Any essay that uses the word “existentialism” anywhere in its pages ought to quote Kafka, and I don’t plan to miss the party. I will, however, depart from the tradition of invoking his most depressing scenes and instead turn my attention to a certain train bound for the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, which everyone can join and, from the looks of it, seems to be about nothing at all. Kafka doesn’t give us anything to disabuse us of this initial impression. *Amerika* ends, in classic asymptotic fashion, without really ending. The protagonist doesn’t arrive, the future lies in wait, the train rolls on.*

The preceding pages have been an exercise in establishing something very like this theater. I began by articulating the problem of coincident entities and, taking it at face value, sought to resolve it in set-theoretic terms. I then showed how these terms could be used to explain a practical method of freeing these entities to behave “independently together.” On the strength of this explanation, I went further and incorporated non-human objects into my thesis, and, using the same set-theoretic terms, sought to show how we might encounter objects independently of our idea of them, letting them occupy their own place or ethos through the semi-controllable introduction of monotypical effects. My idea throughout was to locate a formal structure of grounds forcing, which carried its own incompleteness with it and so wouldn’t provide a master plan so much as a range of

approaches that could be applied according to how matter, in its untotizable vastness, presented itself. The results have arguably been less than dramatic, but they are, literally, *almost* about nothing and patently free for anyone to take up.

As for this object that is now a book, I’ve gone about writing it in a kind of parody of the principles it advances. My model was not the monastic scribe flush with resonant hours, nor the boundary breaker who sacrifices all for art, nor even the dutiful writer for pay. The closest parallel is probably Descartes, who tested his hypotheses in many contexts as he traveled about medieval Europe, except that Descartes sought necessity, and I what lies beyond it. In keeping with that spirit, I tried to treat the act of writing as contingent — while I was actually writing — and then to test those results, not only against other texts, but also against whatever I happened to be doing next.

It’s a peculiar way to string sentences together, to submit to the equivalence of “yes” and “no” at every word choice, and not at all the emotional style to which I was accustomed, but after a while, I found I was no longer writing my way out of fear, or into frustration. As more time passed, it also became easier for me to put the writing aside, or even to stop at a moment’s notice, without trepidation that I would “lose the thought,” since, if I was doing what I was writing about, I would simply be continuing the thought into my tasks at hand. Conversely, if I found myself oblivious to my surroundings while rehearsing a passage, I could be sure that passage was somehow amiss. Gradually, the compositions I reserved for the page came to belong almost anywhere in my day, even as thinking them rearranged my personal assemblage of needs, organizing an inventory of objects and events that did not, in a surprising number of cases, depend on my authorial pride to impress their importance on me.

And so, in the end, this book happened, while costing my part of the world very little. Where I have incurred debts, this epilogue will serve as an acknowledgment of my gratitude: to my editor, Eileen Joy, whose generosity, daring, and commitment to an open-ended process are rare attributes indeed; to Sigrid Hackenberg y Almansa, who not only provided invalu-
able advice but did so with a warmth and expansiveness that made the revision process a pleasure; to an anonymous critic who scared me straight; to Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei and Natalia Tuero German, who wonderfully turned my manuscript into a published fact; to my wife, Claudia, with whom I’ve entered a termless pact that decenters me in ever more breathtaking ways; and to our sons Jonah and Elias, whose radiance — creative, comic and cunning — is undeniable. For those who have chanced upon these words for other reasons, I hope the outcome has at least not contradicted the general case I’ve made for the defeat of correlationism, not once and for all, but iteratively, out here, where everything is. Of course, since you’ve already read the whole book, it’s a little late for me to ask you to approach it in this light. Rather, then, I ask only that you regard it as yet another contingent thing, to accept or reject, in the astonishing parade of whatever comes next.