

Framing, Following, Middling

Towards Methodologies of Relational Materialities

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How to appreciate anew our involvements in and with matter? How to account for the distinctive forms that the material world and ‘us humans’ in it are taking in current times, while these forms interlink scales from socioeconomic and artefactual production to altering ecosystems and the molecular compositions of life? How to consider aesthetics beyond the assessment of cultural expressive patterns as the initial impingement of the world’s materialities from physical locales to mediatised textures upon us? How does this impingement incite our bodies–minds into feeling and thinking? How can we acknowledge, then, the teeming interfaces of ‘us’ and ‘the world’? At those interfaces, categories such as these are not yet neatly separable.

ISSN 1837-8692

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Citation: Cultural Studies Review (CSR) 2015, 21, 4407, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/csr.v21i2.4407>

They re-arise from their mutual relation: a body modulating with its environments, environments experienced and signified afresh. How, overall, to engage both seriously and creatively with the site-specific co-occurrence of reality's terms—social meanings with biophysical processes, political economies with natural forces, artistic practices with technological and cosmic speeds beyond the human grasp?

It is this string of ontological, epistemological and ethical concerns that has over the past decade preoccupied research in the social and human sciences we wish to call new materialist. The projects associable with new materialism cross various investigative fields, theoretical threads and 'levels of materialisation' under scrutiny.¹ Yet, the resonances among these projects and their linking to new materialism as a dynamic rather than a closed term are feasible in light of a shared urge. This consists in exploring the composition and import of materialities far beyond their seemingly stable and measurable objectivity. Recent influential initiatives include, among others, Jane Bennett's inquiries into the quasi-agency or material efficacies of everyday things and the revived materialist philosophies of Diane Coole and Samantha Frost's edited volume *New Materialisms*.² They encompass the feminist returns to the materiality of bodies, nature and knowledge production in *Material Feminisms*, co-edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman; and the body always more than its present actuality in Erin Manning's and Brian Massumi's explorations of movement, emergent experience and the recomposing force of relations.³ These examples are instructive in underlining how the active, reforming materiality engaged in recent work prompts a recasting of other fundamental concepts of research. Social and political questions intermingle with efficacious matter. Bodies turn into a 'bodying' that occurs with the 'worlding' of their milieu. Agency disentangles from arrogant human-centredness, pertaining to beings with diverse participatory powers. Ontologies of relational process replace those of self-contained substance. And ethics centres around site-sensitively remodelling our interdependence with human and nonhuman others.

Our article both resounds and hopes to expand these emerging modes of thought and research. The starting premise of our elaborations on what new materialisms might entail or do is that *conceptualisations need to be regarded as a practice in their own right*. This holds for the attempts to re-conceptualise matter, movement, aesthetics and ontology that are germane to new materialist pursuits.

More precisely, we maintain that for their practice nature to actualise, conceptualisations need to start out as *thinking in action*. As Manning and Massumi have recently proposed, this kind of thought in action takes shape in a bundle of relations with elements both conceptual and non-conceptual. It also embraces the relational eventfulness of its own coming about.⁴ If this happens and a concept's engagements with components other than conceptual—such as particular processual materialities—are allowed to shape its very outlook and manner of posing a problem, it will have approximated to a practice. This will strengthen the concept's abilities to reach beyond the generalising classificatory tendencies of language toward affecting how the world's specificities are felt, perceived and lived with.

In our view, projects with a new materialist orientation have already distinctly promoted the beginnings and functioning of concepts as practice. Stacy Alaimo's trans-corporeality and Rosi Braidotti's bio-literacy are only two illuminating efforts in this regard.⁵ Nonetheless, our aim is to extend the operation of new materialisms as *concepts in practice or the practising of concepts*. We pursue this aim along two lines that in our opinion beg further attention. First of all, we seek to advance the role of art and cultural studies in engaging the materialities of the contemporary world and reworking such theoretical strands connected to humanities (and social science) that give the dynamism and productivity of matter their due. This is not to say endeavours in art and cultural studies would not have until now contributed to renewed sensitivities to matter.⁶ However, we find it crucial to stress the transversal importance that artistic and cultural practices from performing arts to electronic media can have for rethinking the indispensable activity of materialities across human, social, technological, economic and ecological registers. Far from dealing just with the materialities of their 'home' media in a narrow sense, numerous artistic and cultural projects have recently, in their medium-specific ways, addressed broad pressing concerns key to new materialisms. These stretch from the interpenetration of present human patterns of production and consumption with the deep-time geological realities of the earth through to the development of wider-than-human ethical models attuned to twenty-first-century realities. Artistic and cultural productions can even figure at the forefront of these developments. Consider, for instance, the forays into interspecies performance in recent performance practice

and theory.⁷ Against this backdrop, the goal of our article is to foreground the singular rewards of contemporary artistic and cultural phenomena for new materialisms by exemplifying what concepts relevant to these approaches a thinking-in-action *with* such phenomena can elicit. The concepts we want to offer here are *framing, following and middling*. The main example with which these concepts are delineated in this text is *Biophilia Live* (2014), a film linked to Icelandic musical artist Björk's *Biophilia* concept album and concert tour performance. More on this co-composing example soon.

The second line we wish to pursue in this article connects likewise to the practical force of concepts—here especially to that of framing, following and middling, as we seek to elucidate below. This second aspect of our approach is, then, also premised on the idea that concepts form in relations beyond the linguistic while being able to modulate various registers of reality from the cognitive and discursive to the sensory and perceptual (aesthetic), co-lived (pragmatically collective), ethical and political. If concepts, or the problems they enfold, indeed result from such relational tangles of being while inciting new ones, we think it is high time to inquire more systematically into such novel ways of conducting research that new materialist conceptualisations might inspire. That is, we want to direct increasing attention to the *methodological potential* of new materialist notions. Many recent pursuits describable as new materialist do, of course, illustrate how renewed accounts of matter can combine with the study of particular material and sociocultural phenomena and such discussions (whether film and media theories or political philosophies) that are associated with these topics. Still, the impact of new materialist theoretical and ontological stances on research techniques and processes awaits closer query. This applies in our text especially to art and cultural studies approaches in the humanities.⁸ Thus, the kinds of questions we would like to initiate include, for example, how to conduct theoretical film, art and textile research or performance studies analyses of vibrant and relational materialities and how might new materialist notions modify the nature and ethics of researcher–researched relations that have famously been debated across ethnographic and interview methodologies as well as poststructuralism-informed close readings?

When exploring these questions with *Biophilia Live*, we will elaborate further methodological ideas as follows. Instead of comprising a mere theoretical (re)turn,

new materialisms always already amount to research practices. This just needs to be increasingly attended to. Also, instead of theory ever unilaterally dictating the ways research is done, these ways of doing need to be noticed and practised as situated *emerging mutualities* between concepts, research materials, theoretical lineages and disciplinary milieus.⁹ To demonstrate these ideas, we propose our conceptual formulations of framing, following and middling as potential *methodological metamodellings* for new materialist research practices to come.

The 'meta' in the notion of metamodelling we are summoning does not allude to constant grounding principles or criteria that would underlie and transcend their applications in research praxis. Drawn from the work of Manning and Massumi who draw on Félix Guattari, metamodelling is rather concerned with 'render[ing] palpable' such lines or tendencies of formation that essentially vary. It is about acknowledging plural forces of formation 'from the angle of their variations'.¹⁰ The crux of metamodelling is thus that the models—or the propensities, ideas, potentials—that constitute a given process are never one but many. In the case of research, these models and processes comprehend both that which is explored and the ways the exploration is carried out. Moreover, each factor within the given process of formation self-differs across its respective iterations. Metamodelling cultivates this multiplicity of varying tendencies. Confirming that Guattari and Deleuze's process philosophy and concept of the virtual act as significant inspirations for their take on metamodelling, Manning and Massumi stress how 'meta' herein refers to 'abstract' (and not transcendent) since any tendency is open to actualising otherwise in the future. It is open to its own 'reformative excess'.¹¹ The way that factors co-actualise into a particular assemblage, or are encouraged to do so, is, in turn, 'always, a question of technique'.¹²

Now, we claim that transporting this idea of metamodelling into discussions about new materialist methodological tendencies promises fruitful outcomes because of the notion's insistence on relational process ontology so crucial to recent re-examinations of materiality. Concomitantly, metamodelling emphasises just the kinds of emerging mutualities mentioned above. We will offer framing, following and middling as new materialist methodological metamodellings in the sense that each seeks to highlight via its different emphases, leanings and relations to *Biophilia Live* the questions we have mapped out so far. To recapitulate, these questions focus

on the interlinked materialities specific to contemporary ways of being, our aesthetic immersions in matter, ideas of activity and accountability inherently wider than the human—and the implications of these notions for the research techniques or methods of art and cultural studies. As for the different tendencies of our three metamodelling devices, *framing* mostly works with the filmic and documentary qualities and affiliations of *Biophilia Live*. *Following* turns around the stage dresses of the film-concert alongside rethinking (with) clothing and fashion studies. The third and concluding notion of *middling* elaborates on the tendencies proposed by the two previous concepts. It also engages with the stage performative and sonic dimensions of *Biophilia*.

Despite their diverging forces of formation, we hope that framing, following and middling will eventually work as one intrinsically varied metamodelling assemblage, a methodological triptych even. In Deleuze's use of the term, the most defining characteristic of a triptych is not that it represents a narrative with figures and events, but that the figures and events are composed of forces that flow through all the triptych's three 'panels'. A triptych, then, is not so much a visual story with determinate signifying forms as it is a machine of sensation and perception.¹³ To modulate this, we, too, wish that while our three metamodelling devices will actualise as particular propositions informed by their respective contextual specificities, it is the above questions about moving matter, aesthetics and ontology that keep on flowing, insisting and varying through and in-between them.

—FRAMING

Biophilia Live is a concert film recorded at London's Alexandra Palace in 2013 from the very last show of Björk's *Biophilia* world tour. Directed by Nick Fenton and Peter Strickland, the film conveys a live performance replete with virtuoso musicians, mesmerising vocals and striking visuals. However, *Biophilia Live* exceeds the feeling of distance one frequently experiences when watching a documented performance. The aesthetic choices of the concert film—namely, the framing and the movements between the registers of concert documentation, animation and nature film—generate a documentary work that is distinct in its immediacy. The *live* in *Biophilia Live* urges one to get up and start dancing with the starfish.

The viewer is introduced to the cosmic implications of *Biophilia* with a trope that connects the film to the pedagogical apparatus of nature documentaries. With a tracking shot reminiscent of the BBC's television production *Planet Earth* (2007), the camera flies across the planetary system to a lush mountain landscape before focusing on the glimmering costumes of the choir on stage. On the soundtrack, David Attenborough welcomes the viewer to *Biophilia*, 'the love for nature in all her manifestations'.¹⁴ Attenborough's didactic excitement summons the viewer to explore a lively ecology of textures, sounds and shapes that promises to connect the microscopic with the depths of the universe.

The curiosity in exploring the hidden places of the universe—channelled first through Attenborough's emblematic voice and then through Björk's singular vocals—is transposed to the sensation of 'liveness' generated in the concert film. Contrary to more traditional concert documentations that constantly struggle with the pastness of the experience they work to convey, *Biophilia Live* creates a temporal ecology of its own, a niche environment where voices, dresses, moving images and animations co-compose an event that no longer depends on the liveness of what was. The film creates its own liveness. This disposition differs from the concert film's most explicit interlocutor, the BBC's *Planet Earth* franchise, where sensations of liveness have been produced by real-time broadcast streams or live orchestral accompaniment. The televised *Planet Earth Live* (2012) featured simultaneous video streams of animals from five continents and the film version of *Planet Earth* (2010) toured the world with live music.

The liveness in *Biophilia Live*, we claim, arises from the particularities of the film's aesthetic practice of *framing*. Shot with multiple cameras that move on cranes below and above the stage, from close-ups to general views of the stage and its surroundings, these choices in framing provide their own take on the concert. The meticulous tracing of the colour transitions between sparkling blue and bright copper in the singers' outfits and the stage lights as well as the gentle swaying of the camera some ten metres back and on eye level with the stage entangle the viewers not only with the concert but with an immanent interpretation thereof.¹⁵ This interpretation is enhanced with sea creatures, animated patterns and planetary shapes that enter the frame only to recede again when some other rhythm, colour or formation takes the lead. Thus, the framed concert is never offered as a self-



Figure 1: Co-composing an event. Still from *Biophilia Live* directed by Nick Fenton and Peter Strickland © 2014. Image courtesy Wellhart and One Little Indian.

contained one-scale event, but in its relationality to outside fields with which the musical performance takes yet another shape. The ‘aesthetics of the frame’ with which *Biophilia Live* fashions its own audiovisual event consists in simultaneously capturing and expressing the unfolding concert.¹⁶ The frame is at once a structure that confines the unravelling performance—and thus makes it perceivable to an audience at a remove—and a particular expression of the concert.

This dual work of the aesthetics of the frame has an intriguing link to Mieke Bal’s take on framing as a mode of cultural analysis.¹⁷ In her seminal outline, Bal argues for framing over contextual analysis and notes that framing overcomes the positivist ambition to explain and foregrounds the analytical passion of interpretation. In her view, framing encourages critical reflection also on the researcher’s positionality over the course of framing. Bal fleshes out her definition of framing with a curatorial project where she was given the task of presenting an early seventeenth-century non-canonical painting to the public. She contours the notion of framing in conjunction with the material practice of curating the painting in the exhibition space while reflecting on the choices she made and their effectiveness. Curating, in this instance, aligns with the activity of framing that

questions the ready-made object status of cultural artefacts and renders them 'alive' by framing them in changing discursive, thematic, visual or material traditions.¹⁸

The methodological implications of the material practice of framing intertwine with temporality. In Bal's account, a cultural object is never stable but is in process and prone to transmutation. However, in her take these changes are brought upon the object by discursive choices and material conditions that are not of its own time.¹⁹ Framing—as it collides with curatorial practice—works on objects that are of a different temporality to the activity of framing. Framing in a sense re-historicises them, places the objects in novel narratives where their meanings are rendered lively. Consequently, the created event is epistemic.

Recent reassessments of research processes characterisable as new materialist tend to suggest, however, that the explored object and the approach taken are of the same, albeit multilayered rather than unilinear, temporal texture.²⁰ This does not mean they share the same material conditions, but rather that their mutual entanglements are central to the analysis. In ontological terms, the object and the approach are co-creators of the studied event, engaged in a particular performativity that also has epistemological repercussions.

In other words, what is crucial for such a new materialist performative methodological understanding is the appreciation of the 'liveliness' of the studied entity in terms of its agentic or co-constructive capacities. In the case of *Biophilia Live*, an analysis of the film entangles with the vivid relationality of performed songs and, for instance, clips from Jean Painlevé's 1978 film *Cristaux liquides* (Liquid Crystals) that gather the performers into the gentle rhythm of nature's molecular procession. Put differently, a new materialist approach to this film would have to account for its aesthetics of the frame that renders the performance expressive of qualities not reducible to the concert occasion at Alexandra Palace.²¹

We suggest, then, that framing as a new materialist methodological tendency works through a similar double call as the aesthetics of the frame discernible in *Biophilia Live*. On the one hand, framing captures the film in a manner that brings forth its conditions, features and scope; on the other hand, this is done in a way that does not exhaust the object with explanations but facilitates the flourishing of its liveliness. If and when methodological approaches entail evaluation, the approach proposed here insists upon the immanence of evaluation to the object studied. In

methodological terms, this translates into giving the object of analysis an outline that encourages its participating agency and qualitative growth.

This methodological formulation can be related to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's ontological account of the frame and the arts.²² For Deleuze and Guattari, architecture is the primordial artistic gesture as it organises the space of the earth by framing it. For them, art is a territorial praxis—the drawing of boundaries. Framing encloses bodies, places and sounds within a territory in such a fashion that they become expressive of immeasurable dimensions and indeterminate forces. In the present example, these are the sensations of uncontainable magnitudes that ripple out of the audiovisual consistency of the concert film. For Deleuze and Guattari, framing confines in order to release.

In distinction from Bal's account of the material practice of framing, this territorial conception of framing points to how objects and things become expressive in and of themselves in the process of connecting with other objects and things. In her account of Deleuze and Guattari's take on the arts, Elizabeth Grosz summarises the work of the frame as follows: 'With no frame or boundary there can be no territory, and without territory there may be objects or things but not qualities that can become expressive, that can intensify and transform living bodies.'²³

This resonates with the dual nature of the frame in the concert film. The aesthetics of the frame operating in *Biophilia Live*, or in-between the concert and our observations, both captures the performance and enables the becoming-expressive of the framed bodies, places and sounds in a way that is singular to the film. The becoming-expressive of the framed things comes with the emergence of qualities that are in excess of the framed territory and that thus begin pushing on to the frame while potentially breaking through it. Grosz continues: 'Territory is always the coming together both of spatiotemporal coordinates (and thus the possibilities of measurement, precise location, concreteness, actuality) and qualities (which are immeasurable, indeterminate, virtual, and open-ended).'²⁴

Biophilia Live creates its own open-ended ecology by pushing through the frame of the live recording with DNA animations, time-lapse photography and superimposed footage of underwater creatures and natural processes. The concert documentation functions as the primary frame to the world of *Biophilia*, but it is a

frame that was never meant to confine a world already in place or to authenticate the experience of a past event. Rather, the frame points to its own limit and crosses it. During *Mutual Core*, this breakthrough occurs when Björk vocalises ‘this eruption undoes stagnation’ to superimposed footage of erupting lava pouring over the choir squatting on stage. The inseparability of the burning mass from the bodies of the singers creates a sensation of overwhelming force that is irreducible to the actuality of the filmed live performance. The weight of lava frames the crouching choir that finally explodes through the mass to an upright position and continues singing. Thus, the documented performance of the song becomes charged with sensations singular to its expression in the concert film.²⁵

In this sense, *Biophilia Live* can be compared to the final concert scene in the recent Nick Cave biopic, *20,000 Days on Earth*.²⁶ In this last sequence, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds perform live at the Sydney Opera House and their performance of *Jubilee Street* is intercut with footage of shows from past years. The fast paced montage responds to Cave belting out the lyrics ‘I’m transforming, I’m vibrating, I’m glowing, I’m flying’ on stage. Earlier in the film, Cave states that what he fears most is losing his memory. In a way, the final scene of *20,000 Days on Earth* responds to this fear by opening the live performance up to an audiovisual series of the Bad Seeds vibrating, transforming. The intensity of the montage sequence gives form to the sensation Cave fears to forget.

Finally, whereas Mieke Bal’s material practice of framing draws attention to the performative epistemological acts undertaken in cultural analysis,²⁷ framing as an act of territorialisation shifts the emphasis toward networks of relation that undulate from the frame. The orienting lines drawn around the studied object are not meant to explain or contextualise so much as to enable the liveliness of the object to live on. Here, the task of the analyst is transposed from interpretative reflection on the discursive stakes of the cultural entity to an account of how it brings more life into the real.²⁸

Hence, as a potential metamodelling device for new materialisms-informed close analysis, framing rests on the tending of the lively ecology of the research material. Ultimately, this foregrounds the ways the subject of research co-composes the chosen approach, its iterations and knowledge productions. In pragmatic terms, framing involves the careful mapping of the distinctive characteristics that

contribute to the liveliness of the studied entity. Ontologically, framing involves capturing the object's becoming in a manner that offers it a new tangle of relations in which to carry forward.

—FOLLOWING

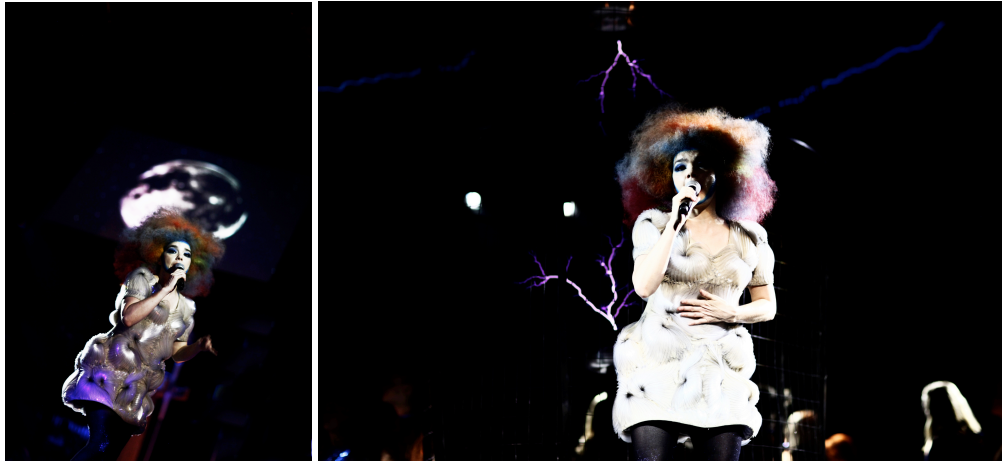
Whereas *Biophilia Live* indulges its audiences with a multiplicity of moving images and sonorities, its leading star's wardrobe for the whole show consists of a single costume: a luminous, bouncy mini dress sculpted with thin, scintillating plastic strips.²⁹ Despite this seemingly stagnant choice of costume, the dress in question is an eminent participant in creating the liveliness of *Biophilia Live*. It fashions relations between the lead singer and the environing elements in process. Contrary to typical concert situations where liveness is accentuated with rapid costume changes and extensive wardrobes, the *Biophilia* event relies on the powers of a singular piece of clothing. Instead of the sort of quantitatively based liveliness one finds in fashion runway shows with their successions of haute couture creations, the *mise-en-scène* of the concert puts the focus on the qualities of the single dress—a feature *Biophilia Live* picks up and works with in its audiovisual composition.

Without an array of costumes to explore, the concert film encourages attention to Björk's singular dress all the more intensively: that is, to follow its qualities in movement, to be open to what it can do. Crucially, this following of the dress in or as movement reveals that a single dress is always more than one. The dress emerges as different across the film's sets and songs. Its opalescent lively surface changes colour, adopts colour, infuses colour; and its bumpy plastic shapes take on various renewing forms of effectiveness or liveness.³⁰ With the dress on, Björk acquires the qualities of a purplish pinkish sky of a thousand shades, and of bubbly hazy cumulus clouds while her enormous fluffy wig heightens the effect. Then the dress obtains the emerald green hue of *aurora borealis*, and joins the gloomy drama of a night sky where the only light is a pale, silvery reflection of the sun. It rhythmically tinkles along the physical-chemical formulas of a crystallisation process. It vibrates with medusas, grows into the spiky tentacles of a coral creature, then decomposes into the ocean floor. It hits as lightning rather than being hit by lightning, flows with lava streams and forms into a cloud of extra-terrestrial stardust.

In its intensity, the dress moves beyond 'mere matter'. Here, materiality comes forth as a force or vitality; it is relational, emergent, productive and self-transforming—indefinitely agentic.³¹ Throughout the concert film, the dress appears as an 'ever-varying manyness'.³² This, however, does not mean that the concrete material consistency of the dress would change. Rather, the costume's manyness happens in 'an all-encompassing relation with what it will be'.³³ Björk's dress in *Biophilia Live* exists *in* its relations, but not only in actual ones. It coincides with its potential to connect and to thus qualitatively move. In other words, the dress is how it will have become-with.

Importantly, intensive material manyness does not equal immersion. Björk does not become *one* with the sky in a supposedly harmonious amalgamation of the coexisting matters of the universe. Nor does she simply resemble the sky, coral creatures or burning lava streams. The nature of the contact is more complex, while the peculiar materiality of the dress has a central role therein. The dress allows Björk's body to encounter the moving visuals of *Biophilia Live* in a singular way. This crystallises in the fact that the dress works on a distinctive nature-(techno)culture continuum. It consists of hundreds of white opal plastic strips crafted together not by human hands but by a 3D printer. Yet there is something evocatively organic in its shape. The costume's surface has gnarl-like formations reminiscent of tree trunks, and on the lower stomach area the techno-fabric folds into a vaginal shape. But the curvy bumps do not obediently emulate Björk's bodily shapes; rather, they seem to add excess. The abject shapes of the dress recall Barbara Creed's notion of monstrous-feminine or Rosi Braidotti's teratological: a female-coded body disturbingly exceeding the boundaries of the cultural-technological and the natural.³⁴ It is precisely this quality of the dress that attracts multiple connections across the continuum of the natural-cosmic and the technical-scientific, the main themes of *Biophilia's* visualisations.

But there is more to this. It is not that the dress would merely represent the teratological or the monstrous-feminine and their transgressive figurations across the natural-cosmic and the technical-scientific. Above all, it is the peculiar material construction of the dress that incites new connections. The numerous plastic strips do not form a solid surface that would stably reflect the surroundings like a mirror or encase like armour. The costume's subtle, minutely varying construction



Figures 2 and 3: Expressing the more-than-human. © 2013 Saga Sig. Image courtesy of Wellhart and One Little Indian³⁵

enhances oscillating and open contacts with the outside rather than self-containment and closure.

This connective openness of the *Biophilia* dress visibly folds Björk's performing body with its outsides, both natural and scientific elements, thus increasing her contact with the (filmed) universe. While many contemporary philosophers insist that our human lives transversally or transcorporeally connect to the nonhuman, the *Biophilia* dress actualises this in an impressive fashion that appeals to the senses: it tinkles, sparkles, vibrates and expands with the visualised organic and inorganic processes, making the often imperceptible connections felt.³⁶ With the dress, Björk does not dissolve into a variety of natural phenomena; she dances, sings and performs with and through them. The dress does not turn Björk nonhuman, but in its bringing-togetherness, connectedness, it poignantly expresses how we are always part of a reality more-than-human.

By describing how the dress works in *Biophilia Live* we have begun in the middle. We have bypassed the costume's origin and its reception and moved with its intensive materiality, because we have sought to start from or amidst the ways the dress becomes in relation in the filmic process. The guiding question has been how to get into the middle of the *dress-action*? How to relate to its being in becoming in the milieu of the concert film? Here we are in need of a methodological concept-device that would allow us to open increasingly to such ontological movement-

actions rather than freezing them. Instead of conceiving the dress as an object the analysis will unidirectionally activate, the aim here has been to approach it as a radically open process—as action not determined by the human mind or body only. The metamodelling device we suggest here is that of *following*. Following is, first of all, a relational practice: both the follower and the followee are in movement. As such, following does not offer a secure position for making interpretations. The researcher as follower cannot stay still perceptually or epistemologically; she must adjust herself to the movements of the followee. Our proposal could be seen as a new materialist version of analytical participant observation that pays intricate, detailed attention to matters in movement: to tinklings, vibrations and sensations, and to the primacy of relations, while endeavouring to make them felt. But whereas participant observation is commonly understood as the observation of people or human sociocultural systems, we extend it to encompass the observation of nonhuman liveliness, including such technologically composed materials and audiovisuals as those in *Biophilia Live*.³⁷

Contemporary cultural analyses of clothing tend to follow different lines by linking clothes and fashion to pre-existing signifying domains; for example, to what dresses represent and what identifications they enable for their wearers. This is evident in one of the few articles on Björk's performance dresses. Dirk Gindt writes that 'Björk uses the dress to visualize her patriotic politics' and thus she makes the dress 'a vital creative medium for the project of negotiating and articulating Icelandic identity'.³⁸ Also, Gindt makes a reference to Björk's personal psychological state at the time when the photos for the album cover of *Homogenic* were taken, and finds it concurrent with the clothing and design choices of the cover.³⁹ Noticeably, what the dresses mean throughout Gindt's argumentation is tied to something that predates them: Björk has certain patriotic, political ideas that she visualises with a dress. The dress comprises a platform—though a creative, not a mirror-like one—for negotiating Icelandic identity that allegedly has long roots in the country's landscape. In Gindt's third example, the album cover outfit reflects Björk's mental stage. Without evaluating the plausibility of these arguments, the one thing tying them together is their focus on contextual, pre-existing issues rather than on the workings of the dress-action.

Behind the emphasis on cultural meanings that circulate on the surface of the dress are the long-held companions of constructivism and representational thinking. In these modes of approach, cultural objects such as art often become sign-vehicles for something else. Their meaning resides elsewhere: 'in the artist, the historical setting, the structure of language, the unconscious, the audience discourses about art'.⁴⁰ Executed in this manner, analyses often end up talking about something through or beyond the object rather than about its ontological becoming, for instance in terms of material peculiarities and connective capacities.⁴¹ What is followed is not so much the potentiality of the object as discursive lines leading to something already established.⁴²

While analyses such as the one described above usually focus upon the cultural meanings that dresses convey and invoke, conservers and other textile professionals typically follow more material lines.⁴³ In the work of the latter, often done with the help of technical equipment and chemical knowledge, fibres, patterns, weaving, stitches and other technical, physical and chemical minutiae reveal the material history of the dress. In this way, albeit being more materially orientated, these perspectives remain mostly representational, attached to uncovering pre-existing conditions.

The new materialist notion of following proposed here seeks to reach toward the 'more-than-representational' of the studied phenomena.⁴⁴ The importance of the representational register(s) is not denied, yet the main focus lies in the primacy of relations in and through which a thing or phenomenon re-emerges. What is followed here are flows rather than lines. Instead of focusing on the dress as an object--or a process--that can be understood and categorised through its historical, material or cultural pre-texts, the new materialist explorations of emergent, unpredictable matter encourage researchers to follow the research object's undetermined material-relational becoming.⁴⁵

While aware of following's long and critical history in the anthropological practices of participant observation, the usage of the term we want to evoke here gestures to the philosophical work of Deleuze and Guattari.⁴⁶ In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, a major source of inspiration for new materialist thinking, Deleuze and Guattari explain that 'matter-flows can only be followed'.⁴⁷ This is eligible only if one is interested in engaging 'with a continuous

variation of variables, instead of extracting constants from them'.⁴⁸ Following, then, indicates an observational and analytic modality that seeks to appreciate the intensive qualities of matter, and prefers to work on the level of their action without transcendent ambitions of determining what they represent. It would strive to let flows stay flows without straightening them into lines.

This is not to say following would entail a research approach superior to those focused on representations. It just has different aspirations. In the case of *Biophilia Live*, following endeavours to access and make felt relations that dress-becomings can produce.⁴⁹ In this way, following proposes an onto-aesthetic approach: it argues that what we can know about the dress is inseparably entangled with its ontological becoming and the sensations it produces as integral to its becoming.⁵⁰

To carefully describe the costume's becomings before hurrying into propositions about its locatable discursive, psychological or other contents is an act of following. This necessitates attention both to the workings of the dress and to its changing appearances—the two are inextricable. What the dress does is change its material appearance in relation to the visual-sonic-material elements of the show; material elements whose qualities do not pre-exist the dress but become simultaneously with it. As a methodological tendency, then, following calls for



Figure 4: Dancing with calamari. Still from *Biophilia Live* directed by Nick Fenton and Peter Strickland © 2014. Image courtesy Wellhart and One Little Indian.

patient attentiveness to the *event quality* of the studied things. The follower should sense the movements of that which is followed. But then again, as Erin Manning argues in relation to her experiences of Argentine tango, following is not a passive activity. It is rather about ‘reciprocal reaching-toward’, that is, co-emerging. Both or all bodies need mutual incitement to create movement.⁵¹

The material-aesthetic activation—co-emergence—of the follower’s body can be sensed, for example, during the song *Hidden Place*, where colourful starfish and medusas pulsate across the whole screen capturing the lead singer into their movement, and thereby relating a love song to the animal powers of the nonhuman. In *Possibly Maybe*, a massive, purplish-pinkish-greenish glimmeringly fleshy, yet in its transparency almost ephemeral, calamari gently pokes Björk with its tentacle (Figure 4). In both these occasions, the flickering film screen invites the audience-participants to join its rhythmic dance.⁵² Here, the dress in its twinkling, sparkling, open becoming has a major role as a connector between the human and the nonhuman, allowing for the becoming of the more-than-human.

As a situationally iterated methodological model, following may also influence our practices of research writing. When considered as following, writing becomes a process of *writing-with* where the researcher’s task is to carefully move and twist her thinking and vocabulary to accommodate the specificities of the examined phenomena. This is necessarily a creative process. We claim in particular that new concepts are often needed to grasp the subtle material-aesthetic movements of the studied materialities; to ‘affirm matter’s immanent vitality’.⁵³ The concept of dress-action used earlier is one suggestion in this vein. Another option would be to elude the object implications of the noun ‘dress’ even more strongly. Instead of the dress-as-thing we might explore the ways the dress dresses, in other words, how it is a ‘dressing’.⁵⁴ This would flow with the ontogenetic approach that the new materialist tendency of following encourages.

—MIDLING

As two propositions about situationally eventuating methodological tendencies inspired by new materialist thought, framing and following have both stressed research projects’ ‘mixed process of formation’.⁵⁵ Expanding on relational understandings of both materiality and the other registers of reality it composes

with, these concepts have advocated a qualitative shift as regards the ideas of researchers' positionality and researcher-researched dynamics established in art and cultural studies over the past decades. What we have sought to do so far is contribute to moving the emphasis increasingly from purportedly pre-existing identities—that is, the studied entities with their contexts and the researcher with her or his personal and intellectual histories—to the ways the characteristics of each ontologically *re-form* in the processes of their 'in-mixing'.⁵⁶ Rather than the researcher's affiliations determining what she can notice and know, these factors are reactivated differentially by their entanglement with specific phenomena. This is a point the metamodelling concept of framing insisted on. Researchers should foster the immanence of their work—how their thinker's past gets involved in an analysis, what demarcations the analysis makes—to the distinctive actualisations of the research materials. Concurrently, the features of the things examined always arise from a domain of 'mutual action'.⁵⁷ As our notion of following tries to demonstrate, this domain involves the emerging object of attention's relations in its immediate milieu—in our case, those of Björk's costume across the audiovisuals of *Biophilia Live*. It also involves the relationally reappearing capacities of the researchers pursuing the analysis.

It could thus be claimed that through their different emphases, framing and following strive to engage with the *middling* of the research event. They seek to address the relational coming-into-being of research 'objects' and knowledges at a threshold where subject and object, singular and collective, material and symbolic, and human and nonhuman cannot yet be properly distinguished or arrested into hierarchies, but re-constitutively interconnect. In this final section of the article, we want to briefly elaborate the idea of middling.⁵⁸ This is done by emphasising aspects not expressly discussed above. These aspects concern the emergent nature of (analytical) perception itself and the onto-epistemological, ethical value of acknowledging and enhancing this tendency in relation to artistic-cultural expressions and research practice. As it has up to now, *Biophilia Live* participates in composing our reflections.

Alongside the plays of form and relation already discussed, the aesthetic ecology of *Biophilia Live*—the ways diverse sensory and perceptual elements co-construct the film—includes further peculiarities. One such peculiarity first emerges

as a somewhat fuzzily felt quality before registering more consciously as the film's recurring material-aesthetic feature. Reminiscent of the film's compositional propensities explored with respect to framing, this feature arises in tension with more conventional and expectable aesthetic arrangements of a concert film. What gradually rises to attention is *Biophilia Live's* marked lack of focus on Björk as the film's key figure and actor. Mostly avoiding traditional star building imagery, the camera work does not revel in her face and body through concentrated close-ups. Nor does it accentuate her as the primus motor of the concert stage's—or the entire film's—activities through appropriately chosen pictorial angles and trajectories. In resonance with the film's overall textures, Björk as image, or imaged body, rather appears, recedes and re-forms within *Biophilia Live's* wider vivid relationality. During the song *Dark Matter*, her moving contours repeatedly shimmer through stardust and galaxy formations saturating the screen. We should actually say 'shimmer with' as the image compositions in question refuse to be divided into a clear foreground and background. A similar effect occurs, for instance, with Björk, diverse sea creatures and the ocean floor.

During *Crystalline* and several additional moments of the film, the cameras do attend to Björk's vocal and bodily performing. This is not done, however, by separating her out so much as by depicting her embeddedness in the broader performative body of the choir or by immediately interconnecting her movements with those of the stage lights or the planets and other pictorial formations unfurling on the stage screens. Björk's voice, too, is rarely confined to a visualised relationship with her body for longer than an instant. Its technologically informed timbres, intonations and attacks co-occur with a variety of imaged and animated processes on the film screen.

Rather than presenting her as a pre-constituted subject entitled to prioritising treatment, then, the aesthetics of *Biophilia Live* playfully disperse Björk, as well, into emergences-with. Her kinetic/visual/aural/tactile figure features as an arising outcome of varying intermodal elements' co-influence. This of course also applies to the other components of these ensemble actions. As exemplified with following, these other elements likewise individuate and obtain a particular effectiveness from within the relational fields they participate in. Now, two aspects of this compositional style connect especially to new materialist considerations while in

their peculiar manner calling forth our methodological proposition about middling. Both aspects pertain to the kinds of perceptions that *Biophilia Live's* aesthetics encourage. Further, they pertain to specific understandings of the very character of perception that this aesthetics can be said to endorse.

The first aspect we wish to highlight is that the film dislodges not just Björk, but more profoundly the human form from the position of a well-delineated object of perception. Ranging from landscape panoramas to the advancing of abstract shapes or a group of seahorses across the screen, many visuals of the film include no signs of the human. Others do, but not in terms of bounded, easily recognisable figures so much as in the form of stylised, suggestive displays of the human body's organic workings (for example, blood circulation). These displays gleefully elaborate on the imaging styles of today's life sciences. Due to their stylised nature, it often takes a while to perceptually connect them to an organic body or the category of the human at all. When the film does include human actors in a more evident visual sense, they, as noted with Björk, still tend to appear from such angles and so inherently relationally that any clear-cut divisions between them and the surrounds, or between human and more-than-human scales, are initially blurred.

Thus, the perceptual tendencies *Biophilia Live* encourages align with the appeal voiced by Attenborough during the film's prologue: 'Now forget the size of the human body, remember that you're a gateway between the universal and the microscopic, the unseen forces that stir the depths of your innermost being and nature who embraces you and all there is'. If this statement and *Biophilia Live's* aesthetics are linked to new materialist calls for a refreshed relational ontology and analytical-ethical stances, it becomes quite apparent that metaphorical understandings of media and performance are not, for one, a sufficient methodological guideline for analysing the film. Unlike what music and audiovisual culture scholar Nicola Dibben suggests as regards Björk's *Biophilia* app album upon which *Biophilia Live* expanded, nature and the natural sciences (and their relations with music) cannot be considered simply as the 'subject matter' of the album and the concert film.⁵⁹ This view largely posits the former as pre-given categories that are secondarily referenced or alter-represented by artistic practices. Nor does the natural world exhibited in *Biophilia Live* provide mere 'metaphors for emotional experiences and musical processes'.⁶⁰

As an alternative, we would like to offer that the film's pronouncedly co-compositional aesthetics plunge into the very middle of how reality's elements can be encountered, interconnected and rendered perceptible. Through its insistently cross-scale and surprisingly rhythmmed conjunctions of the universal, the microscopic and nature's myriad forms, *Biophilia Live* alters these perceptions towards less human-centric modes at their *constitutive, materially and sensorily based level*. Moreover, insofar as what impinges on our bodies affects both feeling and thought, then rhythmically and environmentally fresh sensations and the resulting perceptions may also prompt renewed conceptual thinking on the co-compositional nature of reality and the humans therein. This is enhanced in the current instance by a singular film's and performance's materialities.

Accordingly, the close-analytical approaches of art and cultural studies—spanning from sound and performance to media specific perspectives—would need to increasingly middle into the matter-thought, technology-corporeality, and smaller-wider scale co-constitutions particular to distinctive research materials. This is central to the metamodelling idea of middling we want to propose here. To build on Massumi, we are not arguing that research should begin without presuppositions or any existing categories while aiming for an impossible 'phenomenological reduction'.⁶¹ To middle rather means accepting 'the challenge to regenerate your terms, and their cohesion to each other, at each repeated step in your thinking through the nexus'.⁶² This nexus, we claim, consists of the explored phenomena's continued relational re-emergence into being and perceptibility.

The second and final aspect of *Biophilia Live's* aesthetics we want to highlight expands on the film's jubilant decentralisations of the human. Namely, what becomes apparent is that the film's audiovisuals resist more generally immediate perceptual ordering into separate forms and functions. For example, the film's visuals occasionally slide from one image composition to another in such a manner that their mutual boundaries and categorisable contents—as graphic-abstract and organic-molecular, for instance—remain ambiguous or can only be established after a delay. Relatedly, some elements, like the choir's gowns, appear at times in such intimate close-up that while they invoke rich sensorial impressions, it is impossible to straightforwardly attach them to signifying labels in the sense of answering the question 'what are we perceiving?' In a way, Björk's idiosyncratic vocals echo this

tendency by gliding between breathy and clearly pitched sounds, or lyric-based and non-verbal articulations without a sharp dividing line. Thus, what *Biophilia Live* seems to emphasise in terms of perception is its 'coming to expression' and 'texturing complexity' at the expense of readily identifiable divides and hierarchies.⁶³

It is precisely perception's field-wide and relational underpinnings that Manning and Massumi argue for in their discussion of autistic perceptual tendencies, which underline the spectrum of human perception as opposed to constricting notions of normalcy. Far from firmly separating 'neurotypical' and 'neurodiverse' (a term coined by the autism rights movement) experiences from each other, Manning and Massumi insist upon interconnectedness and the dynamic becoming of perceptual fields as integral to any perception. Neurotypical perceptions just tend to background these aspects because of being orientated toward quickly singling out discrete, meaningful objects.⁶⁴ Importantly, many moments of *Biophilia Live* seem to accentuate the environmentality and relationality of perception, especially in varied materialities. The film hence entices more neurotypical perceivers, too, toward these aspects of our involvements with the world.

To return to middling, we would as our final suggestion offer that the observational techniques of art and cultural studies close analysis would also benefit from opening themselves more to the emergent and inter-relational aspects of perception. They would do well to momentarily resist, at each step in the analysis, the gravitational pull of rapid perceptual categorisations, assigned functions and subject/object logics. Not only might this result in what can eventually be called epistemological rewards in terms of making both our research 'objects' and investigative capacities richer in detail, connections and insight. There is more at stake. Joining Jane Bennett, we claim that honing this sort of 'sensory receptivity' to the relational emergence and 'marvellous specificity' of our research topics and experiences might support not just our analytical, but also our ethical attachments to the world.⁶⁵ As a methodological tendency, then, 'to middle' would mean enhancing our onto-epistemological and ethical animations by and accountability for the specific materialisations of reality that our examinations help to create while these same processes of in-mixing simultaneously recreate us.

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—NOTES

¹ Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, 'Introducing the New Materialisms', in Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, Politics*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2010, p. 4.

² *Ibid.*; Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2001; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2010.

³ See Erin Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA and London, 2007; Erin Manning, *Always More than One: Individuation's Dance*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2013; Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2002; Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2014.

⁴ See, for example, Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, pp. vii–ix, 88–9.

⁵ See Stacy Alaimo, 'Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature', in Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (eds), *Material Feminisms*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2008, pp. 237–64; Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013.

⁶ Ranging from media, feminist and sound theories to artistic practice-as-research, the previous projects of contributors this section have, alongside others, opened up some pioneering avenues in this respect. See, for example, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (eds), *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a New Materialism through the Arts*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2013; Ilona Hongisto, *Soul of the Documentary: Framing, Expression, Ethics*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2015; Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, *Following the Flows of Process: A New Materialist Account of Contemporary Art*, University of Turku, Turku, 2012; Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, 'Moving Matters of Contemporary Art: Three New Materialist Propositions', *AM Art+Media: Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 'New Materialism & Art', no. 5, 2014, pp. 42–55; Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2010; Patricia Pisters, *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2012; Milla Tiainen, 'Corporeal Voices, Sexual Differentiations: New Materialist Perspectives on Music, Singing, and Subjectivity', in Sylvia Mieszkowski, Joy Smith and Marijke de Valck (eds), *Sonic Interventions*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 147–68; Milla Tiainen, 'Revisiting the Voice in Media and as Medium: New Materialist Propositions', in Bernd Herzogenrath (ed.), *Media Matter: The Materiality of Media, Matter as Medium*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2015; Iris van der Tuin, *Generational Feminism: New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014.

⁷ See, for example, Tuija Kokkonen, 'Non-Humans and Performance: A Performance with an Ocean View (and a Dog / for a Dog)', *Journal for Artistic Research*, vol. 0, 2011, <<http://www.jar-online.net>>.

⁸ For a comparable project in the social sciences, see Rebecca Coleman and Jessica Ringrose (eds), *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2013.

⁹ Vicki Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies: Life at Large*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2011, p. 85.

¹⁰ Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, p. 115.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 116.

¹³ D.C. Ambrose, 'Triptychs, Eternity, and the Spirituality of the Body', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2009, pp. 259–73.

¹⁴ The Biophilia project also includes the documentary *When Björk Met Attenborough* (2014) in which the two discuss the relationship between nature and music.

¹⁵ This is comparable to the camerawork of such concert films as D.A. Pennebaker's *Monterey Pop* (1968) that use a lot of close-ups of the performers and thereby provide an intimate viewing experience that does not match the one of the live audience. In Pennebaker, this is underlined with the inclusion of close-ups of the audience.

¹⁶ For an in-depth elaboration on the aesthetics of the frame in the documentary, see Hongisto, *Soul of the Documentary*, passim. For an intriguing take on authenticity and framing in the digital environment, see Miriam Ross, 'Vertical Framing: Authenticity and New Aesthetic Practice in Online Videos', *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media*, vol. 24, 2014, <<http://refractory.unimelb.edu.au/2014/08/06/ross/>>; accessed 17 March 2015.

¹⁷ Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2002, pp. 134–5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153. For Brian Massumi, a situation such as the one described by Bal is a 'cultural freeze-frame'. Speaking about bodies and their propensity for change, Massumi notes that the idea of positionality subordinates movement and thus closes down the potential for qualitative transformation. Transposed to Bal's description, the discursive and material frames that move the cultural object come second to its immobility. Paraphrasing Massumi, this is a gridlock that silences the liveliness of the object itself. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 3.

²⁰ See, for example, Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2007, pp. 71–94, 189–222.

²¹ This coincides with recent explorations of sensation in film studies. For example, Martine Beugnet speaks of 'an aesthetics of sensation, where the material dimension of a cinematic work is initially given precedence over its expository and mimetic/realistic functions', Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2007, p. 14. Elena del Río, for her part, looks at cinema as a series of moving gestures and argues that the affective-performative powers of cinema emerge when the performing body is released from representational duties and allowed to express itself in a more impersonal manner. This, she notes, 'allows it to multiply connections with other bodies', Elena del Río, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2008, p. 17. Similarly, our take on the sensation of liveness created in *Biophilia Live* rests first and foremost on the co-composing materialities of the film—sounds, light, rhythm, colour, texture—and approaches issues of context, such as the tradition of concert documentaries and celebrity culture, from the point of view of these materialities.

²² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Verso, London, 1994, pp. 183–8.

²³ Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008, p. 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁵ In our first two viewings of *Biophilia Live* at the Australian Centre of the Moving Image (ACMI, Melbourne, 7 and 12 November 2014), the overwhelming sensation of cosmic depths was carried over to the cinema space. As the end credits began rolling, the cinema's dim wall mounted lights were turned on and in the otherwise still dark space, they formed a pattern of lines that felt like a continuation of the DNA sequences on the screen.

²⁶ *20,000 Days on Earth*, dir. Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard, 2014.

²⁷ Bal, p. 173.

²⁸ 'Framing is the raw condition under which sensations are created, metabolized, released into the world, made to live a life of their own, to infect and transform other sensations', Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, p. 18.

²⁹ The Biophilia dress was designed by Dutch fashion designer Iris van der Herpen with whom Björk had collaborated previously. See <<http://www.irisvanherpen.com/about#collaborations>>.

³⁰ See Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, pp. viii–ix.

³¹ Coole and Frost, 'Introducing New Materialisms', pp. 9, 29.

³² Brian Massumi, 'Prelude' in Manning, *Always More Than One*, p. xxiii.

³³ Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 7. See also Manning, *Always More Than One*, passim.

³⁴ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, London and New York, 1993; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994.

³⁵ Interestingly, none of the available press images of *Biophilia Live* captures the becomings-with through which Björk de- or transfigures throughout the film. The press images promote the artist and not her becoming-imperceptible or unrecognisable. For a further discussion of these transfigurations or re-emergences, see our reflections on middling.

³⁶ See, for example, Richard Grusin (ed.), *The Nonhuman*, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 2015. For transcorporeality see, for example, Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self*, Indiana University Press, 2010; and for transversality Manning's *Always More Than One*.

³⁷ For following as a new materialist method see, Kontturi, *Following the Flows of Process*, pp. 13–21, 191–9.

³⁸ Dirk Gindt, 'Performative Processes: Björk's Creative Collaborations with the World of Fashion', *Fashion Theory*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2011, pp. 425–50, 426, 430.

³⁹ 'Trapped in a chain of endless touring and promotion, Björk was overworked, her vocal chords were strained, and she was in desperate need of a vacation. With reporters following her all over the world, she had become a global property ... This mental and emotional tension, I argue, is visualized and materialized through the contradictory forces of extension and constriction on the album cover.' Gindt, p. 431.

⁴⁰ Levi R. Bryant, 'Towards A Machine-Orientated Aesthetics: On the Power of Art', *AM Art+Media: Journal of Art and Media Studies*, no. 5, 2014, pp. 22–4. Barbara Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation*, London and New York, 2004, pp. 12–13; Kontturi, *Following the Flows*, pp. 49–51.

⁴¹ Kontturi, *Following the Flows*, pp. 13–17, cf. Bryant 'Towards A Machine-Orientated Aesthetics', p. 24.

⁴² See Kontturi, *Following the Flows*, pp. 197–8.

⁴³ Susan Küchler and Daniel Miller (eds), *Clothing as Material Culture*, Berg, Oxford and New York, 2005.

⁴⁴ Hayden Lorimer, 'Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being "More Than Representational"', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 29, 2005, pp. 83–94; see also Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation*; Kontturi, *Following the Flows*, pp. 17–18; Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thinking Beyond Representation*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, 2006.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, 'Feminism, Materialism, Freedom' in Coole and Frost (eds), *New Materialisms*, pp. 150–1.

⁴⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 1987, pp. 372–3.

⁴⁷ This phrase is key to the methodological account of following Kontturi has developed in her *Following the Flows of Process*; see also Kontturi, 'Moving Matters of Contemporary Art', pp. 52–3. On Deleuze and Guattari's importance for new materialisms see, for example, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (ed.), *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, especially Rosi Braidotti's and Manuel DeLanda's interviews, pp. 19–47. See also Coole and Frost (eds), *New Materialisms*, especially Pheng Cheah, 'Nondialectical Materialism', pp. 71–91; William Connolly, 'Materialities of Experience', pp. 178–200; Rosi Braidotti, 'The Politics of Life Itself and New Ways of Dying', pp. 201–18.

⁴⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 372–3.

⁴⁹ Recently, more and more researchers have begun to question the mainstream representational approaches to fashion and clothing while formulating alternatives or companions to them; see, for example, Michael Carter, 'Stuff and Nonsense: The Limits of the Linguistic Model of Clothing', *Fashion Theory*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2012, pp. 343–54; Llwellyn Negrin, 'Fashion as Embodied Art form' in Barrett and Bolt (eds), *Carnal Knowledge*, pp. 141–54; Anneke Smelik, 'Fashioning the Fold: Multiple Becomings', in *This Deleuzian Century: Art, Activism, Life*, eds Rosi Braidotti and Rick Dolphijn, Brill-Rodopi, Leiden and Boston, 2015, pp. 37–56. See also Erin Manning, 'Dress Becomes Body: Fashioning the Force of Form', *Funambulist Papers 51*, <<http://thefunambulist.net/2014/03/13/the-funambulist-papers-51-dress-becomes-body-fashioning-the-force-of-form-by-erin-manning/>> and Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2014, pp. 35–54.

⁵⁰ Cf. Barad's *Meeting the Universe*, which emphasises knowledge-production as an onto-epistemological process.

⁵¹ 'The follower is no longer simply following but emanating a movement of her own that calls for engagement, creativity, joy'. Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006, pp. 88–9.

⁵² Simon O'Sullivan's term 'participant-with' comes close to the formulation of a researcher as a follower: 'We as participants with art are involved in a dance with art, a dance in which ... the molecular is opened up, the aesthetic is activated, and art does what is its chief modus operandi. It transforms, if only for a moment, our sense of "ourselves" and our experience of our world.' O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, p. 50.

⁵³ See Coole and Frost, 'Introducing New Materialisms', p. 8; Kontturi, *Following the Flows*; Milla Tiainen, 'Revisiting the Voice in Media and as Medium: New Materialist Propositions', *Necsus – European Journal of Media Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2013; see also Massumi, 'Prelude', p. xiv–xv. The emphasis on concept-creation links new materialist methods to such ethnographic writing that fashions new concepts based on fieldwork. In a new materialist concept-creation the interest, however, lies specifically in an effort to grasp the material world in its ever-changing subtle becoming.

⁵⁴ Dressing is a concept that Erin Manning uses in her article 'Dress Becomes Body'.

⁵⁵ Luciana Parisi, 'For a Schizogenesis of Sexual Difference', *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2004, pp. 67–93.

⁵⁶ Brian Massumi, 'Of Microperception and Micropolitics: An Interview with Brian Massumi, 15 August 2008', *Inflexions: A Journal for Research-Creation*, vol. 3, 2009, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Erin Manning and Brian Massumi passingly evoke the notion of middling or 'to middle' in several of their texts regarding perceptual experience and research and knowledge making practices while not elaborating its implications at length. See, for example, Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, p. 5; Erin Manning, 'Against Method', in Phillip Vannini (ed.), *Non-Representational Methodologies: Re-Envisioning Research*, Routledge, New York and London, 2015. For 'the middle' as a concept denoting both the indispensability of transition and the assemblage conditions of phenomena in relation to opera and performance studies and the musical practices of 'classical' singers, see Milla Tiainen, *Becoming-Singer: Cartographies of Singing, Music-Making and Opera*, University of Turku, Turku, 2012, pp. 40–1.

⁵⁹ Nicola Dibben, 'Visualising the App Album with Björk's *Biophilia*', in Carol Vernallis, Amy Herzog and John Richardson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 687.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 699.

⁶¹ Massumi, 'Of Microperception and Micropolitics', p. 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*, pp. 4, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–9.

⁶⁵ Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, p. 4.

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