in which the documents of willfulness are deposited. Or is there? Perhaps a document is a building, one that houses or gives shelter. A willfulness archive would refer to documents that are passed down in which willfulness comes up, as a trait, as a character trait. Even if the documents are not contained in one place, they could be described as containers. We could draw here on Jacques Derrida's reflections on archives as *domiciliations*, where the documents are guarded, are put under "house arrest" (1996, 2). If documents can be buildings, they can be where an arresting happens. Perhaps it is the willful subject who is under arrest. To arrest can mean not only to "cause to stop" but can also be used figuratively in the sense of to catch or to hold. The willful subject is under arrest in coming to appear to a watchful eye, to the eye of the law, as the one who *has* certain qualities and attributes.

To be arrested is not to be stationary. She moves around; she turns up by turning up in all the wrong places. The willful subject led me to where she came to appear. In following this figure, I thus came across materials I had not previously encountered. The Grimm fable, "The Willful Child," is one such example. Even as the figure of the willful child became familiar, I was still surprised by the "how" of her appearance. Research involves being open to being transformed by what we encounter. This fable redirected my thinking and became a pivot, or a table, that supported my travels. It was thinking through this fable that led me to reconsider how the the part/whole distinction relates to the will/willfulness distinction. I had already begun drawing on descriptions of the general will in Pascal's *Pensées*, discussed in chapter 3, in which the image of a body and its parts (the foot as well as the hands) is so powerful. Once I found the Grimm story, this image from Pascal made a much stronger impression. The arm that keeps coming up began to haunt me. I began to notice other wayward body parts. This book is full of them and the promise as well as terror of their agency.

The Grimm story has allowed me to attend to the part of other parts. I situate the Grimm story within a wider body of work that can be described

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as "education of the will" in which the will becomes the object as well as method for teaching a child. It is in this body of work that the figure of the willful child appears most frequently and is called upon with the greatest urgency. In the history of education of will, the willful child has been hard at work.[20] The function of the will as a pedagogic tool is hard to separate from its function as a moral organ (see chapter 2). All texts in which the figure of the willful child is "at work" could be described as part of the history of the education of the will, which includes literary as well as philosophical materials concerned with moral character.

I have already noted the significance of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* to the development of this project, a novel that could be described as bildungsroman, focusing on the moral and psychological development of a protagonist. In going back to my starting point, I ended up working through all of Eliot's novels, which eventually came to form a key part of my willfulness archive, even though this book is not itself a book on Eliot.[21] I decided to work with George Eliot's novels not only because they were crucial to how I embarked on the willfulness trail but also because Eliot can be thought of as a novelist of the will: she exercises the language of will in her description of character. As Michael Davis has noted in *George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Psychology*, Eliot was engaged in the intellectual debates of the time which "dismissed the notion of the will as free or spontaneous" (2006, 120; see also Bonaparte 1975). Within her novels, the will appears not simply as something characters have but as part of a moral and affective landscape. Davis concludes that Eliot "maintains a sense of the will as a psychologically and ethically significant category" such that "her awareness of the problems attached to the concept of will" provides "the basis of a subtle and complex redefinition of that concept" (2006, 120). Working closely with Eliot's texts has helped give more coherence to my own. Perhaps, in returning to the same body of work, I have found a respite from wandering.

Eliot's texts have also helped me to think of how will works as an idea that converts into narrative, creating a world in which will as well as willfulness become assignments that pertain not only to persons but also to things. As Moira Gatens notes, George Eliot can be thought of as a philosopher as well as a novelist, or we could approach her novels as a "new form of philosophical writing" (2009, 74). Eliot's works could be described as a novel form of philosophy. My choice of Eliot as a willful companion reflects my own interest in reimagining the relationship of philosophy to

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literature. In reading Eliot as a philosopher, I also read philosophy as literature. In this book I engage with a wide range of "philosophies of the will" and treat these philosophical works as strands of a willfulness archive. In other words, I read philosophies of the will not simply for the content of arguments about will, but with a reflection on how the will (sometimes but not always in relation to willfulness) takes form and is given form within the works themselves.

I do think of the arguments of this book as philosophical arguments even if the book does not inhabit in any "straightforward" way the house of philosophy. The philosophical project of the book could even be described as *not philosophy*. What do I mean by this? To be doing *not philosophy* is a way of framing one's relation to philosophy albeit in apparently negative terms. *Not philosophy* is practiced by those who are not philosophers and aims to create room within philosophy for others who are not philosophers. Not being a philosopher working with philosophy can be understood as generative: the incapacity to return texts to their proper histories allows us to read sideways or across, thus creating a different angle on what is being reproduced. *Not philosophy* aims not to reproduce the body of philosophy by a willful citational practice: if philosophers are cited (and in this book many philosophers are cited) they are not only cited alongside those who are not philosophers but are not given any priority over those who are not. This is how I come to offer as my final hand a rereading of Hegel's master/slave dialectic as a companion fable to the Grimm fable.

By *not philosophy* I am not, however, only referring to the philosophy produced by those who are not philosophers. *Not philosophy* also attends to "the not," making "the not" an object of thought. *Not philosophy* is also a *philosophy of the not*. In this book I argue that the will can be rearticulated in terms of the not: whether understood as possibility or capacity, as the possibility of not being compelled by an external force (I have discussed this understanding of will in Lucretius), or as the capacity to say or enact a "no" to what has been given as instruction. Indeed, willfulness as a judgment tends to fall on those who are *not* compelled by the reasoning of others. Willfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being *not*, as not meeting the criteria for being human, for instance. Not to meet the criteria for human is often to be attached to other nots, not human as not being: not being white, not being male, not being straight, not being able-bodied. Not being in coming up against being can transform being. This statement can be heard as aspiration: *not philosophy*, in

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reinhabiting the body of philosophy, queers that body. Willfulness: philosophy astray, a stray's philosophy.

A queer body can be a queer body of thought. Thinking through the relationship between will and willfulness has allowed me to reorientate my relation to the will as a philosophical idea. The arguments offered in this book could be read alongside the work of scholars such as John Smith (2000) and Peter Hallward (2009) who have both argued that the critique of the volitional subject within poststructuralist thought does not mean volition as a concept no longer has its uses. Smith argues that some readers of "contemporary theory" might assume that "the will is an outmoded concept" (2000, 12). He suggests that for feminist readers the will might be understood as a "masculinist concept," as belonging to the subject that has been the subject of feminist critique (12).[22] Smith also notes how the will has become difficult to disentangle from Nazism, with its triumphant "triumph of the will."[23] Hallward in turn reflects on the tendency within poststructuralist theory to "dismiss the notion of will as a matter of delusion or deviation" (2009, 20).

Against these dismissals of will, Smith and Hallward argue for a revised and dialectical concept of will as a praxis or activity. I agree that the concept of the will is not exhausted. I am not interested, however, in rescuing volition from the established critiques (not all of which I would describe, as Hallward does, as dismissals)[24] even though in chapter 4 I reflect on the importance of political will, and even if by the end of the research I began to feel a certain commitment to the possibilities left open by will. But I am not arguing *for* the will, even if I draw on its utility. One of my aims in *Willful Subjects* is to deepen the critiques of voluntarism by reflecting on the intimacy between freedom and force. I respond to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's call for us "to resist simply re-propelling the propaganda of a receding Free Will" by drawing on willfulness to rethink the relationship between "voluntarity and compulsion" (1994, 138). Power relations can be secured "willingly." When willing is secured, a will project is a security project. Once secured, the will is not easy to apprehend *as* will. Phenomenology has been an important resource in developing this argument by helping me to reflect on how willfulness "comes up" given how what has been "already willed" (chapter 1) or "generally willed" (chapter 3) tends to recede or become background. The willful subject might be striking in her appearance not only because she disagrees with what has been willed by others, but because she disagrees with what has disappeared from view.

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To bring materials together as a willfulness archive might create an even stronger impression of the willful subject. There are risks in strengthening an impression. We might presume she *is* the impression she leaves. We might think we have found her there *like that*. It is important that we do not assume that willfulness simply describes a disposition: although as a description (of disposition) willfulness might have certain effects (on disposition). We are following a depositing rather than finding what is deposited. This book thus asks not, what is willfulness, but rather what is willfulness doing? To ask what willfulness is doing is also to ask what we are doing when we are being willful: this is how the question of doing does not pass over the question of being. With these questions come others. *Where* do we tend to find willfulness? *When* does willfulness come up? *Who* is attributed as willful? A key aspect of the argument is that willfulness is not only deposited in certain places but that through this depositing the will is unevenly distributed in the social field. The reverse mechanism is the same mechanism: the uneven distribution of the will is how a figure can appear as willful (some wills appear as too full of will, a fullness that is also narrated as an emptying or theft of will from others). No wonder that the figure of the willful subject—often but not always a child, often but not always female, often but not always an individual—has become so familiar. It is the depositing of willfulness in certain places that allows the willful subject to appear as a figure, as someone we recognize, in an instant. It is this figure that explains why we might hesitate in using the language of willfulness to describe the potential of the swerve. She is a powerful container.

I aim to make this familiar figure of the willful subject strange by reflecting on the familiarity of her form. And it is thinking of the status of the willful subject as a figure that allows us to open up the concept of the archive. Donna Haraway (1997) has shown how figures are semiotic and material. If figures mean; they matter. If figures matter; they mean. A willfulness archive assembled around a figure does not only include documents or texts. Or we could say that when we assemble an archive (and to assemble is an action, a gathering of materials that would otherwise remain dispersed or scattered) we do not need to approach those materials only as texts. When figures are exercised, they move; and we are moved by them. Just think of the Grimm story; a written text certainly, although one that no longer appears in official editions of Grimm stories (perhaps the violence of this story is too visible though of course the violence of the Grimm stories is never far from the surface); a written

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text that might and can be read as just one translation of the oral stories gathered by the Grimm brothers; stories in which the child's arm or hand coming out of the grave was a common motif.[25] But I am not just thinking of the histories that are at stake in the arrival and passing around of a given text. How else can we describe "The Willful Child" other than as a text? We get further with our descriptions if we include the affective realm. How do these words affect the reader? If the story is intended for a child, how would it reach that child? Does it touch her because it is touching? The figure of the willful child is saturated with affect. The word "willful" is an inheritance *in* how it is affective, which makes willfulness effective or efficient in its result. Words can smother us, enrage us; they can leave us full or empty. When they touch us, they create an impression.

I write this book as someone who has received a willfulness impression. It is perhaps because I too was called a willful child that this figure caught my attention. I have heard the intonation of this call, how it can fall harshly, as accusation. This call is often a calling out to a child, to someone who *can* be addressed in this way, who, at least at this time or in my time, was assumed not to have the right to return the address. The willful child can be part of our own history, embodied as memory: someone we might have been or someone we might have been thought to be, someone we became in the face of having been thought to have been. I became interested in this figure, a ghostly figure, perhaps, a trace or impression of a person, as someone, or as somewhere, I have been. In including myself within this text I am, as it were, laying my cards on the table. I am giving you my hand. I have no doubt that some would conclude that my hands cannot be impartial. They are not; and I fully intend this not. I write this book with partial hands.[26] Impartial hands would leave too much untouched.

In assembling a willfulness archive, I am also working with concepts, and I hope to return concepts to bodies. Concepts can be sweaty: a trace of the laboring of bodies. Willfulness becomes a sweaty concept if we can reveal the labor of its creation.[27] If we hear the definition of willfulness, cold and dusty from being lodged in a dictionary, as a call, as an address to someone, we can think of how words and concepts leak into worlds. To recall: "asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason; determined to take one's own way; obstinately self-willed or perverse." To be called obstinate or perverse because you are not persuaded by the reasoning of others? Is this familiar to you? Have you heard this before?

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When willfulness is an attribution, a way of finding fault, then willfulness is also the experience of an attribution. Willfulness can be deposited in our bodies. And when willfulness is deposited in our bodies, our bodies become part of a willfulness archive.[28]

To follow willfulness around thus requires moving out of the history of ideas and into everyday life worlds. If we inherit this history, it leaves an impression on the skin. I could not have worked with these impressions on my own, even if the experience of being called willful can feel like being cast out. I needed the hands of others, virtual and fleshy others, to support my own effort to make willfulness the sustained object of theoretical reflection.

The book is organized as threads of argument that are woven together and tied up somewhat loosely. I have used echoes and repetitions across the chapters (the same things come up in different places). I have relied on the *sound* of connection to build up a case from a series of impressions and have thus imagined the writing as poetic as well as academic. This is not to say there is no reason in the rhyme. In structuring this book, my aim has been to thicken gradually my account of the sociality of will. After all, the judgment of willfulness derives from a social scene: how some have their will judged as a problem by others. The first chapter draws on examples of individuals who are "willing together" in actualizing a possibility; the second reflects on how the project of eliminating willfulness from will becomes a moral imperative that is binding; the third reflects on how some wills are generalized in a social or institutional body; and the fourth considers how willfulness is required when you come up against what has been generalized as will. One of my key aims is to explore how the will becomes a question of time by thinking through how will relates to the past as well as the future, and how the will is thus never quite present or in the time we are in: the subjective time of will is thus described as non-spontaneity and the social time of will as non-synchronicity. The question of will becomes a question of precedence, and in the book I explore specific figures including the guest (chapter 1), the child (chapter 2), and the stranger (chapter 3), who can be thought of as sharing a condition: that of coming after.

In chapter 1, "Willing Subjects," I consider willing as an everyday experience and social activity. I explore willing as a project form, as how subjects aim to bring certain things about. I begin in this way to depersonalize willfulness (which as a judgment can often feel too personal, as if it is *about* a person) by showing how willfulness can be attributed to whatever

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gets in the way of an intention, including objects as well as subjects. In chapter 2, "The Good Will," I return to the figure of the willful child and consider how she becomes a tool in the history of the education of will. The chapter also explores how the will itself becomes a project, as what a subject must work upon, and offers a critique of the universality of the good will by reflecting on the gendering of the will as well as willfulness. In chapter 3, "The General Will," I analyze the distinction between will and willfulness as it relates to the distinction between the general and particular will. I explore how parts that are not willing the preservation of the whole are charged with willfulness, including nonproductive and nonreproductive parts. The book then offers a recharge of the charged term of willfulness by thinking through how we are *in* this charge. In chapter 4, "Willfulness as a Style of Politics," I reflect on how willfulness has been actively claimed. If willfulness involves a conversion point (how a potential is converted into a threat), this chapter explores another conversion point, what we might call a counter-conversion (how a threat can be converted into potential). However, the mood of this chapter is not simply or only celebratory. I reflect on experiences that are difficult and do not wish to resolve that difficulty (to resolve difficulty would be to lose proximity to what is difficult). In the conclusion if I do celebrate, at least in part, willful parts (perhaps in the original sense of "celebrate" as to frequent in numbers or to crowd), I also acknowledge that willfulness does not provide our action with a moral ground. Being less supported might also mean being willing to travel on unstable grounds even if (or perhaps because) our aim is to find support.

In writing about willfulness, I concede the possibility that my own writing will be judged as willful: as too assertive, even pushy. One of my arguments is that some bodies have to push harder than other bodies just to proceed; this argument might be true for arguments as well as bodies. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) describes the meaning of willful as strong willed "in the positive sense" as both *obsolete* and *rare*. The negative senses of willfulness (or even willfulness *as* a negative sense) have become so deeply entrenched that to open up a history of willfulness one might have to insist on other more positive senses. I might have become rather insistent about the potential of being insistent. Sometimes you might even have to "over-insist" to get through a wall of perception; it is a reflection of what we have to get over. At the same time, I am conscious that a book on willfulness needs willing readers; by which I mean those who are willing to keep reading, to stay with the text, whether or not they

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agree with it. I have thus taken as much care as I can in how and when I have introduced willful subjects. And I have taken my time; indeed, it is not until the last chapter of this book that I describe the world from *their* point of view, from the point of view of those who receive and are shaped by this judgment. I use the third person plural here even though I include myself within a willfulness archive. I often address this book in this way, thinking of *it* in terms of what *they* are doing. When I came to rewrite *it*, I wondered whether *they* would agree.

Over time I began to reimagine the project of the book as lending my ear to willful subjects. Although some of the stories of willfulness are individual, the project of the book is collective: it is not only about bringing individual stories together, but hearing each as a thread of a shared history. Strays, when heard together, are noisy. Perhaps the book itself has become plural in being filled with willful subjects. It might even have become *like* what it has been filled *with*; willful subjects who insist on their separation, who refuse to be subjected to my own will. Has *Willful Subjects* become a willful subject? I will answer this question with a firm yes. It is an affirmation that leads me on another willfulness trail. Feminist, queer, and antiracist histories are full of rather willful books. Gloria Anzaldúa describes *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza* as follows: "The whole thing has had a mind of its own, escaping me and insisting on putting together the pieces of its own puzzle with minimal direction from my will. It is a rebellious, willful entity, a precocious girl-child forced to grow up too quickly" ([1987] 1999, 88).[29] The book as a "whole thing" can become a willful girl-child, the one who insists on getting her own way, who comes to you with her own explanations of what it is that she is doing. In making this connection between the willful subjects in the book and the book itself, I was becoming a point on the genealogical line of feminist and queer of color scholarship. This line is not a straight but a wayward line, as it must be if we are to find each other in the puzzle of what unfolds. In wandering away we might even reach the same places. As I explore throughout this book, the willful subject is often depicted as a wanderer. When you stray from the official paths, you create desire lines, faint marks on the earth, as traces of where you or others have been.[30] A willfulness archive is premised on hope: the hope that those who wander away from the paths they are supposed to follow leave their footprints behind.

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