

Mattering Compositions

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I was living in the coal mining camps in West Virginia when Reagan was elected. Right away everyone knew that something was happening, that we were *in* something. Right away the stories started about the people who were getting kicked off social security disability. Why *her*? She's a widow with diabetes, no running water, no income. Why *him*? He's crazy and one-legged; he's got *nobody*. It was as if, overnight, at the hands of a national election, the compositions of life here had hinged onto an impossible and senseless world, leaving people literally "turned around". I remembered this same sudden tipping point, where the world seemed to hit an edge, from a few months earlier when a terrible car accident involving drugs, drag racing and wife swapping (or some kind of kinship twisting, no one really knew what) had left five children dead and everyone else walking into walls in their own homes, as if they suddenly couldn't remember where the doorways were.

The hinge of Reagan's election brought a kind of clarity too. Suddenly, abject poverty itself was on display, plain as day. Now you saw that the old people were buying cans of dog food for their suppers; they'd be spotted at the camp store with just maybe six cans of dog food on the conveyor belt and that was it. Young people were living in cars; the stories traced their daily movements over the hills: where they were spotted parking, how the baby's dirty diapers were piling up in the back seat.

It was as if the elemental had come into direct contact with a life leveled by a plane of intensity. As if the environmentality of the world itself flooded the social-material-aesthetic landscape with stories, gestures, car parts, the overflowing creek, and gunshots in the night. Everything was implicated and of a piece, as if a curtain had descended on the place, creating an otherworldly stage on which history veered off into a state of nature and the sociality of talk honed itself down to the story of leakage and fleshy planes of impact. People became

bodies moved. Every misbehaving body part was a cutting edge of something becoming a phenomenon. Every story became an ambient map of a harsh new world in a state of uneven emergence. The very stuff of things, bodies, and words had coagulated into a method of mattering.

Of course this wasn't new, just clearer for a minute as the extreme trajectories of possibilities now took a certain shape. This was a place already blanketed in the expressivity of shock. Events bloated with possibilities had long littered the landscape like phantom limbs. History was no distant structural determination visible in outline but an energetic series of points that hit like bullets. Everyday aesthetic-material compositions were chords struck on deaths in the mines, slow starvations, house fires that killed everyone inside, marauding gangs of teenagers in the woods, the horrors of the body without medical care, the mass devastations of industry-wide mine closings, twenty or thirty years of mass migrations of whole generations fleeing in search of work, and the harsh excitements and hardships and marital battlefields of area-wide strikes. Whatever happened in this place honed down to hard points scored across bodies, machines, and places in the hills. Sociality was rendered heavy and diffuse. Events circled through the narrative elements of character, gesture, dialog, timing, a certain look.

Cascading scenes of devastation touched the question of life, giving it an energy, a rhythm, a palpable excess. Wild incipient trajectories could set people off. There were phantasmagorical eruptions. A teenager going on a week long burning spree taking out barns and outhouses and ending up living under a rock. Or racist violence in the dark, in the woods, in a space of condensed displacement—a white on black rape, all men, an escape and a long night's walk back to the safety of a segregated camp. Never an official confirmation of any kind. Throughout it all, the kind of utopian thinking that comes of hard drinking or hard religion flickered on and off like the blue lights of a TV set left on at night.

Reactive circuits threw up life forms that settled on the place as a mode of living through things. When the big mines closed and people were getting killed in the deadly little punch mines, snake handling boomed in the churches. For the sinners, there was drinking and drugs and sucking the gas out of other peoples' cars with a tube. The place was overfilled and in the habit of proliferation. People said the place smothered them but they "wouldn't never want to leave." They ran their mouths; they visited, they watched things arrive in the company of others. They had the common habit of "making something of things". They shared ways of being "torn up" or "getting used to" things, forms of neighborliness, labors of all kinds, and ecstatic forms of experience under the signs of religion, dream, or

addiction. There was theft and violence and care. The distant state came down in raids. There were daily forms of collapse and endurance.

When the union died one day in the middle of a strike, a stunned defeat settled on huddled bodies. The bodies wheezed, they reeled. People fell out in mass outbreaks of “the nerves” and “the dizzy.” They said it was like they were being pulled down by a hand that grabbed them in the middle of their back. When the fast-food chains in town became the only place to work, the beat-up pickups went and the beat-up Ford Escorts came. When the idea hit that the young people would have to leave to find work in the cities, parents prepared their girls by training them in martial arts so now there are a lot of black belts in West Virginia and Cincinnati. Wal-Mart happened. Oxycontin happened. Tourism didn’t happen. Falwell’s moral majority didn’t happen either; the little metal stands full of pamphlets appeared in the back of churches but after years of standing there untouched, they finally faded away. When the talk shows started, young people who were overweight or “didn’t talk right” were flown to Hollywood to be *on* the shows. Freakiness was not, here, a spectator sport.

A worlding had taken root as habits of watching, waiting, “running your mouth,” and “foolin’ with things”—all active, practical compositional arts that incited, recorded, and performed collective shifts in modes of being. The repetitive animations of prolific storytelling aestheticized and accumulated a world like a field of mineable resources. Every act was a way of sensing out what was happening. Every glance noted the worldly capabilities of people and objects. Bodies sitting together registered the weight of the world. Their restless mobility and tinkering with things laid down the rhythm of daily life. Their intense states, like the ruins of homesteads in the hills, marked the living out of impacts as a form of attachment to life itself.

Here, I write in an effort to return to this method of mattering that surrounded me when I was doing fieldwork in West Virginia as an enigma, but one that had a lived sensibility I couldn’t help but sense myself. It seems to me that this sensibility is akin to what Karen Barad calls “mattering” and what Isabella Stengers calls a “vivid pragmatics.”¹ It also brings up what object oriented ontologists would call a robust realism in which objects withdraw from phenomenological and representational efforts at reduction and paraphrase². Here I try to follow how the expressivity of a vivid, actively mattering world like this both underscores certain kinds of thought and makes thought dense and oblique³ with labors, the constant scanning of possibilities, and an attunement to the amassed detritus of cruel or surprisingly gentle events. It seems to me that this kind of mattering is a method

under pressure in which the point of thought is not to represent or to judge but to reanimate what is coming into states of matter and mattering in bodies, stories, acts, and events. It may be that a theorist of mattering needs some singular skills and capacities such as timing and staging to be able to follow the serendipitous and digressive lines of energetic surfaces, concrete abstractions, and substrates and airs. This may be a world in which what matters, first, is that objects and persons are cooked down to a capacity to listen to the muscled melody of things.

When I opened my now 35-year-old field notes to begin, things fell out: a pile of pink receipts from Lilly's Professional Pharmacy for Riley Hess's black lung medications; a note from Greta, the nurse at the poor people's clinic, instructing his wife to keep the receipts for Medicare claims; an also pink receipt, probably mixed up with Riley's archive all those years ago, for a jacket I bought in Ann Arbor for \$12.99; and Jerry Henson's American Health and Life Insurance Company naming me as the beneficiary: Katie Stewart (Friend), the F was capitalized. These droppings affected me not because they mapped onto memories already lodged in my head but because they were themselves disturbances in a field registering a strange archive of social-affective-aesthetic imprints.

They reminded me that I had dropped the ball in my efforts to get Riley's disability benefits. They took me back to the scene of Jerry handing me that beneficiary card. I barely acknowledged it; he didn't quite announce it; there was an indirectness about the situation. I must have dropped it in a file or a box without really registering it and never thought about it again, certainly not when Jerry died about a year later, at forty something, of complications from the flu. He had also brought me boxes of canned fruits and vegetables he had put up because I was leaving the field and, as he put it, I could pay anything I thought they were worth; I could send it once I got set up back in Michigan because he knew how hard it was and he didn't want me to be hungry. I was driving out of the mountains the next day, when my car overheated and died. It was Jerry who came and pulled it back to his place. I must have taken a bus to Michigan. Over the next months Jerry bought a matching, also wrecked, Dodge Dart, and the two cars sat side by side in his yard, creating lines of affinity, possibility, and labor to be done in an old Dodge Dart world. My line of thought ended with a stray image of the time my colleague, Betsy Taylor, helped Jerry gather fifty-three kittens and cats from his house and yard and took him and the cats to the animal shelter in town. The droppings on my office floor conjured this method of mattering that accumulated, left traces, and registered in certain ways and to degrees.

When I was in the field, there was always so much to keep up with that field notes were busybodies making beelines at a worded explosion. People were

sensing out the crystallizations and dissolutions of what happened. Events flickered like an apparition or landed hard like a shard in a thigh muscle. They etched onto things, maybe taking a limb or a child. Materialities swelled into modes of address. A life in composition cooled into the shapes of cars and cows, of smoke and mud and words, maybe a ghost, visible only from the waist up inciting talk and touch.

Life stories came in bits and pieces of abandonment and loss peppered with the compositionality of habits and signposts leading onward in a world “got down.” His father left the family when he was two or three. He was adopted and had a third-grade education. He drank a lot before he married at nineteen. He had eight kids. She had thirteen kids; her uterus hangs down out of her body; when I call her to ask about getting some firewood she opens with a ten-minute rapid-fire monologue on how she plants by the signs. He worked in the mines, in lumbering, on the railroad. One son drank himself to death in Chicago, a daughter died of diphtheria, another daughter is nervous; she tingles. She had three marriages. She has numbness. He always takes a red-hot shower. He says most of the accidents in the mines are caused by carelessness. The spewing rock down there smashed his finger and broke a toe. There was no job or safety training down there. They’d go to their cars to drink; they’d smoke in the mines. Don’t drink in the mines because the air pressure makes you sick. Once there was a fire; it made a loud whooshing sound like a train coming. He stayed in until he realized the foreman didn’t know what he was doing and then he got out. Many lost houses, cars, furniture, during the last strike. This one will be easier because people will have tax returns.

This kind of talk was so much what life was about that it would be a disservice to reduce it to a referent in meaning or truth. Things hit the mouth. The social was a compositional rise to “make something of things” followed by the stilled call and response of just sitting. There was nothing but this. Any attempt at a summary meaning of life ended up as an open-ended litany. In April 1982, my notes record the following events people I ran into were talking about: someone broke into Della Mae’s and stole fifty dollars, pickled eggs, and pinto beans; someone burned Charlie’s house. Someone broke into a woman’s house in Rhodell; someone broke into Kelly’s service station and the health clinic; Pete Shrewsbury and a boy from Killarney were arrested; someone pulled the wire on the water pump so there was no water in Rhodell; Ronnie Alexander died of pills and liquor; Sam Tanks’ son beat him up bad; Elanda Hamlet was almost raped by William Street; Zackie Shrewsbury spent the day in court and Etta Spangler’s husband was indicted for grand larceny.

It was as if everyone was trolling a world already organized, moving, and expressive. The collective weight of the things that happened unfolded in partial and striking form in the elongated time of a visit. A visit was like dropping into a trough of stories, learning to sustain some series of social openings onto bizarre possibilities. People seemed to be talking about what could happen or what could have happened to produce the singular effects now partially sensible as ruins or a kind of resonance. People seemed to use their bodies as experimental instruments of story, checking to see what might happen if someone said this, or did that.

One day I was in the Sophie Laundromat. A man walked in and gave the attendant what looked like a Mother's Day card. They talked while she kept an eye on the customers—"Better put in your softener, girls." They started with lawn mowers because he was having trouble with his; then there was every kind of machine, electric and gas, push and pull, old and new, machines from Sears in Beckley and hybrid home-grown, all the various parts that go to different makes and models, and how you can fashion each part out of something or other because they break down, and so and so did one thing to fix something but they didn't know if it worked. They talked about what this army of machines and parts does to arms and legs and lower backs and lungs as evidenced in the body of so and so or that one who had that leg. Then the woman said, "Well, have you got all your cleaning done?" "Ha?" "Have you got your cleaning done?" "No, she's not done." I realized that she was trying to get information about what this man's wife, perhaps her daughter or her daughter-in-law, was up to. "Well, are y'all looking for any company to come in?" "No, we're not looking for any company."

He said he had to leave but then immediately started up again talking about someone named Harold who had been fixing up his house, tearing off the roof. "He told me he likes his job." "Yeah, they said he likes it." Then he mentioned the man's boy with some reference to stealing. She said, "Ya, they have to get after him all the time. They stole my granddaughter's wallet, threw it off the cliff." Then they talked about exactly where the wallet was found and where it must have fallen—in those brambles there. It had her social security card in it.

They were checking in not only on what was happening in precise intimate places but also on the ways things traveled in words and across bodies of all kinds.

The man again said that he had to get going. Then he started to talk about a man who had been married recently. "This makes his third." "Oh," she said, "I thought it was his first." "Oh, no." "Well, I remember once he was fixin' to marry

that woman lives up in the trailer but I thought she turned him down.” “Oh, no, first he was married to that one and they had a kid, they lived together only six months, then he married that one from Egerie and they lived together only six months and *she* had a baby.” The woman tried to get the story straight: “She had the baby after they lived together only six months?” “No, it was *hers*. She *had* that baby.”

Then the man finally walked out. The woman finally glanced down at the card and then read it.

In the field, I was always mulling over the same basic question: what are they talking about? I circled around ways to ask them: What do you mean when you say. . . ? What is it like when you . . . ? Why do you say that? Why do you think people “run their mouths” all the time? What do you get out of Miss Whittaker’s testimony when no one can understand a word she’s saying? All such questions prompted the same response: “I don’t have no ideal, Katie” and then people would have to find a way to start again as if I had interrupted them.

My fingers were tapping the keys and people were talking about my secret spy typing in there late at night. That was *my* method. *Their* method was to come by and just sit, just talk, shoulders touching, maybe offer a little tip but one so small and matter-of-fact in comparison to the overwhelm to which it responded that it presented as a philosophy devoid of even the fantasy of “subjects” and “objects.” If their method was a kind of social contact, sociality itself was a rhythm marking the beat of a saturation. It was like sticking your finger in a dyke or sidling up to a brick wall with a little purr. People seemed to be drawn to “getting something out of” the alchemy of a self-sensing world as witnessed in any number of things, including the inhuman gestures of demons and angels, the excesses of drug addicts and racists, the endurance of the unbelievably injured, or the oddly still curious tilt of a head.

A visit always started with people “placing” each other even if they knew each other well or had never met. “Placing” was a speculative leap into possible connections, no matter how unlikely or extenuated; even neighbors or kin, even those who just walked in without knocking and sat down at the kitchen table, went through some process at the beginning of a visit that was like throwing a deck of cards on the table and picking up a random hand to play. A visit was like a very slow rumination on the state of things at the moment in the scene of sitting together and looking out at the world. It was like setting a stage for contact with some matter at hand. Visits always ended with slow repetitions of phrases like “I don’t have no better sense than that” or “I don’t know what all, but I just

couldn't help but say *some*thin.'" A visit combined the dreamy and the material, turning the substance of the world itself into the stuff of thought brought close to hand.

One day, when I arrived for a visit, Audie and her daughter, Julie, were squatting in the sun calmly squishing caterpillars against the side of the house. We went inside the hot porch to sit and Audie got us all warm lemonade. Audie figures the caterpillars came from that apple tree forty feet away; she pictures them somehow making their way across the lawn. Like snakes, they make her sick. She says there was a snake on the road that was so big that when she tried to run it over, her truck skidded off the road.

We were looking out together across the lawn of the caterpillar march. She started up again. Someone's trailer blew up. It might have had something to do with three young men in wheelchairs who were always together. We veered off into the stories of the accidents that left the young men handicapped and then into her series of verbal still lifes of the three men together in their wheelchairs in front of a trailer staring out at the road. It tore her up when her first daughter left. She still comes around, but that's worse because Audie gets used to having her around and then she leaves again. If *Julie* ever takes a notion to leave, Audie will just have to take a notion to live alone. She's got trouble over a woman at work who won't pull her weight. Audie doesn't care about the extra work, she likes the work, and it's not hard work, but with this woman doin' all *this* Audie can't get out of the bed. Because where she works they don't *need* no bossing. They just decide together how to work and they fill in for each other if they need to. When I left, Audie and Julie went right back to squishing caterpillars against the house.

Even casual talk among strangers meeting in public places would drop into the space of story and stick on something with some kind of weight. A man I met at a drugstore told me I should have the mole on my face removed. Moles are dangerous. You could get a cut and then get blood poisoning from them. He'd had warts (which were not like moles) on his hands and he'd had a girl rub Vaseline into them. That was what someone had told him to do. The Vaseline was what had done it but it might not have worked if he'd rubbed it in himself.

In the ordinary contact aesthetics⁴ of being in a world with other things and people, anything could set off speculation. Thought was like a wind tunnel of associations landing on things. One Sunday during the public prayer of a church service, Irene whispered to Sue that she'd seen a calf on Sue's land and it looked dead. We left to see about the calf as soon as there was a break. We passed a

burning house. Sue said they must have set it. I asked her who set it but got nowhere. The house had been empty for a long time. I heard later that it had been donated to the fire department and that *they* had set the fire to train some new men. But when Sue said “they” must have set it, I remembered a few months before when Hatcher’s house burned down and Lou and Al said Hatcher must have set it because they were able to get a lot of the furniture out and the next day he was already renting Lacey Meadows place like he’d already had it all set up. Ray had been at that fire, which he enjoyed. He said he had seen the firemen bringing the furniture out, but not in a way that expressed any opinion about whether he thought the fire was set. Refrains like the accusation that a fire was set sat next to matters of fact as if the worded opinions had the same status as the sight of furniture coming out of a house. There was no getting to the bottom of things and things weren’t personal either. They were talking about what can happen and what it takes to be its sensor. That meant actively “foolin’ with things,” prolifically generating contact zones that demanded sensory-social-aesthetic capacities.

Ray is running his mouth. He moved in with Tracey in Odd to get away from his brothers, who were known for their drinking and fighting, though he was notoriously the worst. He says he won’t leave Odd until they carry his corpse out. He’s never sick except he had all that cancer and they cut him all the way down, around and up his back. He never sleeps. Cold doesn’t bother him. He works out on the ground in shirtsleeves when it’s ten degrees. He takes the good with the bad. You have to. He’s some kind of mechanical genius and he always seems to be talking about sex, hunting, tracking scent. When Bobby went by to see about his truck, Ray and his sons had hundreds of parts spread out all over the dirt and they were screaming at each other. But by the afternoon, the truck ran perfectly.

One night in Amigo, the camp where I was living, I awoke in the middle of the night to see a geyser shooting out of the dirt road in front of my house. The other women who lived on the alley were already out there with their shovels digging the frozen ground into troughs to divert the water. Tammy went in to call the emergency water line and came back laughing about how she had tried to sound like she was calling from under water, drowning. They knew no one would come. Then they stood around in the dark talking about the story of a woman who had died that day. They decided her husband had killed her. They remembered all the times they had seen her, the bruises, her bright red hair, she was as sweet as she could be; men abused their wives because they were big babies. Sue’s husband, Jimmy, was a plumber. He would have to fix the water main; the whole camp

would have to dig it out first. There would be black coal dust in the water now. Patty needs her kitchen pipes fixed but Sue won't tell Jimmy to do it because she doesn't like to speak for him. She doesn't mind if people know she was divorced when she was young, she doesn't care what people say, but she's not going to try to tell anyone what to do. Maybe that's because telling someone what to do would be not just rude but an interruption of a method in its throes. A method of people getting some kind of purchase on the surplus of propensities that propelled things by inserting themselves into possibilities.

Now, at Reagan's election, someone said Reagan was in the mafia and the government was a conspiracy aimed at making war in South America for money. Patty tried to buy half of a cow but the woman wouldn't answer her questions about what the cuts would be so Patty thought the woman might be trying to sell *her* the cow but sell *someone else* the hide and the fat would be turned into hamburger and somehow it didn't add up so Patty didn't buy it even though the price was right. She thought about this from different angles for a long time, wondering what might be going on. If I tried to take a walk on the road people would stop to pick me up, not out of kindness or malice but in the throes of speculations spit out of truck windows at me—a *mélange* of half-images of what might happen: prostitutes were the women who walked streets; there was a tunnel up ahead that I should go to the mouth of but don't go through it, just stand in the mouth and see if I get a feeling.

What were they talking about? Things would compose into sharp and singular forms even while they were also decomposing or retracting. Talk tracked the edges of possibility as ricocheting impressions or narrow little tunnels of sense that exposed the real as a rhythmic alternation that shimmered and dimmed. Things were dangerous, deadly, but there was also a kind of satisfaction that came of being saturated by a scene of potential impacts and reprieves. The kind of satisfaction that comes of getting a blessing from a testimony delivered in an incomprehensible language. So when Reagan was elected the place reacted; bodies were set in motion; people watched and talked and sat together in a closeness to each other and to the charged world that was their ambit, almost as if drawing themselves into matter to see what was happening to the atmosphere and air of the place itself.

Young Christians were giving up things like coke or sugar or bowling. People were being healed in the water; they said maybe it was from the impurities in the water, or because angels jumped in it, but the water itself had healing properties. A man who has a plate in his head woke up screaming; he was seeing things.

Maybe a screw was coming loose the way Julie's mother's had. He had been taking diet pills. He taught Julie to drive his truck when she was afraid to. Another man was having falling down spells, he was cured of the depression when he figured out it was devils and he drove them out. A man didn't qualify for black lung benefits even though he was so sick with it because he had worked six months too little, according to the company paper trail. Things made no sense but they were *in* the senses and undeniable.

A concrete conceptuality of objects, events, and bodies unfolded and recoiled in an overwhelm of tendencies and associations, openings and divisions. As in Foucault's philosophy of incorporeal materialism, found objects and the things that happened held the potential for realignment and reorganization. They spurred on the sayable, the seeable, their mixed media compositions of words and things were shaky and capable of shaking things up. The method of mattering here was a mode of contact between disparate elements moving in and out of sync. Every singularity of story and event suggested the partial, though striking, coherence of an energetic milieu in motion. Sitting together, people "ran their mouths" as if they were the metronomes of the world. They sensed out of what was happening not as an end point or a norm, but as a generative re-upping of the capacity to "make something of" things. A strange, practical realism of potentialities that are irreducible to fact or meaning and therefore given to the phantasmagorical and the hard mattering of things.

Anything could set things off. A Greek man came into the camp selling hot watches and everyone acted very cool. Several bought things, including Gary. He said he didn't need the pen any more than he needed a hole in his head but then he told a story about going to the state fair as a teenager and selling watches for ten times what he had paid for them. He followed up with a long sad story about his wife throwing him out and taking everything they had except her ring. She threw that ring at him and he had to hock it to get a bus ticket. In the pawnshop, a woman was saying that her husband had bought something that was supposed to be real gold but it turned out to be a cheap object. No one was upset by these stories. Gary also mentioned he wished cocaine wasn't so expensive and no one seemed shocked by that either, though this was no "sinner" crowd. They were just registering all the possibilities in things.

When I sat down to write this, the papers dropping out of my notes seemed to be formal, written remnants of efforts to settle things—to establish a Medicare claim or to create a future with a beneficiary designation. But, like the everyday flood of stories, these papers might also be seen as methods of mattering that

initiate more than they foreclose: a conjuring of possibilities, a tentative venturing forth into foreign landscapes, a precise and practical performativity aimed at somehow turning bureaucracy and power into matters at hand. Literacy, here, was not only limited but something to fool with as if it were a physicality or a musicality. Writing was an instrument directed at the official world of the courts, benefits offices, medical institutions, religion, and the zone of the unions and the mines. But what mattered was its expressivity. The religious rhetoric of the end times struck a chord through ecstatic music, trance, collective prayer, tears and the physicality of “getting sugar.” An illiterate man dreading his day in court put his arm in a cast to directly communicate to the judge that he was unable to sign his name. Activists going to the state capital to testify against strip mining had to be “carried” there in fear that they wouldn’t be able to talk; one man wanted to go home and get his teeth; the others surrounded them, touching and murmuring, until they were called to the stand where they were taken over by the fluid oratory of a preacher or a union leader.

My question was always “What are they talking about?” It was as if they threw words at the world looking for some kind of purchase, even as the words themselves magnetized all kinds of things, creating a proliferation of moving lines. It was as if they had to conjure the expressivity of what surrounded them and as if the exhaustion of that accumulation was itself an end point or satisfaction. So they talked, following the lines of possibilities, and then just sat together. Being satisfied was being saturated.

Sometimes in church an old, illiterate man would shout out a biblical passage he had memorized. Others would take up the call with responses of longer, more dramatic memorized passages of blood or destruction until the room settled into a satisfied stillness. Once I showed a community action documentary that featured several African American residents of the camps. The stars showed up at the grimy, windowless, cinderblock hut, nominally designated as the town hall, wearing white furs and sparkling shoes. The audience was just sitting; no one “paid them any mind” as they walked proudly to the front row to take up seats in the folding chairs. Then an old man stood up, moved to the aisle, and launched into an uninhibited high-stepping clog dance that lasted about thirty seconds. No one even looked at him. It was almost as if these performances came from an elsewhere such as the stardom of the academy awards or a past time of clog dancing and a time in which there were public places for performances other than the churches. But it’s also as if something simply sparked out of the charged, straight-faced, atmosphere of the room. There was no finality, no summing up,

no decision about meaning or character or anything else. Just implication, complication, a folding of things into each other that inspired something musical in nature, something artful in the shit storm of life. A slow, unfolding, experimental and ethical pedagogy of expression that opened the question of living beyond and living on.

Notes

- 1 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC, 2007). See also Isabella Stengers, Brian Massumi, and Erin Manning, "History through the Middle: Between Macro and Mesopolitics—an interview with Isabella Stengers" (2009), *Inflexions: A journal of research creation*, 3 (2009). Available online: http://www.inflexions.org/n3_stengershtml.html.
- 2 Graham Harman, "Realism without Materialism", in *SubStance* 40, no. 2 (Issue 125, 2011):52–72. See also Graham Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Winchester, UK, 2012).
- 3 Graham Harman, "DeLanda's Ontology: Assemblage and Realism." *Continental Philosophical Review* 41 (2008):367–83.
- 4 Jason Pine develops the concept of a "contact aesthetics" in *The Art of Making Do in Naples* (Minneapolis, 2012).