

AFTERWORD

Worlding Refrains

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What is, is a refrain. A scoring over a world's repetitions. A scratching on the surface of rhythms, sensory habits, gathering materialities, intervals, and durations. A gangly accrual of slow or sudden accretions. A rutting by scoring over.

Refrains are a worlding. Nascent forms quicken, rinding up like the skin of an orange. Pre-personal intensities lodge in bodies. Events, relations, and impacts accumulate as the capacities to affect and to be affected. Public feelings world up as lived circuits of action and reaction.

Critique attuned to the worlding of the refrain is a burrowing into the generativity of what takes form, hits the senses, shimmers. Concepts built in this way score the trajectories of a worlding's looping refrains, its potentialities, and attach themselves to the living out of what is singular and proliferative in a scene or moment, to what is accrued, sloughed off, realized, imagined, enjoyed, hated, brought to bear or just born in a compositional present.

This afterword is my refrain on the concepts gathering in the scenes of this volume. A repetition that underscores, over-scores, rescores in a social aesthetics aimed at affect's moves and subjects jumping to invisible airs that waver and pulse.

These essays write affect as a worlding refrain all the way down. They hone critique to an inventory of shimmers. A sharpening of attention to the expressivity of something coming into existence. Here, affect is a gathering place of accumulative dispositions. What matters is not meaning gathered into codes but the gathering of experience beyond subjectivity, a transduction of forces, a social aesthetics attuned to the way a tendency takes on consistency, or a new regime of sensation becomes a threshold to the real.

Affect is the commonplace, labor-intensive process of sensing modes of living as they come into being. It hums with the background noise of obstinacies and promises, ruts and disorientations, intensities and resting points. It stretches across real and imaginary social fields and sediments, linking some kind of everything. This is why there is nothing dead or inconsequential in even the flightiest of lifestyles or the starkest of circumstances. The lived spaces and temporalities of home, work, school, blame, adventure, illness, rumination, pleasure, downtime, and release are the rhythms of the present as a compositional event—one already weighted with the buzz of atmospheric fill.

Everything depends on the feel of an atmosphere and the angle of arrival. Anything can feel like something you're in, fully or partially, comfortably or aspirationally, for good or not for long. A condition, a pacing, a scene of absorption, a dream, a being abandoned by the world, a serial immersion in some little world you never knew was there until you got cancer, a dog, a child, a hankering . . . and then the next thing—another little world is suddenly there and possible. Everything depends on the dense entanglement of affect, attention, the senses, and matter.

All the world is a bloom space now. A promissory note. An allure and a threat that shows up in ordinary sensibilities of not knowing what compels, not being able to sit still, being exhausted, being left behind or being ahead of the curve, being in history, being in a predicament, being ready for something—anything—to happen, or orienting yourself to the sole goal of making sure that nothing (more) will happen. A bloom space can whisper from a half-lived sensibility that nevertheless marks whether or not you're in it. It demands collective attunement and a more adequate description of how things make sense, fall apart, become something else, and leave their marks, scoring refrains on bodies of all kinds—atmospheres, landscapes, expectations, institutions, states of acclimation or endurance or pleasure or being stuck or moving on. Affect matters in a world that is always promising and threatening to amount to something. Fractally complex, there is no telling what will come of it or where it will take persons attuned.

Anything can be a bloom space. For my stepson, John, now, it is becoming homeless. An intimacy with the world's imperative. People like to simplify the situation of homelessness as if it is a self-evident process of abject poverty without a safety net or a subject of personal blame. But it is also a worlding, an attunement to a singular world's texture and shine. The body has to learn to play itself like a musical instrument in this world's compositions.

When he was in high school, John skipped classes every afternoon to play basketball with the guys even though it often ended in assault suffered. At night he would disappear to hang out with the budding neighborhood "gang" and no amount of talk or grounding would pull him back into the something of our household instead. Not even close. His buddies shaved gang symbols into his hair and painted the icons all over his arms and neck. He got thrown out of school under a no gang tolerance rule. He was arrested for trace amounts of marijuana possession—an event set off by him looking suspicious. And all of that was just the beginning. Take ten steps forward (alternative high schools; Job Corps and getting kicked out for fighting; enrolling in the military and having his enrollment set aside as fraudulent for failing to report his marijuana conviction even though it had been expunged from his record; getting trained as a nurse's assistant and getting a job and losing it after making it to the certification test but forgetting to bring his ID; living in group housing but getting kicked out for losing his job and not working his program to get another one; following someone he knew to a transitional housing duplex and just staying there until he got kicked out). Now he is on the street, learning the sensory labor of worlding as a homeless person. The walking, the finding places to sleep, the broken nose from rolling over on a rock, the encounters with the police, the talk—"I'm gonna get a place of my own with Jimmy, I'm gonna get my job back, I'm gonna get myself off the street, I won't be on the street for long, I give it ninety days. Give me thirty days and then I'll be back . . . It's not as bad as you think." He and his running buddy have a fight, split up, then reconnect; the counselor at the homeless shelter gives them the language of watching each other's backs. Their blankets are stolen. One night when it's below freezing someone throws a blanket over them while they sleep, wasted. It's like a miracle. He shows me what is different about him now; he has no hair on the insides of his calves because of all the walking they do to get food—Wednesday night it's on the east side of town at a church, Tuesday, Thursday mornings there's a truck down on the tracks, the Sally serves but no one likes the Sally, mostly they go to Lifeworks down on the drag—that's for the kids. But the drag rats are so grabby. He's had so much milk, no coffee, he's lost

weight from not having enough to eat. He's proud of his new shirt—it's worth like twenty bucks—and he took a shower before he showed up on our steps this time. Every time he comes he has forgotten what he said last time, what he was planning. He says he looks good. He says he can't go into the army because of his feet and the swelling in his testicles. I say you need medical attention, these things can be fixed. Not these things, he says. Maybe the navy. The labored viscosity of being in whatever is happening renders choices and surfaces already weighty. Already the atmosphere you're literally attuning to. This kind of attachment can be easy to get into when the hard labor of attuning is pulled to the task. And of course it can be hard to get out of once you're in it.

John spends all of his time roaming to gather resources. He shows up at our house with Bluetooth headphones, a CD player, a radio, a huge stuffed Sonic character for his little sister. He went dumpster diving and only got twenty-one dollars. Can we do him a favor? Can we help him out financially? He'll be off the streets soon. He's working hard at being put into motion by a worlding that has arrived. Last night we got another call from the county jail. The caller was only calling to say that he had left his backpack when he was released the day before. We say we'll try to get word to him to go pick it up. But I'm sure he doesn't know how to get there by bus. A bloom space can catch you up and then deflate, pop, leave you standing, a fish out of water. Or, same thing, it can catch you in its moves.

A bloom space is pulled into being by the tracks of refrains that etch out a way of living in the face of everything. These refrains stretch across everything, linking things, sensing them out—a worlding. Every refrain has its gradients, valences, moods, sensations, tempos, elements, and life spans.

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 car, no running water, no income. Why him? He's crazy and one-legged; he's got nobody. Old people were buying cans of dog food for their suppers; you'd see them at the little rip store—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.

These were extreme stories—dense and textured stories that made a scene out of the end of the socially responsible state as it had been lived in this place until just yesterday. Sort of. None of this was a surprise, just a shock. Just the recognition. When things shifted in the political economy of coal, the big mines closed and people were getting killed in the deadly little punch mines. Then it was over. The union died one day in the middle of a strike. Word came down that the company wasn't negotiating. A feeling of stunned defeat settled on huddled bodies. The bodies wheezed. They reeled. They were hit by contagious outbreaks of "the nerves," people fell out; they said it was like they were being pulled down by a hand that grabbed them in the middle of the back.

The force of things would amass in floods of stories and in ruined objects that piled up on the landscape like an accrual of phantom limbs. This was not just some kind of resistance, or even the resilience of a way of life, but the actual residue of people "making something of things." It was the material, sensory labor of attending to a bloom space that stretched across the world as they knew it. People said the place smothered them and they "wouldn't never want to leave." The worlding of the place accreted out of opening events. A story, a gesture, a look, or an outbreak of the nerves would establish a trajectory and pick up crazy speed or disperse, or settle into a still life, or blanket the place like a premonition spontaneously generated in the lives of all those attuned.

The barer the life became, the more its worldings proliferated and accrued. The attending to what was happening became the direct materiality of people's shared senses. Intensity was the air they breathed. Bodies were on alert—marked, readily engaged, always talking, gathering the eccentricity of characters, exercising the capacity to affect and to be affected. Snake handling boomed in the churches whenever the economy went bust. For the sinners, there were drinking and drugs and sucking the gas out of other people's cars with a tube. Sometimes there were phantasmagorical eruptions, maybe a teenager going on a week-long burning spree 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. But never an official confirmation of any kind. Later, when the talk shows started, young people who were overweight or "didn't talk right" were flown to Hollywood to be on the shows. 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 were going to have to leave and go to the city for work, the girls all started taking karate lessons in preparation, so now there are a lot of black belts in West Virginia and Cincinnati. Wal-Mart happened in West Virginia. Oxycontin happened. Tourism didn't happen. Falwell's Moral Majority didn't happen either; the little metal stands full of Moral Majority pamphlets appeared in the backs of churches, but after years of standing there untouched they faded away. The kind of utopian thinking that comes of hard drinking flickered on and off through it all like the blue lights of a TV set left on at night.

It was in West Virginia, in the heavy and diffuse social living I was doing there, that I got into the habit of watching things arrive in the company of others. Things like a shift in the sensorium, or the stink of some national transformation settling over the hollers, or the sheer weight of power coming down, or the weirdly giddy possibilities that popped up with the advent of a Wal-Mart over the mountains in Beckley. It was then that I began to think, along with others, that nameable clarities like family or friendship or love or collapse or laughing or telling stories or violence or place are all bloom spaces. They are all forms of attending to what's happening, sensing out, accreting attachments and detachments, differences and indifferences, losses and proliferating possibilities.

Bloom spaces are everywhere. You can start anywhere. The etching of the refrain can show up in the mundane and the material process of solving problems. The hinge between the actual and the potential can pop up as an object out of place, the sense of an absent-presence, a road block, a sticking point, or a barely audible whispering that something's up in the neighborhood.

Right now they're tearing up the roads in the neighborhood. Getting out to the main road means running an ever-changing maze of detours. Tires are squealing, coffeed-up drivers are throwing transmissions into reverse and banging lefts and rights. It's been months. A neighborhood "we" is tired of it. They'll have one road blocked for weeks. Then they'll open it again and move the work over one block. But a week later they're back, tearing up the road right next to the place they just spent weeks excavating. What are they doing? What do they think they're doing?

Some of us recognize a new social habit of making eye contact with other drivers when we get stuck at yet another road block. We're in it together, whatever it is. Some of us are wondering together, but only temporarily, we

know, and it's not a close connection—as much dog-eat-dog as collective. Then the city sends us all a postcard telling us to stop pouring grease down our drains. Its public service voice says that even if you pour hot water down the drain after you pour the grease in, it will eventually cool and coagulate in a big collective clump somewhere down the road, making a big mess and a big problem. What? This doesn't seem right. It's too symbolic—a message about bad mechanical hygiene in this part of town. But still, for a minute we (could) all imagine the big clumps of grease gathering at those pipe junctures under the roads. I did, and I wondered who else was hearing this faint whispering that something was now “in” the roads and underneath. Some of us are thinking about the under-the-roads and the city's maybe not so great attunement to what's going on. Now it's the fourth time they've dug up this one section of road that stands between my home and office and I notice that this time they're just using hand-held shovels as if either they've given up actually looking for the “grease balls” (or whatever it is they're actually doing). Or maybe a body with a shovel now seems like a better method of attunement. It does to me. It's almost occult—the materiality of the looking and fixing, the almost audible whisper in the neighborhood that something's going on, that something's been going on for a long time, that we don't know, they don't know, it's annoying—the never-ending interruption of routes, it's a grating, a crankiness that has to be endured. It's a literal interval-making machine that blooms but never catches much sense.

Morning assembly at my daughter's elementary school is a buzz of bodies and tunes. Clusters of kids and their parents flow toward the cafeteria from a wide radius of streets and walking paths. There are bikes, skateboards, jump ropes, scooters. People are carrying lunch boxes and backpacks, school projects, coffee cups, cameras, papers to be turned in, other kids' stuff left behind at a sleepover. Tattoos are on display on arms, legs, peeking out of necklines and waistlines. Hair is tousled, sleepy, propped up, slicked. Some people are dressed up for work, but most work is casual dress or done at home. There are smiles in all directions, nods, greetings. Kids are calling out to each other, running over to each other and to their classroom lines, parents are finding their places against the walls near the others they speak to every day—“How's it going? . . . What'd you do this weekend? . . . Is that a cast on Max's leg? Hey, we have a project with our roof if you have time to look at it . . . This is the best part of my day. I know, me too. . . . Man, the allergies are terrible

today! . . . Did you get that notice? . . . Are you going to Spring Fling? Oh, is that this week? Shit.” Attention drifts to gazing at the others a little further out in the room, flipping gestures and hand signals that shoot trajectories across the space. “Hey, Costco Man! How ya like the heat! Summer’s here, man.”

When you enter the room you feel the angles flooding in, the luminescence of an ordinary but prized style of being present. A cross-modal force of synesthesia. A becoming sentient to a way of being, an experience of community in terms of what it makes possible. An intimacy tied to the mood of the place. A vibe (did I forget to mention that this is Austin, zip code 78704, known for its aging hippies, musicians, artists, do-it-yourselfers, and hipsters?).

The classes take turns going up on stage. Passing around the microphone, the kids recite the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas, in English and Spanish. Then it’s “Get your snappers ready . . . Good, better, best, we will always do our best to make our good better and our better our best.” They lead the school song: “It’s so full of life, in this school there is no strife; Spirit in the air, teachers smiling everywhere . . . Here to make a difference, teaching peace and harmony; Zilker is a great place for kids!” The kids call for announcements, birthdays, sing “Happy Birthday” *CHA, CHA, CHA!*, and huddle on stage for the final cheer, “*HAVE A MARVELOUS MONDAY!*” Then everyone shoots off to their classrooms or back to the sidewalks and streets. The broad smiles linger on the faces. A powerful and fragile refrain accumulates over time, recomposes itself every day, and floats out of the auditorium attached to bodies.

The assembly takes ten minutes. It didn’t take the new principal much longer to pop it like a balloon. He fumbled it for about a month, but we all knew on day one that assembly was dead when he took over the microphone and failed to remember the sequence, the lyrics, the repetition in Spanish. The parents were making eye contact—first bemused and then outraged. As a newcomer, unattuned to the rhythms and tempos of assembly’s perfect machine, he thought he could make it more efficient. He tried half a dozen times to change where the students of each classroom stood and which direction they faced so that the kids could flow out of the room to their classrooms. The teachers were making contact and raising their hands to catch his attention as complexity turned to dead, shape-shifting chaos. It was as if he had thrown up the pieces of a puzzle hard wired into grooves and then panicked. There was no putting the scene of the assembly back together

again. He didn't have the kids go up on stage, he didn't ask for birthdays, when he was reminded that we needed to recite in Spanish he would vaguely mumble, "Does anyone know Spanish?" (leaving the 30 percent of the room that was Spanish-speaking stone silent, looking at him). The kids were bored, embarrassed, waiting for the awkward impasse to come to an end. Finally the principal decided assembly should be only once a week. (The parents said "What about us?") Assembly went back into the hands of the teachers and the kids. But once a week is not a refrain that works its way into everyone's day. It's another something that has to be remembered, an option on Mondays. Not a scene of bonus pleasure.

Transitions can be hard. That's an understatement when you're old and frail and giving up your last home.

My mother was born to a life of hard transitions. Her father was one of a long and broad line of hard-drinking bricklayers and farmers. They built the big public works in the area—schools, bridges, banks. They disappeared into violent, abandoning drinking for weeks at a time. Beat their wives and/or kids and then spent days crying for forgiveness to their eldest daughters (like my mother). Hard transitions. Once her mother, Bea, walked off with all her little girls to live with a relative in another town. They walked all day. But they went back. Once her father dropped off all the girls at a school the next town over and never came back to pick them up. They waited and waited. They gave a girl a quarter to get them a drink but she never came back either. My mother laughs about it now—a lesson learned. She can't remember how they ever got back home; she'll ask her sisters. They were by then a pack of scared but competent girls who had each other's backs. The massive horses that plowed their father's fields filled them with horror; the girls worked behind them, alarmed senses laying down ruts. My mother learned to drive the farm truck when she was ten. It was the Depression. Bea told the girls not to tell anyone when they had only potato soup for supper, but my mother loved potato soup and ate it happily every day. Bea could play any song on the piano by ear after she heard it once. She hung her hand-washed laundry on the line in the field, sent the girls out to pick blueberries to make pies, made all their clothes, worked cleaning houses, taking in laundry. Later, when Jack was dead and the kids were grown, she went to work as a house-mother at the nursing school of the hospital. As an old woman she was an aide in an institutional classroom for kids with muscular dystrophy and

brain damage, lifting heavy bodies in and out of wheelchairs and onto toilets, cleaning houses on the weekends. She could draw.

There were strong and hard aunts. Uncles they hated. The girls walked over the fields and past Nunna's house to get to the school in town. Nunna's house was an old stage coach stop on the road to Newburyport. Now the little farm town is a bedroom community of Boston bursting with strip malls where ponds used to be. Aunt Mary loved kids (but not her own; she was mean to them); she would take the cousins (but not her own kids) to Boston Harbor on Saturdays in her old, wood-sided Beach Wagon. Her husband had died of a heart attack while carrying a bathtub over his head when she was pregnant with her fifth child. She took over his plumbing business, raised the five kids, and turned her big old house into a boarding house for working men.

Eventually the line of aunts and great-aunts who held the keys to learning and pleasure weakened and the hinge of potentiality snapped into raising children. A lot of them. My mother came from a line of hard, competent women barely attached (but attached) to men who meant long-term trouble and to kids (here the attachment was firm) who grew up in packs. The family was big. The women gathered on Saturdays to keep track of connections and losses as people married, had kids, got sick, had troubles, died. We cousins (if you included second and maybe third cousins) numbered over three hundred; we were a full half of any classroom in St. Michael's Parochial School. When we hit adolescence there were deaths among us—alcohol, drugs, fast-moving cars packed with kids on country roads. Air went out of the family. One sister broke off from the others after her oldest son died. Bea died. But the sisters had built a world. They had a habit and rhythm of putting one foot in front of the other. The labor of worlding. Looking back, they all say they don't know how they did it; that was just what you did in those days.

We were staying at my grandmother's house when the big house that belonged to my grandfather's family was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. My mother ran across the fields and stayed all night. She came back smelling of smoke. The fire had been so hot that the silver brought from Ireland had melted into a mass on the dining room sideboard. My mother still wonders how they got those nice things. There was lace, the silver, high ceilings, hiding places in secret passages, there must have been ten bedrooms, a pond. There must have been some money from somewhere. The men certainly weren't much good—not a one of them—though they had a big hand in all those courthouses and bridges that stand as monuments to an era.

Transitions. The big epochal ones you look back on are not so hard, at least not when you're looking back, their outlines etched as history on a landscape and a collectivity. Then you're not alone. You're part of the great generation or something. You're in it with others, going through something, a long line of somethings. When my mother looks back, she's just amazed at all the changes, as if the ground itself had shifted again and again and before you knew it, everything was unrecognizable, the force of things snapping into place as sheer transformation.

The old South Lawrence Irish families were like clans. They still are. They are completely closed except to their own. They're over at each other's houses every day; you'll see five or six cars parked at a time, coming and going. Things happen in those families. My mother taught poor Latino children who lived in burned-out North Lawrence. Every day there were stories about their lives. Bruises. Visits to apartments where there was no furniture or food. Violence. Sweetness. Great food. Beauty and loss. For forty years these families and their kids were for my mother an encounter with otherness that laid tracks of empathy, recognition, prejudice, despair, transcendence, amazement, labor, attunement, big and small achievements, and a lingering feeling of impotence.

Now all the sisters are gathered again, ritually, for the occasion of my mother's death. Not yet, but pressing. We sit them in comfortable chairs in my mother's living room, but they rearrange themselves around a table with tea and cookies. Suddenly they're loud. They're talking in rapid fire, overlapping, stories that my sister and I have never heard before. They're piecing together the details that only some of them knew, had heard. They're scraping the barrel. They hated Uncle Bill. They were afraid of him. (Which one was Uncle Bill?) They piece together good enough stories of events and characters by pulling on their individual senses. Shirley heard something once; Joan remembers a smell in a house; Tisha remains fearful of something that seems innocuous; Claire has a picture of him somewhere.

Afterward, my mother goes back up to the nursing home where she now lives. She's making the transition. Moving on, one step in front of the other, has a whole new meaning when you're blind and can hardly stand without the help of a walker. Yet she has the habit of a worlding. She is trying to find the rhythm of her new bodily life, to hit the reset button. She is laboring to literally fall into step with the pacing of *The Meadows*, to find lines of attachment, to become describable as a body by learning how to affect and to be affected in this world such as it is. She is looking for a track for a flourishing of some sort.

When she first came back from the hospital, her body could only cling to the bed sheets while feeling the vertigo of falling. I was sitting with her, trying to reassure her that she could wait now, things would get better. But when I would get up to leave for the night she would spring to a furtive standing position. “Okay, just help me get the label (l-a-b-e-l) on top of the walker. . . . Let’s just do that before you go. Okay. Let’s just figure it out. It’s gold, it fits in your pocket, it goes over the . . . like a . . . table (t-a-b-l-e). Can you see it? Why won’t you help? I just need you to do this one thing for me before you go.” Then she would sink down, deflated. A few minutes later I would try to leave again. She would shoot up again, “Okay, let’s just get this one thing done. . . .” It’s a sheer repetition, a stab in the dark to discover a laboring rut that might include her.

The aides will slowly come to know her, know what she can and can’t do. I will slowly learn to leave her to it. At first it’s only an hour or two apart—an interval—and then we begin again with a report of what has happened. It’s a sensory refrain pulling in events and scenes as if they were much-needed raw materials for a compositional grounding, a restart. She says this place is surreal. They have started to carry her down the hall to physical therapy. She says she saw small dogs in the hallway (the next day she discovers they were real). There is all this funny, cute equipment in physical therapy—red cylinders, something bluish you can sit in and move your arms around in, something like a robot that runs down the aisle. The occupational therapist was there on the first day, teaching her how to hold a fork again so she could feed herself. It’s amazing what a difference a few teaching repetitions makes. I tell her this is a nice place; whoever knew it was here up on the second floor of Edgewood—big, lots of people, its own dining room and activities room. It’s amazing. She asks me to tell her about her room. It’s a cottage. She has a beautiful ash tree right outside her window, the snow is falling hard, beautiful, there’s a full moon, the ground is covered, in the distance there is a huge dairy barn, there are still horses in the field, beautiful healthy horses in chestnut brown, they have wool blankets on and beyond the barn is Half Mile Hill where kids have always sledded and we went this afternoon. It was wild. We climbed to the top of the hill. Someone has left two Adirondack chairs and a table up there and you can sit and see the whole lake and mountain range. It’s beautiful. Down below, tucked into the valley, Edgewood looks like a Scandinavian village. All white and collective. The Christmas lights are beautiful. Would she like some hot chocolate?

Then comes the time we have to leave at dawn. She’s still very much alone and in the dark. She’s in her bed. She struggles to find something a mother

can still say. “Don’t worry about me, I’m living the life of Reilly.” I know this is somehow a surge to her prime and her Irishness, a fabulation that moves to find an earlier scoring. I look it up when I get home, just to do something. The *Life of Riley* was a popular American radio situation comedy series of the 1940s that was adapted into a feature film in 1949 and continued as a long-running television series during the 1950s, originally with Jackie Gleason. The expression “Living the life of Riley” suggests an ideal life of prosperity and contentment, possibly living on someone else’s money, time, or work. It implies being kept or advantaged. The expression was popular in the 1880s, a time when James Whitcomb Riley’s poems depicted the comforts of a prosperous home life. It could have an Irish origin. After the Reilly clan consolidated its hold on County Cavan, they minted their own money, which was accepted as legal tender even in England. These coins, called “O’Reillys” and “Reillys,” became synonymous with a monied person, and a gentleman freely spending was “living on his Reillys.”

Ten days later mother’s language is much better. She loves the word-retrieval therapy. She’s always had an amazing memory and a talent at picking up trivia. They tell her she’s awesome. She passes the psychological evaluation with flying colors. The terrors have passed. They give her kisses on the cheek. Everyone loves her. She eats her meals in the dining room with the same two women and they have become her friends. Others come and sit next to her at activities. (Later the assessment team will call her the social role model.)

Another eight days into it, she’s so happy. She knows everyone. She tells me stories on the phone every day (I call at 2 o’clock her time). Stories about the residents’ histories, their connections, where they used to live, who their mothers were. And stories about the aides—their children, their education, their countries of origin. The aides touch her on the shoulder, they laugh with her. She can’t remember names. She doesn’t have to worry about anything. Like clothes. She doesn’t mind taking their transportation to doctor’s appointments rather than have one of us take her, but she’s wondering if they can get someone to accompany her because when she went to see the neurologist that time before there were several buildings, snow, she had to take an elevator. She’s wondering how she will make doctor’s appointments, where her check book is, whether they’re bringing up her mail. She wants to get her things organized, but they won’t let her out of her chair without an aide. My job is to repeat over and over what detailed arrangements have been made in an effort to create tracks of recognition.

On the thirtieth day they kick her out of the Meadows. Medicare’s pay-

ment period is over. She says she knows she's not ready to be back in her apartment but she'll try. She quietly does what she can to stay. She meets with the head of social services, reminding them that she is blind now. They take her back to her apartment in Edgewood. Aides visit to get her dressed, go the bathroom, bring meals . . . They come to get her for daycare for five hours a day but she doesn't take to it. She doesn't like some of the women in that group. They're all "oooohs and aaahs." The woman who is running the group was just about losing it today, rolling her eyes. Mom hates that sort of thing—a scene that's not working and people are losing it. She told them she didn't know how much she'd be coming back. But she had a good lunch. Sometimes they play memory games and she sparks up. Bad days she's reduced to the crabby figure instead of the one who "no matter what life throws at her, she gets up and puts one foot in front of the other every day."

She asks her friend Eleanor (who is blind) what her tricks are. Eleanor says she doesn't have any. My mother doesn't think Eleanor uses aides at all. She says she will never again eat in the big dining room at Edgewood. It's too much. People get dressed up. Even with an aide and her walker she has a hard time finding her way to a table and sitting down; she can't see her plate; she doesn't know how much food she's spreading over the table and her clothes. It's too much. She misses having her meals with the women in the Meadows.

But there are things that can be done. She has her sister go get her a new prism for the double vision in her one okay eye. Just in case. They take the door off her bathroom and replace it with a nice gauzy curtain. Now she can get in there herself with her walker but she's shaky. She has a number of episodes in only a few weeks. There are falls, cuts, fainting. Twice she ends up in the hospital. My brother Frank doesn't want her using the stove at all but she might have my sister Peggy get some little chicken pot pies. Frank says she can't even stand to make herself a sandwich.

She decides to cancel the dinners being delivered every night and set up for her (heated up, laid out). She doesn't want to have to clean up the Styrofoam containers the food comes in. There are so many of them and they need to be recycled. It's too much. Not right. But how will she eat? She's losing weight; she weighs one hundred pounds and she's so frail. She decides to start going to lunch instead of dinner in the big dining room. That would be better. She goes and makes a new friend. She wants to go back to physical therapy so she can learn to walk better, get some balance back. Once they bring her up to the Meadows for tea with her old friends as part of a walking therapy. But everything is pieced together. Claire keeps trying to shift things

around, find something that works. It all ends when they find her one morning hanging off the bed, half under it, wrapped in her sheets and very disoriented. She's back to the hospital and then back, the very same day, to the Meadows. We get her a room of her own. We move her things up. We empty her apartment. It's a hard transition.

She's back to the work of being sentient to the world she's in. It is matter of literal contact, exposure to the rhythms, interruptions, bodies, paces, and relations of a territory. A matter of being taken off, shown someplace else, catching on. A living through the transmission of affect, the restlessness of its promise, the relief of its continued mobilization, the anticipatory structure of power and obstacles. (If they would only let her get up for thirty minutes a day so she could find things in her drawers, remember where things are.) It is the production and modulation of "life itself" through worlding refrains. Synthetic experiences become generative repetitions of care and potentiality—the movies on Friday nights, the great food, bright colors, hats, festive occasions, sing-alongs. An accumulation that scores.