This interdisciplinary study explores the relationship between conceptions of nature and (largely American) legal thought and practice. It focuses on the politics and pragmatics of nature talk as expressed in both extralegal disputes and their transformation and translation into forms of legal discourse (tort, property, contract, administrative law, criminal law, and constitutional law). Delaney begins by considering the pragmatics of nature in connection with the very idea of law and the practice of American legal theorization. He then traces a set of specific political-legal disputes and arguments. The set consists of a series of contexts and cases organized around a conventional distinction between “external” and “internal” nature: forces of nature, endangered species, animal experiments, bestiality, reproductive technologies, genetic screening, biological defenses in criminal cases, and involuntary medication of inmates. He demonstrates throughout that nearly any construal of “nature” entails an interpretation of what it is to be (distinctively) human.

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LAW AND NATURE

David Delaney
For Austin,
friend, scholar, example,
with much appreciation
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was written while I held a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship (FB-35511-99). I am very grateful to the Endowment for the support and to the proposal reviewers for helpful comments. Some of the arguments made in chapter 15 were first articulated in “Beyond the Word: Law as a Thing of This World” published in Current Legal Issues vol. 5 (Law and Geography), eds. Jane Holder and Carolyn Harrison (Oxford University Press 2003). I would also like to thank Finola O’Sullivan, Jennie Rubio, their colleagues at Cambridge University Press and the manuscript reviewers for all of their help in seeing this project through. I am especially grateful for the work that Margaret Deith did in copy-editing the manuscript and catching the omissions, mistakes and (at least some of the) incoherent passages that came to her. Any that remain are my fault. This book would not have been conceived, let alone written, had I not enjoyed the nurturing environment provided by my colleagues in Law, Jurisprudence and Social Thought: Roger Berkowitz, Jennifer Culbert, Lawrence Douglas, Nasser Hussain, Tom Kearns, Austin Sarat, Martha Umphrey, and Karen Underwood. It has been a privilege to participate with them in creating a new vision of interdisciplinary legal studies in a liberal arts setting. I would also like to express my appreciation to Amherst College, and especially to Lisa Raskin, for enabling me to flourish during my long “visit.” Likewise, I am grateful to the students in my Law’s Nature course for helping me to sharpen the ideas that ultimately found their way into this book. Those ideas would not have taken the form of this book were it not for Susan Silbey. Her faith in my work and her advocacy on my behalf were indispensable and are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Nick Blomley for his part in shaping the project of critical legal geography that was the impetus for the initial idea of exploring law’s nature and for the pleasures of scholarship founded in friendship. As always my gratitude to Michele Emanatian – whose insight, wisdom, criticism, love, labor, and humor sustain my life – is boundless. And, finally, thanks to all the folks at the Fourth Street Inn.