Björk and Michel Gondry's Networked Authorship:

The Music Video as a Mode of Post-Cinematic Practice and the Post-Colonial Subject as Minor Author.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis theorizes the 1990s music videos by Icelandic performer Björk and French director Michel Gondry as examples of post-cinematic practices contingent on a non-hierarchical distribution of authorial agency and intention. Using the rubrics of minor literature and minor cinema as defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, this thesis asks: How can we desubjectify the aesthetic contributions which constitute the music video as a heterogeneous media form to reflect the collaborative creative processes associated with a post-cinematic condition? How can a collaborative and networked understanding of authorship in the music video still acknowledge the contributions that minor subjects make to mainstream media forms through their political positioning? Breaking with the narrative and representational habits of classical cinema, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR (1993), ARMY OF ME (1995), ISOBEL (1995), BACHELORETTE (1997), AND JÓGA (1997) appropriate techniques from the avant-garde and reflect the non-linear structuring of database aesthetics. From this perspective, rather than focusing on a singular author as the definitive source of creative agency, this study will theorize authorship as a recursive, networked process of assemblage involving various elements of the music video (e.g., songs, audiovisual images, performances). As signifiers for the contribution of singers, filmmakers, producers, and actors, these compositional fragments consequently dictate the autopoetic structuring of the music video as a post-cinematic object. Accounting for the positioning of Björk as a post-colonial subject, this thesis will conclude by showing how Iceland, a nation often perceived as peripheral to Europe, consistently informs the representation of nature and technology in the artist's audiovisual work. Through strategies of cultural hybridization, Björk reconciles the dichotomies between urban and rural, as well as local and global elements that underscore her oeuvre.

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Introduction

"*The world as a work of art that gives birth to itseIf.*"
Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

In an early YouTube video uploaded in 2007, the Icelandic musician, performer, and artist Björk fades on-screen to the sound of cheering fans. With a late twentieth century television box in front of her, she talks about all the weird situations into which television has put her, as she moves onto dismantling the set. Removing its case, Björk points at the television's inner circuits, wires and boards, saying that they resemble a little model of a city, and explains how, through powerful electrons, the televisual image comes to be.[2] In the video, Björk goes on to recount how, after listening to an Icelandic poet's story, television begun to scare her. The poet's story, warning her about the hypnotic power of the medium, provoked a real phobia in Björk, which gave her migraines whenever she tried to watch television.[3] Eventually, her fears dissipated after she read how television functions as a technology and learned to differentiate between television as a form of communication, and television as a "brainwashing" medium for the masses. Contemptuously, she ends the segment noting that "you shouldn't let poets lie to you."[4] With over two million views, this uncredited clip from *Live Zabor* (1989) has probably been watched by more people online than via its original source, a VHS tape of a live performance by Björk's 1980s post-punk pop band, The Sugarcubes, which was later re-released in 2004 as a DVD.[5] This clip is worth noting, as it grazes upon the contours of this thesis's discursive concerns. Featuring the Icelandic artist and performer, whose music videos serve as case studies in the chapters to follow, the clip signals to the seemingly superficial event of re-issuing audiovisual content through new media platforms

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[1] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* 419.
[2] "Björk Talking about Her TV."
[3] Félix Guattari argues that in a post-media era '[t]he element of suggestion, even hypnotism, in the present relation to television will vanish. From that moment on, we can hope for a transformation of mass-media power that will overcome contemporary subjectivity, and for the beginning of a post-media era of collective-individual reappropriation and an interactive use of machines of information, communication, intelligence, art and culture." "Towards a Post-Media Era," 27.
[4] "Björk Talking about Her TV." (03:28- 03:30)
[5] "The Sugarcubes - Live Zabor."

– from videotape to DVD and finally to YouTube – as representative of what scholars have defined as the post-cinematic condition within which this thesis situates its object of study.

Using Björk's collaborations with French music video director, documentarian, musician, and cineaste Michel Gondry, this thesis considers the music video in terms of an expansion of the cinematic canon, not only as an aesthetically forward genre, but also, in this specific case, as a politically engaged practice. This approach accounts for the concern in post-cinematic discourse with audiovisual and moving image practices previously not deemed worthwhile of serious consideration. As Mathias Bonde Korsgaard points out, in spite of the music-video having become one "of the most visible and important forms of online media," academic research on it "has yet to catch up with the consequences of this transition, in terms of [its] distribution, reception, and production."[6] In the latter sense, through their hybridized and collective approach to the music video practice, Björk and Michel Gondry have influenced cinematic culture in ways that have not been acknowledged, while also anticipating non-medium specific, non-linear, and non-narrative forms of expression within post-cinema. Contingent on notions of collective authorship, this thesis provides a commentary on auteur theories from the viewpoint of post-cinematic practices by considering how networked authorship may be conceptualized through the music video and, specifically, as a performative interaction between the visual and musical elements which compose it.

As a performer, the presence of Björk in post-cinematic circuits, sites, and screens as a global pop star renders her work a privileged vector that enables the conceptualization of such authorship modalities in contemporary networked societies. Drawing on deterritorializing theories of narrative and authorial processes, as well as Björk's collaborative music video work with Michel Gondry, the final part of this study shifts the focus of this thesis to issues of post-colonial subjectivity. This subjectivity as an Other has informed the aesthetic ethos of the artist's work, as well as Björk's public persona throughout her career. From this perspective, the conclusive argument of this thesis is that Björk herself is not only as a post-cinematic author, but also a minor one. I conceive this term from the concept of minor authorship from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's writings about minor literature, as expressed in their *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.[7] For Deleuze and Guattari "a minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that

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[6] Mathias Bonde Korsgaard, *Music Video After MTV*, 3.
[7] *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

which a minority constructs within a major language."[8] This theoretical framework allows me to examine authorship in the music videos of Björk and Michel Gondry as a minor practice which appropriates the language of film as a major "language", while also foregrounding a commitment to activism and aesthetic experimentation. I consider this approach as a post-cinematic perspective it that expands the possibilities of cinematic representation and what may or may not be considered a cinematic work in a digital media landscape.

Post-cinema – best defined as an epistemological and industrial shift occurring parallel to the emergence of digital media technologies, and concurrent with new moving-image cultures – historically refers to the conceptual and material reconfiguration of cinema as both a medium and as an apparatus within new media assemblages of globalized network societies. As Shane Denson and Julia Leyda argue in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Cinema, "*post-cinema asks us to think about new media not only in terms of novelty but in terms of an ongoing, uneven, and indeterminate historical transition… actively re-shaping our inherited cultural forms, our established forms of subjectivity, and our embodied sensibilities."[9] Post-cinema, they conclude, necessitates "new theories of spectatorship, commodification, and convergence."[10] As a concept, accessibility represents one field where these theoretical concerns become material in a post-cinematic condition, with digital media networks disturbing the hegemony of top-to-bottom production, distribution, and circulation models in mass media. Contingent on such accessibility, the digital afterlife of music videos on social media databases such as YouTube, represents the medium's importance in a post-cinematic context wherein anyone can make or remix a music video and distribute it throughout the internet.

More importantly, the very history of the music video now resides on these social media databases for anyone to watch at any time, and for free. Making works from previous eras available to a whole new generation of, not only viewers, but also up-and-coming music video artists, these databases allow for new modes of collective cultural production, whether directly (through collaboration) or indirectly (through re-mixing). As Jonathan Gray points out, "the participatory and mash-up cultures, and digital multi-layered new media environments that surround us have under-

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[8] *Ibid.*, 16.
[9] Shane Denson and Julia Leyda in *Post-cinema*, 2.
[10] Shane Denson and Julia Leyda in *Post-cinema,* 4.

standably invited a boom of explorations of networked authorship and of collaborative creativity."[11] Derek Johnson places this type of new creativity within the context of participatory cultures. Johnson argues that "[c]reativity, in these models, is not located at single sites of genius or central authority, but at each node in a network."[12] This observation points to, not only to how past media works have been made increasingly accessible to contemporary producers and consumers, but also, to how past music videos go onto shape contemporary media through collective modes of cultural production. It is in this context that Björk's work – past and present – has been made available to audiences through social media, as well as to some of the most ground-breaking artists of the last decade in various fields, from music to photography to the moving image.

Performers such as Lady Gaga, FKA Twigs, and Aurora clearly fall within Björk's distinct "art-pop" aesthetic genealogy, and her work with Venezuelan-born Arca (named Artist of the Decade by VICE magazine), is significant. Together, they co-produced Björk's *Vulnicura* and *Utopia* in 2015 and 2017, respectively.[13] The music video and its cultural influence, through the work Björk, will be conceptualized as post-cinematic in three ways: 1) they are defined by the intrinsic heterogeneity and hybridity of their composing elements, rather than by a specific material support, such as celluloid, video, or digital; 2) they have influenced both cinematic practice and theory, while remaining relatively marginal within film culture itself, and 3) they have expanded beyond their habitual site of consumption/exhibition and now occupy, not only cinemas and museums (signaling a return to the form's video-art and expanded cinema genealogies), but also social and interactive media networks.

This thesis thus theorizes post-cinematic authorship as a way to reflect on contemporary culture as well as its orientation towards interactive and collective processes of transmedia creation amongst autonomous agents. Within this discursive framework, this thesis asks: What is the role of the artist as a cultural producer at a time when such production takes place through the constructed identities, the networked subjectivities, and the "avatars" of new media platforms? Furthermore, how does this type of media-networked authorship relate to subjectivity in contemporaneity, and particularly, to those of minor authors who create from marginal subject positions? As

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[11] Jonathan Gray, "When is the Author," 93.
[12] Derek Johnson, "Participation is Magic," 142.
[13] Fallon, "Arca Is the Artist of the Decade."

a post-colonial environmental activist, Björk explores such questions through her work, often invoking the contrast between the natural and the technological, with Iceland and its nature as signifiers for cultural identity. Her collaborations with Michel Gondry signify modes of networked authorship, and the music videos that the two artists have completed together, with their rules of assemblage lying within the interactive process of their formal elements, are examples of autopoetic constructs. As previously stated, this compositional process, contingent on structural fragments, may be best defined as a recursive process of self-authoring.

Recursion as a Post-Cinematic Theoretical Framework

One of the central questions in post-cinematic discourse relates to the ontological nature of cinema, and particularly, to how digital cinema – as a post-celluloid cinematic event – problematizes Clement Greenberg's modernist ideas about the specificity-of-medium which emphasize an aesthetic medium's material support as its defining characteristic.[14] This position views the material support of a medium as determinant to define its aesthetic characteristics, and was central in André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer's writings about the ontological distinctiveness of the cinema.[15] In post-cinema, wherein media objects share not only the same material support, but also the same platforms and circuits, the attention should go less to the specificity of the medium than to the typology of media practice and their convention. Considering genre and medium as central concepts in cinematic authorship, Rosalind Krauss' use of recursion in *Voyage to the North Sea* is helpful in situating moving image and audiovisual practices such as the music video in a post-cinematic context.[16]

Krauss introduces the concept of recursion to develop an account of medium-specificity contingent on practical conventions rather than on material substrates. Beyond the essentialist approach inherited from Greenberg's modernist analysis of artistic practices, Krauss argues instead for specificity in media as "differential, self/differing, and thus as a layering of conventions never simply collapsed into the physicality of their support."[17] Although Krauss opts to keep a loose notion of medium as a matter of cultural prevalence, she notes that the term's modernist baggage

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[14] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 5-10.
[15] Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*
[16] Rosalind Krauss, *Voyage to the North Sea*.
[17] *Ibid.,* 53.

renders it "too contaminated, too ideologically, too dogmatically, too discursively loaded."[18] By invoking "the relationship between a technical (or material) support and the conventions with which a particular genre operates or articulates or works on that support," Krauss emphasizes the "layered, complex relationship" that Greenberg's approach tends to ignore; "that [which] we could call a recursive structure." In this structure, it is the elements themselves which "produce the rules that generate the structure itself… [T]his recursive structure is something made, rather than something given."[19] In this sense, recursion is a central concept to the framing of this thesis in post-cinematic culture.

According to Sammie Bae, in "math, linguistics, and art, recursion refers to the occurrence of a thing defined in terms of itself."[20] The utility of a recursive approach in the formal analysis of post-cinematic objects – particularly the music video – is that by breaking down objects into smaller, more manageable units for analysis, one may better understand how such objects are assembled. This follows recursion as a concept in computer science wherein a function continually refers back to itself and its base-case through a process of fragmentation of smaller equations until the solution to the more complex equation is attained. The assemblage of post-cinematic objects, as recursively contingent on their intrinsic functional rules, is therefore dependent on the specific base from which such objects are built, such as generic or medial conventions. The term recursion is therefore particularly useful in analyzing and evaluating the music video as formally composed by multiple aesthetic elements, wherein the song serves as its recursive base-case, insofar as the video serves to highlight its narrative and conceptual elements.
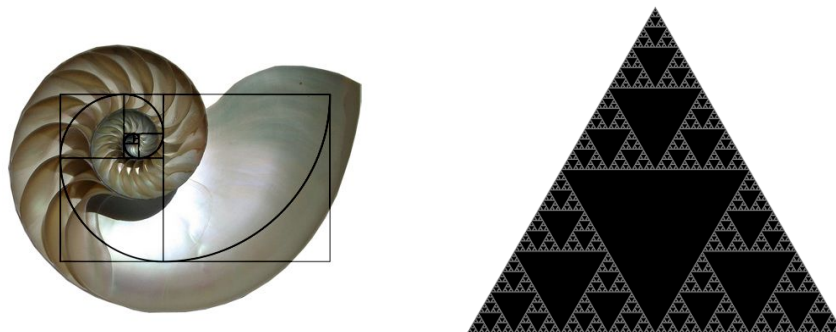
*Figure 0.2:**Visual Recursive Patterns.** Nautilus shells, the Golden Ratio (Phi (φ)), and the Sierpinski triangle are representations of the inductive logic of recursion in nature and geometry. Chasinga and Wikimedia Commons*

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[18] *Ibid.,* 5.

[19] *Ibid.,* 5-7

[20] Bae, "Recursion," 99.

Divided into units, as in a recursive algorithm, the formal elements of the music video — which include, among other, the song, the performer, and the video's diegesis — become dyadic. For example, the song in a music video — as a musical composition paired to lyrics — becomes its music-lyrics dyad when recursively fragmented for analytical purposes. The performer — who embodies her onscreen and extra-textual persona through her music video performance — becomes the persona-performance dyad. And the diegesis — composed by a variety of elements at the sound and image level of the music video — becomes the image-sound dyad. With each element functioning according to the conventions of their respective medium (as song, performance, or cinema), while contributing to the multimedia assemblage of the music video, these dyads collaborate in an authoring process that is both individual and collective. The dyadic fragmentation of compositional elements also aims to conceptually account for the material contributions of all labour to the production of a music video, both "above" and "below-the-line."[21] John T. Caldwell has observed that below-the-line "craftspeople" are considered to be non-authorial contributors in spite of necessarily "generating textual and stylistic components" through their work.[22] From the viewpoint of creative agency, recursion therefore entails acknowledging how the collaborative nature of the music video informs its physical production, its conceptual meaning, and ultimately, how it is interpreted by audiences and critics.

Interpretation by audiences can also be understood as part of the authorial process since cognitive research suggests "that we cannot simultaneously track every medium of a multimedia object."[23] In the context of the music video as a heterogenous, multimedia form, this means that a music video is perceived as subjectively different with each and every subsequent interaction. That is, the music video is cognitively "re-authored" with every viewing, even after repeated screenings, since any one viewer can only engage with so many of the music video's compositional elements, or media, at the same time. Said viewer will sometimes focus on certain aspects of the song, other times on the nuances of the performance, and other times, on the diegetic elements which compose the *mise-en-scène*. Not limited to the production phase, the authorial process therefore extends to the reception stage, with viewers serving as *a posterori* authors of the music video over the course

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[21] "'Below-the-line' ("BTL") tends to refer to all of the workers involved in the 'physical production' of unionized feature film and film television, who work at fixed hourly rates subordinate to above-the-line ("ATL") 'talent' and management." Caldwell, "Authorship Below-the-Line," 351.
[22] *Ibid.,* 351.
[23] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 14.

of the circulation process. It is in such a sense that production and reception may be said to overlap as the ouroboric ends of authorship; on one end, by the material labour by those who produce it, and on the other, by the cognitive labour of those who consume it.

As post-cinematic entities, music videos are in this sense, as Roger Beebe and Jason Middleton contend, "generally fragmentary and incomplete narrative structures [which] compel the viewer toward a greater interaction with the text, filling in the gaps him or herself."[24] As such, the notion of recursive composition in the music video that I formulate above accounts for a non-hierarchical, collective, and ever-continuous authorial process, with viewers as agents of, not only interpretation, but of creation on cognitive and affective levels. "There is no such thing as a text that simply *is*, therefore; there are only texts that *become* and that will continue to become," Jonathan Gray remarks.[25] Framed within the context of postmodern subjectivity, wherein performance is constitutive of identity, Gray continues, "the text will always continue to become… like people, texts are intrinsically social entities, and hence their meanings and impact are social and cultural, *and socially and culturally established.*"[26] From inception to reception, the music video functions as a networked-subject, composed by the collective performance of manifold autonomous agents, including the viewer in circulation. Ultimately, for Gray, "[n]o text has a single author, and any theory of authorship that does not wish to trip over its own shoelaces must first come to terms with the profound multiplication of authorship."[27] From this viewpoint, the heterogeneous composition of the music video may be considered as an affective assemblage, acquiring multiple meanings at each subsequent iteration, with each viewer completing the authorship process. Even in repetition, there is difference.

Post-Cinema and Björk-Gondry's Networked Authorship

There are at least three distinct, though not mutually exclusive, conceptualizations of the post-cinematic condition. The first one is an ontological definition that relates to cinema's historical specificity as a medium and its material/indexical relation to a "pro-filmic" reality. The second

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[24] Middleton & Beebe, *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones*, 2.
[25] Gray, "When is the Author," 94.
[26] *Ibid.,* 94-95.
[27] *Ibid.,* 92.

one is an aesthetic understanding of what may and may not be considered as properly cinematic.[28] The third one directly concerns the cinematic apparatus and the filmic experience.[29] As Lisa Åkervall notes in her overview of post-cinematic literature published up until 2018, the cinema has faced "a transformation so sweeping as to invite questions about whether it exists in the same way it did decades ago, or if, instead, it has ceded its cultural priority to new configurations of platforms, modes of exhibition and practices."[30]

The "post" prefix in post-cinema signals a historical shift; a new stage in audiovisual and moving-image production, distribution, and exhibition. "Post" does not indicate a clean break, but rather a reconfiguration of cinematic practices and theories, what Hardt defines as "a partial rupture, preserving continuity."[31] As such, post-cinema signifies both a succession and a new direction in both film theory and practice. As a commodity, for example, mainstream cinema is now widely understood to be primarily a digital endeavour, with pre-production, production, and post-production increasingly overlapped into one another. As Steven Shaviro points out in *Digital Music Videos*, "the chief characteristic of recent digital audiovisual work is that it blurs the line between production and postproduction."[32] Moreover, the hyper-plasticity and dominance of computer-generated images at every such stage, has granted filmmakers an unprecedented painterly control over the cinematic frame.[33]

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[28] In 2019, there was much discussion in film cultural circles around this subject, with director Martin Scorsese (who is a public film intellectual in his own right) noting that the Marvel movie franchise was not cinema. This statement was made all the more paradoxical considering that it came in the wake of his film *The Irishman,* which had a notoriously short theatre release window in order to qualify for awards-seasons before streaming on Netflix.

[29] "The triad of canon, index and dispositif that defined 'cinema' as an object of study proved to be prone to accidents and episodes of instability. The transition to digital photography in the 1990s threw the index in crisis, the development of digital networks and platforms ended the privilege of the dispositif of cinema over other modes of circulation, and new modes of digital access and the discovery of new fields of research such as ephemeral and orphan films subverted the canon." DeRosa, "Post-what? Post-when? A Conversation on the 'Posts'of Post-media and Post-cinema."14.

[30] Åkervall, "Reviews," 132-133.

[31] Hardt, *An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, 52.

[32] Shaviro, *Digital Music Videos*, 10.

[33] In "What is Digital Cinema" Lev Manovich argues that digital cinema, as contingent on computer animation, "is no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting," 175.

In practice, however, the financial cost of hyperrealist computer generated imagery (CGI) means that it is conglomerate media which retains true authorial agency over the yearly batch of transmedia science-fiction and fantasy franchises. Disney, for example, was responsible for 40% of the United States' 2019 box-office revenue through their transmedial franchises which include both the Marvel and Star Wars Cinematic universes.[34] Regardless of digital cinema's place in the "marketplace," this ability to author any and all realities with perfect verisimilitude has borne on the study of cinema as a medium whose historical specificity had previously lain in its indexical relationship to reality. With digital cinema increasingly challenging the representational "truth claim" of cinema's photochemical, material base during the 1990s, a perceived ontological rupture in the medium ignited discussions surrounding cinema's "death." In "Lives of Cinema: Against its Death," Niels Niessen points out that Lev Manovich's notion of cinema as essentially indexical has been accepted and developed upon by other film scholars, such as, for instance, Mary Ann Doane and Laura Mulvey.[35]

Paradoxically, the influence of the cinema as both an aesthetic model and an object in the gallery and the museum only spread as the new century carried on, with the rise of artists' films as a particularly significant example. Part of a cinematic turn in contemporary art production, these artworks, as Tanya Leighton contends in her book *Art and the Moving Image*, "have quantitatively surpassed traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture – a situation that would have been unimaginable forty years ago."[36] The resurgence of the moving image as institutional art has in part been the result of the continuing democratization of the cinematic image through increasingly less expensive digital cameras and rendering software.[37] New technologies, able to simulate celluloid's affective texture, were complemented at the turn of the century by digital projectors and flat screens, which simulated the scale and framing of the white-cube mural and canvas without compromising image resolution. This 'cinematisation' of the visual arts,[38] their sites of exhibition,

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[34] Whitten, "Disney accounted for nearly 40% of the 2019 US box office."
[35] Niessen, "Lives of Cinema: Against its Death," 307.
[36] Leighton, *Art and the Moving Image*, 7
[37] The advent of NLE, or non-linear editing, software such as Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere, coupled with digital video cameras able to shoot at 24 frames per second and with interchangeable lenses at the turn of the century were central in this regard.
[38] Leighton, *Art and the Moving Image*, 28

and of *haute culture tout court*, sparked anxieties in cultural gatekeepers for whom cinema's mil-
lennial death had been greatly exaggerated.[39] In this sense, the post-cinematic condition has in-
creasingly been defined by a situational shift in production and exhibition paradigms.

This spatial and situational shift has affected, not only the privileged sites of the museum
and the cinema, but also all types of media and screens on which moving images circulate, from
smartphones, to computers, to VR headsets. During the last decade, the music videos by Björk and
her collaborators have emphasized the ability of the form to infiltrate sites otherwise meant to
merely entertain or advertise. This was the case with Björk and Andrew Thomas Huang's 2015
MUTUAL CORE exhibition in Times Square, which deterritorialized (if only temporarily) the
ubiquitous ad-screen at the epicenter of the society of the spectacle in New York City.[40] Deterri-
torialization, in general, means the breaking of habitual conventions in a language – or for the
purpose of this thesis, an aesthetic practice. Deterritorialization may also refer to the separation of
social relations from a specific location by an extraneous force. In the context of the exhibition of
MUTUAL CORE in Times Square, deterritorialization means that the artwork, by not conforming
to the conventions of the site as one through which the flows of capital are connected through
spectacle, disrupted the coding of the Manhattan landmark. As such, MUTUAL CORE stripped
away the organizing flow of capital and the inherently value system of the site by shifting its pur-
pose from serving as a monument to capitalist excess to one of aesthetic contemplation.

By breaking with the conventional use of the spectacular screens that populate Times
Square, as a piece of music video art, MUTUAL CORE is an adequate example of post-cinema
both subverting and inhabiting normative production, distribution, and circulation models for its
own purposes. Åkervall, in "Networked selves: Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch's Postcinematic
Aesthetics," argues against Hal Foster's notion of a postcritical condition – wherein critique, crit-
ical theory, and critical art have declined in contemporaneity.[41] Instead, she proposes that "critique
and creation alike transform and transgress one another's borders and become immanent to their
mutual redevelopment and repurposing."[42] Similarly, the concept of post-cinema, as presented in
this thesis, is more specific than a discourse or a re-evaluation of cinema in an age of digital media.

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[39] Leighton, *Art and the Moving Image*, 32
[40] In *Society of the Spectacle* Guy Debord famously claims that '[t]he spectacle is capital to such
a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image."
[41] Foster, "Post-critical," 3–8.
[42] Åkervall, "Networked selves: Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch's Postcinematic Aesthetics," 40.

Figure 0.2: Times Square Screening of MUTUAL CORE.

Instead, this thesis considers how certain post-cinematic practices, such as the music videos by Björk and Gondry, can serve as critique for dominant models of digital cinematic practice, even if they circulate through the same circuits. As a mode of cinematic practice, post-cinema is formally and conceptually distinct from other narrative-centered modes of digital cinema. Particularly, from that of conglomerate transmedia narration as defined by Henry Jenkins.[43] Within this context, the pivotal role that capitalism, whether neoliberal or algorithmic, has played in the "emergence of a different media regime, and indeed of a different mode of production," as Steven

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[43] Transmedia, Henry Jenkins notes, is "entertainment for the age of media convergence, integrating multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium," *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, 95.

Shaviro notes, cannot be underestimated.[44] As "*machines for generating affect*, and for capitalizing upon, or extracting value from, this affect," music videos, rather than functioning as ideological superstructures, "live at the very heart of social production, circulation, and distribution. They generate subjectivity."[45] More concerned with embodying contemporaneity than representing it through narrative, post-cinematic aesthetics may be considered as minor relative to conglomerate transmedia practices. Often working against this narrative impulse, the music video is post-cinematic well before the digital modes of production and distribution which have come to define the concept of post-cinema in contemporaneity.

Carol Vernallis, in her book *Experiencing Music Video* (2004), departs from previous approaches to the study of the music video which had hitherto framed it as symptomatic of postmodernist aesthetic excess at best, or as a mere by-product in the continuing commercialization of music, at worst. In the former sense, E. Ann Kaplan's *Rocking Around The Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism and Consumer Culture* analyses the music video in the context of postmodernism and of MTV as "one continuous ad."[46] On the other hand, in "Video Pop: Picking up the Pieces," Simon Frith rejects the use of postmodernism to sacralize music videos as art, emphasizing instead their role in the commercialization of music.[47] Vernallis' text is useful as it is one of the first ones to treat the music video "as a distinct genre, one different from its predecessors – film, television, photography – a medium with its own ways of organizing materials, exploring themes, and dealing with time."[48] As such, she delineates music video's audiovisual tactics and strategies (its "ebb and flow") from their formal composition, and its cultural and cinematic sig-

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[44] Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect,* 2.
[45] *Ibid.,* 3.
[46] Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism and Consumer Culture,* 12.
[47] Frith, "Video Pop: Picking up the Pieces," 96-97.
[48] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, X.

nificance from how its constituting elements are assembled. As a continuing site for the experimentation, development, and invention of new audiovisual technologies[49] before they are narrativized,[50] music video aesthetics, in the tradition of previous cinematic avant-gardes, often anticipate or directly influence, later trends in narrative cinema, and consequently, on visual culture overall.[51] This is not to say that cinema has itself been devoid of music video-like aesthetics, even in the absence of sound. In fact, many modern music videos use techniques developed by modernist filmmakers in the 1920s, 40s, and 60s. Within the context of documentary filmmaking, D.A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back* (1967) is also an important signpost, and perhaps an anticipation of the music video as a counter-cultural media practice.

In *Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media*, Gina Arnold et al. trace the genealogy of the music video and its aesthetics and observes how "the synaesthetic combination of music and moving images has a considerably longer and more diverse history than that of music television, and certainly of MTV."[52] The authors also emphasize music video's relocation from the television to the internet, as well as to the discursive shift which followed in how the music video is studied. Though significant in the theorization of the music video as a medium, they note that "the evolution from Vernallis's unashamed celebration of music video aesthetics as a distinct format a decade earlier… is clear in *Unruly Media*'s discussion of the music video in the context of the 'mixing board aesthetic' of YouTube clips and new digital cinema which for her have become inseparable from music video itself."[53] In this sense, the music video has been central to the expansion of moving image aesthetic beyond canonical models of cinematic practice.

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[49] Lev Manovich observes in *What is Digital Cinema?* that "the genre of music video has been a laboratory for exploring numerous new possibilities of manipulating photographic images made possible by computers… [I]t is a living and constantly expanding textbook for digital cinema," 184.

[50] Paul Sellors notes that for Tom Gunning, 'narrativisation,' via Stephen Heath, "names the process of directing the spectator's attention to significant aspects of the images, thereby enabling interpretation, and effectively transforming the showing of images to the telling of a story via these images," *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths*, 63.

[51] Bullet-time, a representational technique popularized by the 1999 sci-fi *The Matrix*, was in fact invented by Michel Gondry for Björk's ARMY OF ME, and further developed for the Rolling Stones' music video LIKE A ROLLING STONE.

[52] Gina Arnold, Daniel Cookney, Kirsty Fairclough, and Michael Goddard, *Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media*, 1.

[53] *Ibid.*, 2.

Methodology

This thesis adopts a methodology as heterogeneous as the formal composition of the music video and the audiovisual oeuvre of Björk in general. From a film studies perspective, it is indebted to the decades-long discourse surrounding cinematic authorial issues, first addressed through the figure of the film *auteur* as presented by the *Cahiers du cinéma* editorial programme in the 1950s.[54] Central to this framing were the conventions that audiences expected from a specific genre, and how cinematic auteurs subverted and/or adhered to those generic conventions throughout their career. Through notions of a consistent personal style as a signifier for cinematic authorship, this approach implicitly considered the audience as a part of auteurism's theoretical "apparatus." Given the practice's short-form and differing musical genres, stylistic continuity in music video authorship is harder to attain than in cinematic oeuvres. Hence, towards the authorial concern of this thesis, and as methodological framework, an emphasis will be placed on the music video collaborations of Björk with French director, musician, and audiovisual artist Michel Gondry during the 1990s.

Gondry is a central figure from which to explore the ever-changing music video style of Björk, having worked on eight of her fifty-five music videos. More importantly, these music videos defined the artist's pop-persona and style, with Gondry having directed the leading videos for her first three albums in the 1990s. These videos are important as they are the closest equivalent to the literary legacy of authorship in the context of film studies. As Björk has stated, on most of her albums "there has been one mythical song, [a] kinda literature-based thing… For me there is continuity from 'Human Behaviour'– 'Isobel'– 'Bachelorette'… it is slightly autobiographical but times one hundred. A heightened mythical state." This *mythography*, most of which was also written collaboratively with Icelandic poet Sjón, extends to 2004's "Oceania" and 2008's "Wanderlust" However, we will focus only on those directed by Gondry; HUMAN BEHAVIOUR from 1993's *Debut,* ISOBEL from 1995's *Post*, and BACHELORETTE from 1997's *Homogenic*. Here a brief point should be made to clarify the naming conventions that this thesis adopts. In an effort for discursive clarity, and to differentiate between cultural products, if one were to refer, for example, to *American Idiot*, the album by Green Day, it would be differentiated in italics from their

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[54] Particularly significant in this regard were the articles "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" by François Truffaut published in 1954, and "De la Politique des Auteurs" by André Bazin published in 1957.

song "American Idiot" in quotation marks, and from their music video AMERICAN IDIOT in capital letters.[55] Although there are no eponymous albums in any of Björk's songs throughout the thesis, there are instances when referring to the song and the video as separate products through this convention makes their formal analysis clearer.

Though narrative and narration are explicitly addressed in the first chapter, this thesis moves beyond this level of analysis, focusing instead on the non-representational and affective qualities of the music video as signifiers for minor cinematic authorship and subjectivity. This will be especially the case in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. In conceptualizing Björk as a minor post-cinematic author, I will adopt a formal analysis focused less on the narrative elements of Björk and Gondry's music videos, than on the interaction among musical, performing, and audiovisual components in them as instances of recursive composition, collaborative practice, and minor authorship. Following recursive analysis as a model, my textual reading will consider distinctive aspects of these music videos, comparing and contrasting their specific modes of production to other found within various media forms, within cinematic and post-cinematic contexts. As explained before, one of my main theoretical reference to address creative agency in these works are Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theories of minor literature and post-subjective identity[56]

To balance this theoretical approach, an ethnography of production via digital video databases (such as YouTube and DailyMotion), will provide information which formal analysis and hermeneutics alone cannot provide. Based on film and media industry studies methodologies, this approach will provide empirical data — through recorded production histories, testimonies, and documents — as evidence for creative contributions beyond those of Björk and Gondry. This information, the closest one may come to grounded research 20 years after the videos' production, will support the argument for music video authorship as collectively recursive, and as dependent on collaboration at every level of media production. Since production histories now reside in digital video archives as behind the scenes footage, biographical documentaries, and other paratexts related to music videos, a deep exploration of databases such as YouTube will complement the

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[55] This naming convention follows that of Andrew Goodwin in *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture*.

[56] In a minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari claim, there are no unique subjects; no individual geniuses or authors, "there are only collective assemblages of enunciation," *Kafka*, 18.

aforementioned formal and theoretical methodologies. Through industrial and institutional histories that draws upon empirical data, this approach aims to avoid projecting traces of personal expression which were beyond the intention of the author, and therefore circumvent fallacies regarding intention as such.

By focusing instead on how material circumstances define what ultimately ends up on the screen, this methodology aims to further emphasize the collective nature of music video production and the contributions of all labour; from above-the-line talent (such as Björk and Gondry), to below-the-line craftspeople (such as make-up artists, costume designers and cinematographers, as well as recording engineers, producers, and lyrical composers). Through this film and media industry studies approach, one can better understand not only how the music video defines the cultural zeitgeist, but also how cultures in media and music video production define formal and technical choices which are often the focus of interpretive and analytic methodologies. As Gray and Johnson argue "by considering authorship as culture – and thereby, as something we can both construct and deconstruct… we are able to do more than legitimate creative genius… [and instead] conduct grounded research into how authorship is rendered visible and invisible."[57]

Chapter Structure

Divided into three chapters, this thesis reflects the tripartite framework of minor literature as identified by Deleuze and Guattari; its deterritorialization of language, its collective assemblage of enunciation, and the connecting of the individual author to a political immediacy.[58] Through a formal analysis, Chapter 1 considers how Björk and Michel Gondry break with both cinematic and music video narrative conventions through the use of cyclical and recursive narration, surrealist tactics, and the extension of one storyline – the Isobel myth – across three music videos: HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, ISOBEL, and BACHELORETTE. Though specific to these three music-videos, the chapter's central argument may be applied to music-video in itself as a deterritorializing mode of cinematic practice. That is to say that most, if not all, music-videos inherently deterritorialize conventional cinematic form by the very constitution of their formal elements, in which their assemblage serve a specific song and performer rather than a narrative, conceptual, and/or sociopolitical concern.

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[57] Gray and Johnson, "Introduction," *A Companion to Media Authorship*, 5.
[58] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 18.

Focusing more on the theoretical implications of collaboration, Chapter 2 considers the music video as a collective subject – a hyperbeing – whose performing body is an assemblage of its constitutive elements. As such, this post-cinematic body can be said to be "differently regulated by the codes of both musical and visual representation… format and genre."[59] Informed by post-structuralist theories of subjectivity as performance, this theoretical chapter frames Björk and Michel Gondry's music videos as networked subjects composed by the performance of its three defining elements; its song, performer and images. When broken down into dyads, these formal elements function recursively as an "autopoetic outcome of performative action and interactions, inscribed in, on, and by the body including in its language-performances."[60] As such, if Chapter 1 is concerned with music video practice as a whole, Chapter 2 is more concerned with Björk and Michel Gondry's collaborative practice as a paragon of post-cinematic modes of networked authorship.

Finally, Chapter 3 will take the previous chapters' considerations to investigate how Björk's minor subjectivity – as an environmentalist Icelandic female artist – informs her aesthetic choices, and how the three tenets of minor authorship, as defined throughout the thesis – the deterritorialization of form, collective enunciation, and political immediacy – converge in the music video JÓGA. This video is significant, as it serves as an audiovisual ode to the natural grandiosity of Iceland. In the video, Björk's subjectivity is sublimated into the volcanoes and shifting tectonic plates which make up the landscape of the youngest geological landmass on Earth. Moreover, the video represents the apotheosis of experimental techniques by Michel Gondry by integrating analogue audiovisual trickery – continuing the director's fascination with avant-garde aesthetics – with digital editing software to create new representational and conceptual vistas.

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[59] Dickinson, "Music Video and Synaesthetic Possibility," 16.
[60] Hartley, "Authorship and the Narrative of the Self," 43.

Chapter 1.

Narrative Deterritorialization and Recursion in the *Isobel* Saga

In 1993, Andrew Sarris, one of the earliest proponents of the *auteur* concept in America, reflected amongst other filmmakers, scholars, and critics, that "in the ultimate vindication" of auteurism, "MTV ha[d] begun including the name of the director at the beginning and end of every music video."[61] Video had indeed killed the radio star, but for Sarris, it had also seemingly resurrected the auteur. Coincidentally, that year also saw a "rebranding" of MTV's aesthetic in light of alternative music's emergence, and of the slew of music videos by daring new directors which accompanied it. Over the course of the decade, these music video auteurs, having grown up watching music videos, would go on to elevate the audiovisual form to a practice beyond its perceived crass commercialism, and help in validating the music video as a proper medium for artistic expression, rather than as a mere symptom of pop culture excess. The visual style of Michel Gondry in particular, signaled to music video's audiovisual genealogy, often adapting and updating techniques from silent and experimental cinema, stop animation, and nature documentaries.

Figure 3.1: ***Music Video Directors Credited.*** *Screencaps from YouTube uploads of the 1992 and 1993 VMAs show the inclusion of the director's name following the rise of "Alternative" Culture as embodied by Nirvana and their "Best New Artist" nomination in 1992 and their "Best Alternative Video" nomination in 1993*

Though Björk had been a star in her native Iceland since the release of her self-titled album, released when she was 11-years old, it was her and Michel Gondry's first collaboration, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, which introduced them both to international popular culture at large in 1993. After their debut amidst the "alternative" make-over of MTV, the duo would go on to collaborate on the first videos for Björk's albums throughout the 1990s. Along with the album covers, these videos

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[61] Grimes, "The Auteur Theory of Film: Holy or Just Full of Holes?"

set the tone for how each album was to be subsequently read, with each one presenting Björk as a distinct character as their protagonist. ARMY OF ME and ISOBEL for *Post*; JÓGA and BACHE-LORETTE, for *Homogenic* are what in the industry are knowns as a "twofer," which is when "a director receives a sum to direct two videos, with the permission to allocate the money where she chooses."[62] This accounts for the aesthetic differences between videos in the *Isobel* trilogy. Furthermore, in a 2008 interview, Björk elaborated on her mythical persona, Isobel, noting that in most of her albums "there has been one mythical song… For me there is continuity from 'Human Behaviour' — 'Isobel' — 'Bachelorette' — 'Oceania' — 'Wanderlust.' I guess it is slightly autobiographical but times one hundred. A heightened mythical state."[63] As the protagonist in Björk's *automythography* (an "Other I"), and consequently, in Björk-Gondry's music video trilogy, the character of Isobel navigates the tensions between instinct and reason as embodied by nature and modernity; the rural and the urban.

This chapter frames the music video from the perspective of post-cinema as a re-evaluation of the cinematic canon, that is, of what has traditionally been considered as "valuable" in film and moving image as well as in film culture, whether it be in the context of mainstream Hollywood cinema, the auteur cinemas of Europe and Asia, the political cinemas of the Global South, or experimental cinematic practices. As Miriam De Rosa suggests, this re-evaluation is achieved by "putting other configurations of the moving image" such as the music video, "on equal footing with 'cinema.'"[64] Reconsidering the place of the music video in the cinematic canon, an argument could be made that certain music videos function, not only as cinematic paratexts, but also as cinematic and post-cinematic works in-themselves. Paratexts, as Jonathan Gray explicates, include any materials that are not part of a work, but which nevertheless inform how a text is read, as they are constitutive of it. Just as album covers and music videos inform how songs are perceived, "book covers, movie posters, ads in magazines to trailers, critical reviews to alternate reality games, special edition DVD's to spinoff toys, roadside billboards to fiction and film" create layers of meaning that are not within the work itself.[65] This is frequently the case of a music video accompanying the musical soundtrack of a film composed by and/or performed by the star of the

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[62] Vernallis, *Unruly Media,* 18.

[63] Lapatine, "Björk: The Stereogum Interview."

[64] Miriam De Rosa, "Post-what? Post-when? A Conversation on the 'Posts' of Post-media and Post-cinema," 17.

[65] Gray, "When is the Author?" 102.

same film, typically creating a synergy between diegetic elements in the film and extra-diegetic elements linked to the star's public persona.

This was, for instance, the case with Björk's Oscar-nominated single 'I've Seen It All' from her album *Selmasongs.* As the soundtrack for Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2001), *Selmasongs* remediated the film's narrative onto another medium distinct from cinema, while remaining relatively autonomous as an album by Björk, the pop star. 'I've Seen It All' is worth noting here, as it featured two formally distinct music videos. The first is credited to Von Trier, who directed an excerpt from the film's musical number (including Swedish actor Peter Stormare's vocals) and was broadcast on the standard music video channels of its day such as MTV and VH1. The second video was an interactive video by Floria Sigismondi that used Thom Yorke's vocals (as originally intended by Björk) and was released exclusively online by MTV, before being erased from their server and music video history. To this day, only a screengrab remains on Björk's YouTube video channel, and it lacks its most post-cinematic, interactive elements.[66] That is, unlike the original, the video does not respond to the movements of the viewer through the mouse interface.

On the surface, the Von Trier's music video is cinematic, insofar as it is a constitutive "utterance" from a larger cinematic text, whereas Sigismondi's follows the non-linear structure and assemblage aesthetic of post-cinematic media, as it is dependent on interactivity (through a computer's interface), and subsequently, on the viewer's agency to function as intended.[67] Yet, both these texts point at the remediating potential of the music video, as a mode of both cinematic and post-cinematic practice. Von Trier's video represents classical and modernist cinematic traditions as evident by the Hollywood musical being remediated through the modernist realism of Dogme 95, the movement that the filmmaker co-founded. Sigismondi's music video, on the other hand merges a non-representational, abstract aesthetic with the interactive affordances that digital media grants viewers through the computer interfaces, such as a mouse. Through this hybridization

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[66] "Björk Webeo."

[67] As Vernallis points out, "Beyoncé's music video 'Countdown' looks like a clip on YouTube, as does Lana Del Rey's 'Video Games.' Segments from Edgar Wright's *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, Richard Kelly's *Southland Tales*, and Julie Taymor's *Across the Universe* could be placed on YouTube and inadvertently be experienced as music videos, prosumers' mashups, art students' class-projects, or trailers. So we might try to understand a media object differently now— through its length, level of gloss, platform, viewing audience, or budget. *Unruly Media*, 4-5.

of cinematic and database aesthetics, Sigismondi crafts, in 2001, an early instance of what could be called a post-cinematic aesthetic. This post-cinematic aesthetic, as Manovich explains, is "cinematographic in its appearance, digital on the level of its material, and computational (i.e. software driven) in its logic."[68] Finally, these two music videos point at different ways to conceptualize post-cinema, either as breaking with a vestigial aesthetic past (through the classical and modernist cinemas of the 20th century) or as components of a reconfigured mediascape (embodied in an early instance of the interactive digital moving image).

Figure 1.4: **Floria Sigismondi's I'VE SEEN IT ALL.** *On Björk's YouTube channel, the music video is described as an "interactive Flash video created for the 2000 MTV Awards, featuring the song 'I've Seen It All' (from album 'Selmasong', OST for the movie 'Dancer in the Dark' by Lars von Trier, also featuring Björk in the lead role). The Webeo was directed by Floria Sigismondi with help of digital designer Piotr Szyhalski. First premiered on MTV.com on September 1st 2000, then it seems to have been lost without a trace - nobody saved it. We at Björk.com dug around and got this video copy of it, 7 years later, when everyone thought it would be gone forever! Enjoy!"*

This chapter will focus on three music videos by Björk and Gondry; HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, ISOBEL, and BACHELORETTE. Following the periodization of Hollywood industrial cinema as a mode of cinematic practice meant to both entertain and be profitable, these videos may

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[68] A contemporaneous meditation on what may constitute post-cinematic aesthetics was addressed by Lev Manovich. New media, according to the author, was already cinematic because "the visual culture of a computer age is cinematographic in its appearance, digital on the level of its material, and computational (i.e. software driven) in its logic." Manovich, *Language of New Media,* 180.

be said to be classical insofar as they are categorically intended to promote a song, album, and star through the televisual apparatus (broadcast on cable music video channels such as MTV and VH1, rather than circulating through more contemporary post-cinematic circuits such as the internet, galleries and the museum). Despite their more commercial context, these three videos are nevertheless significant as they are audio-visually constructed along an avant-garde genealogy, and deterritorialize classical cinema's narrative logic through surrealist tactics (the stylistic signifier for Michel Gondry's work). Moreover, they also break with habitual music video narration by extending their narrative beyond one, or even two videos. As a post-cinematic narrative BACHELORETTE is particularly significant, as its narrative logic represents, through its *mise-en-scène*, the recursive logic of database aesthetics. More cyclically episodic than cinema's teleological, cause-and-effect linearity, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, ISOBEL, and BACHELORETTE (the first three entries in the *Isobel* saga) follow a narrative logic which renders analytic techniques for film narration inappropriate.

This is worth considering in a post-cinematic context, since the music video, as Manovich argues, is one mode amongst non-narrative cinematic practices "that are not linear narratives, that are exhibited on a television or a computer screen rather than in a movie theater – and that simultaneously give up cinematic realism."[69] One may consider Carol Vernallis' suggestion that any analysis of a classical music video's narrative dimension should be considered in light of other functions such as showcasing lyrics, music, and stars, and thus offers a useful analogy, "to imagine the various elements of music video's *mise-en-scène* as separate tracks on a recording engineer's mixing board: any element or combination of elements can be brought forward or become submerged in the mix."[70] This is appropriate, since music and lyrics, as the elemental base for a music video, often drive the narrative if one is present. As such, the music-lyrics dyad is brought to the fore, or accentuated, through music video's visual composition (its colour, microrhythms, and materiality), and the star's captured performance (whatever form this may take). These two dyads; Björk's music-lyrics and Gondry's image-sound, ultimately intersect in the video's persona-performance, with the dynamic amongst them ultimately defined by how a music video's narrative, televisual, and performance spaces are rendered through editing.

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[69] Manovich, *What is Digital Cinema*?, 184.
[70] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video,* X

Minor Authorship, Genre, and Database Aesthetics

Following the success of their pop-surrealist HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, Björk and Gondry would go on to become two of the most influential creative figures in 1990s audiovisual culture, that is, as helping to define a multimedia circuit which included broadcast media such as television and radio, as well as cinema. This influence over the better part of a decade culminated with Björk's contributions to 2000's *Dancer in the Dark*, for which she wrote the film's score and lyrics, and earned a Best Actress award at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival, as well as an Oscar nomination for the lead single, "I've Seen It All." Three years later, the release of Gondry's DVD for the *Directors Label* series solidified him as an *bona fide* auteur with a consistent, recognizable visual style, later evidenced in the feature-length films *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Science of Sleep*. This DVD series was also the industry's first serious attempt at consolidating both a music video canon and authorial pantheon by compiling the previous decade's most "visionary" video directors (with Spike Jonze having already made the feature-length film *Being John Malkovich*) into an easily accessible database format which allowed for repeated viewings and analysis of the auteurs*'* music videos.[71] This first edition of *Director's Label* DVD series narrativised a database of videos, from an array of different performers across musical genres, into the oeuvres of three singular auteurs; Chris Cunningham, Michel Gondry and Spike Jonze.

To paraphrase Sarris, the DVD collection helped define music video's auteurs at the beginning of the 21st century, and thus help see the practice's trees in its forest.[72] This approach to cinematic authorship – also used by André Bazin and François Truffaut in order to "dodge the charge of [cinema] being yet more mass culture," and thus legitimize it as an art, and subsequently its study as a discipline,[73] is one which nevertheless remains contingent on a "hegemonic, Romantic, and decidedly masculine" definition of the author.[74] Although the *Director's Label* series remains "the best on music video," Vernallis criticizes the collection for ignoring "a vast array of talent, most glaringly women and members of traditionally underrepresented groups, including

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[71] Writing before databases such as YouTube made most music videos, past and present, widely accessible, Vernallis notes on the frustrations due "music video's waning availability…The difficulties of obtaining videos flow into this book," and relies insteadn on Peter Gabriel's, Madonna's, and Prince's home-video compilations for her close readings. *Experiencing Music Video*, XV.
[72] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory," 561-563.
[73] Gray, "When is the Author," 90-91.
[74] Scott, "Dawn of the Undead Author," 457.

Floria Sigismondi, Sophie Muller, and Paul Hunter."[75] In their exclusion of such music video auteurs, the *Director's Label* DVD series exemplifies how the notion of a singular, white-male author remains as a marketing and discursive framework well into the 21st century, in spite of the "postmodernist decision that the Author is Dead and the subject along with him."[76] This continuing exclusion from cultural production canons of authors who do not occupy "upper middle class, white, male, straight, able-bodies, cisgenders, Western positions" makes Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of minor literature useful in reconfiguring authorship in the post-cinematic condition, while also allowing a discursive space for minor authors such as Björk.[77]

As a theory of authorship, the minor embodies experimental, political, and popular aesthetic tactics in order to collectively enunciate new modes of subjectivity. By subverting formal habits and linguistic conventions, a minor author is said to connect aesthetically to the political immediacies of a people "yet to come" through a personalized approach to language and/or cinematic form.[78] In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari outline how minor literatures operate within dominant languages and their respective high literary traditions. For Franz Kafka, this included both the "paper" German of bureaucratic Prague and the literary German as immortalized by Goethe. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "a minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language."[79]

Deleuze and Guattari also take a distinctively formalist approach to aesthetics wherein composition serves as the definitive criterion of artistic expression and political agency. For them, "composition is the sole definition of art. Composition is aesthetic, and what is not composed is not a work of art." [80] Furthermore, in *Kafka,* they state that "as long as the form and the deformation or expression are not considered for themselves, there can be no real way out, even at the level of content. Only expression give us the method."[81] Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature

[75] Vernallis, *Unruly Media*, 262-63.

[76] Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing*, 104-6.

[77] Kristina Busse notes that literary criticism in the 1980s and 1990s grappled with "how to combine identity politics with the theoretical insights of postmodernism…. After all, at the very moment when women and other minorities finally began to enter the canon, the concept of canonicity came under attack and the privileged position of the author got dismantled." "Return of the Author," 55.

[78] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 221

[79] Deleuze & Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 16.

[80] Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 191.

[81] Deleuze & Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 16.

is particularly useful in situating the music video's ontological constitution as a heterogeneous, post-cinematic assemblage, that is, "as an alterable complex of components that includes the spectator."[82] This ontological approach to media objects bears on the theory of the subject, which C. Paul Sellors succinctly summarizes in *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths* as "a complex area in film theory that shifted the focus of film from an object of study to a process of subject formation."[83] With the director and the spectator as subjects of "language, institutions, ideology, cinematic conventions and so forth… It makes no sense to speak of an origin or meaning because these are under constant revision.[84] In Deleuze and Guattari's use of subjectivation theory, they state that in a politicized minor literature there are no subjects, "*there are only collective assemblages of enunciation.*"[85]

Moreover, Deleuze & Guattari emphasis on popular genres as being particularly conducive for deterritorializing dominant aesthetic forms beyond literature – including representational media (like cinema) and non-representational media (like music) – is relevant, given the statuses of Björk and Gondry as a pop star and a pop auteur, respectively. For the French philosopher and psychoanalyst duo, cultural producers such as Björk and Gondry, through what "we call pop – pop music, pop philosophy, pop writing – Worterflucht…"[86] are the true minor authors. Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework will thus compliment this chapter's film-oriented analyses of Björk-Gondry's music video formal construction and its relation to post-cinematic notions of genre and authorship. For Diane Railton and Paul Watson, genre and authorship are critical the study of visual images. However, "it is not possible to simply transpose these ideas from the study of music, film, or television onto the study of music video in any straightforward manner." [87] In this sense, Björk and Gondry's music video practice may be classified as minor, relative to both mainstream cinema as well as to other, more generic music videos which may lack their experimental approach to the music video as a genre.

Composed by song, performance, and audiovisuals, the classical music video is both a cinematic genre and a heterogeneous object, which asserts the collective intention of promoting a

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[82] Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*, 10.
[83] Sellors, *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths*, 136.
[84] *Ibid.,* 136.
[85] Deleuze & Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 18.
[86] *Ibid.,* 26.
[87] Railton and Watson, *Music Video and the Politics of Representation*, 10.

product (a song), being a product (that is, a commodity in its own right), and selling *itself* as such (by producing a commodity which ultimately creates a desire-loop for repetitive consumption). Having to entice consumers into multiple viewings (often via VCR and videotape), classical music video privilege sensation over narration, desire over discourse, and transience over permanence.[88] That is, they tend to focus on spectacle, fashion, and titillating the senses, thus privileging the performer's allure and their virtuosic and/or sexualized performances. Despite classical music videos' focus on those star-personae who double as its authorial surrogates (e.g., "a Michael Jackson video," "a Nirvana video," "a Björk video"), these music videos' visual articulation, their "video" aspect – as in any other commercial film production – remains dependent on a director's technical proficiency, as well as his or her ability to represent a song and its performer(s) as desirable entities, and thus, as valuable commodities.

Formally, early music video directors thus came to rely on fragmentation and juxtaposition to not only to visualize music but also reveal the performer's body – that first site in the visual representation of music, whether through dance or instrumental performance – as "an enormous but incomplete surface."[89] This approach to framing and editing places the music videos of the 1990s on the visual cinematic genealogy of past avant-garde and experimental cinemas, but with their formal and textual parameters (such as length and tone) first and foremost defined by a commodity (the song) rather than by a specific material concern with cinematic properties.[90] This dynamic, between the director's image and the performer's music, has often been described by music video scholars as that between autonomous subjects – be they as the interactions between an architect and her client,[91] or those between "partners… in couples in therapy."[92] In the latter sense, Carol Vernallis notes that as "analysts, we might consider each spouse in return… Asking what

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[88] "To encourage repeated viewing, a video may need tantalizing imagery, or perhaps just additional imagery of another sort." Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video,* 8.

[89] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 46.

[90] Andrew Goodwin insists that to discuss the music video as "subversive" or "anti-realist" is to miss the performer's role as protagonist and narrator through music's "double address" and the "fractured" image's function as structuring musical properties. *Dancing in the Distraction Factory*, 4.

[91] "To make a video, the performer and director enter into a symbiotic relationship, one best compared to that between an architect and his or her client. One supplies the need and the money, one supplies the technical know-how, and either or both provide the germ of the idea," Saul Austerlitz, *Money for Nothing: A History of the Music Video from the Beatles to the White Stripes*, 8

[92] Vernallis, *Unruly Media,* 211.

the music and image are saying to one another, how they act as players and performers."[93] This latter notion, of music and image in a state of performance, is important to conceive of the music video as a networked subject.

From an authorial perspective, however, even in the most distributed of collaborations in the music video, and/or when a signature visual style may be clearly discerned, the focus remains on the representationally privileged performer and her the song, rather than on the director of the music video.[94] In this sense, it is the performer, rather than the director, who, quoting Michel Foucault's idea of authorship, "performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function."[95] Authorship has been an important category in film studies since the emergence of the discipline, together with genre. Genre can therefore become a useful first strategy in situating the music video within the greater canon of cinematic works in film studies. Considering how the music video, like the cinema, can be both narrative and abstract, approaching it as a genre can help in considering music video's socio-economical contexts, while accounting for those conventions that define it as a specific cinematic practice. This is particularly important as it relates to Björk and Gondry as authors. As Barry Keith Grant notes, genre "provides a frame within which auteurs can animate conventions and iconography to their own purpose… [while remaining] intimately connected to social and historical forces."[96] As a genre, the structure of a music video is not dictated by a set of narrative and visual conventions the way that a horror, or a science fiction film might be. Instead, what audiences expect from music videos vary from one to another and are more often defined by the performer and his or her musical stylings.

Music videos are therefore, first and foremost, defined by a song's non-representational qualities; its rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic patterns which, "produced before the video is conceived… [means that] the director normally designs images with the song as guide. Moreover, the video must sell the song."[97] Though the role of lyrical composition cannot be underestimated, particularly as it relates to the literary pedigree of cinematic authorship and singular expression in film studies, lyrics' contributions to the music video relate more to its content, rather than to its

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[93] *Ibid.,* 211.

[94] As already noted, the director's name remained absent from the classical music video's credits until 1993, at which point music video's *auteur* period may be said to have begun.

[95] Foucault, *Aesthetics, Methods, Epistemology,* "What is an Author?" 210.

[96] Keith Grant, *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, 5.

[97] Vernallis *Experiencing Music Video*, X.

expressive plane.[98] As such, music videos authors "have developed a set of practices for putting images to music in which the image gives up its autonomy and abandons some of its representational modes" to instead represent visually "sound's ebb and flow and its indeterminate boundaries."[99] Due to music the formal limitations of the video, such as its short-length format, potentially banal music and lyrics, and an emphasis on showcasing its star, music video directors have adapted and learned to "make frames and cuts as expressive as possible,"[100] often by adapting or reflecting upon past cinematic techniques, particularly, those from non-narrative and more visually abstract cinematic modes, such as surrealism and Dada.[101]

Inherently reflexive, music videos often draw attention to their assemblage through the audiovisual technologies which compose them – such as the practice's early incorporation of video feedback into its *mise-en-scène* through multiple television sets displaying a singular performance from simultaneous camera angles.[102] As such, music video's genealogy may be traced to cinematic movements and audiovisual practices such as Russian formalism, the modernist avant-gardes, and postmodern video-art.[103] These aesthetic approaches, ontologically-oriented and functioning beyond commercial narrative cinema, placed an emphasis on "not just understanding the medium,

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[98] "At the same time, it remains important to me that most music videos are not, in fact, avant-garde experiments. Throughout the past century, popular culture and avant-garde culture have influenced each other and indeed borrowed and stolen from each other. But for all the formal experiments and estrangements of popular cinema and pop music, they continue to lay an emphasis on content in a way that high-culture artworks often do not. In particular, pop music gives voice to personal experiences of love and hate, sex and desire, anxiety and comfort and rage." Shaviro, *Digital Music Videos*, 16.

[99] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, X.

[100] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video, 30.*

[101] Diane Railton and Paul Watson note that "[i]t is perhaps the imagery, techniques and style associated with forms of surrealist art which can most often be found in the art music video. Indeed, Joan D. Lynch argues that videos which 'borrow the techniques' of Dada and Surrealism are "the most interesting… … In associating itself with the art world and co-opting its techniques, the art music video both claims legitimacy for popular music and seeks to install the performers of popular music as serious artists." In *Music Video and the Politics of Representation*, 55.

[102] For Steven Shaviro, "music videos are often deeply self-reflexive and strikingly innovative in form and technique. Like computer games and pornography, they are on the cutting edge of digital technology. They push the latest programs and devices to their limits, and they experiment with new modes of visualization and expression." *Digital Music Videos*, 8.

[103] Vernallis notes that "Russian formalists (precursors to the experimental filmmaking tradition) should share a lot with music video directors… Lev Kulevshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Sergei Eisenstein worked with minimal resources… and they used almost no intertitles because they were making films for a largely illiterate public." *Experiencing Music Video, 30.*

but also exploring modernity itself… [Whereas] commercial narratives present allegories *of* the modern world, avant-garde films frequently constitute meditations *on* it."[104] In the same manner, Vernallis notes most music videos tend towards being non-narrative, so as not to distract from its music, lyrics, and stars, whilst also reflecting pop music's formal "consideration of a topic rather than an enactment of it."[105] An exception rather than the rule, narrative is a minor, not dominant, impulse in the music video.

According to Vernallis, the dominance of non-narrative forms in the structure of the music video is due to its multimedia form and to the centrality of the song as a structuring framework.[106] Moreover, when and if narratives are present in the music video, she further contends that they tend to "contain an enigmatic ending," or "fail to yield a satisfying resolution" altogether.[107] In "Database as Symbolic Form," Lev Manovich argues that the database, not narrative, is the "symbolic form of a computer age,"[108] and that its re-emergence (through formats such as DVDs), whether "hierarchical, networked, relational, or object-oriented," is due to the database structures of digital cultures having superseded the linear teleology of cause-and-effect, narrative ordering.[109] Whereas 19th century photography, as that century's new medium, privileged catalogues and other forms of database, celluloid film, composed by continuous individual frames, inherently seemed to support narrative linearity. As such, in a post-cinematic condition, "multimedia encyclopedias, virtual museums, pornography, artists' CD-ROMs" and DVDs have proliferated, and the database has once again become dominant.[110]

The linearity of cinematic narrative has therefore become but one option in non-linear media such as the music video. In DVDs, for example, one could passively watch a film from beginning to end, without pausing (thus recreating the captive temporality of the theatrical experience), or one could jump back and forth between scenes with ease, immediately re-watch one, and/or simultaneously engage with other on-screen features (such as behind-the-scenes commentary and

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[104] Sellors, *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths,* 87.
[105] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 3.
[106] *Ibid.,* 12.
[107] *Ibid.,* 8-10.
[108] Lev Manovich, "Database as Symbolic Form," 40.
[109] *Ibid.,* 39.
[110] *Ibid.,* 52.

other "Easter eggs"[111]). Digital databases have nevertheless come to rely on narrative ordering in order to facilitate access, navigation, and categorization. The easiest way to understand this, are the objectives, or rules of play in a videogame. In a videogame, narrativisation defines that game's affordances as a database, as well as what you are allowed to do through an interface. Using one of the most famous videogames as an example, 1983's Super Mario Bros, narrativisation dictates what you *can* do (its affordances) through the console's controller as the titular character; walk, run, jump, hit objects, and travel through pipes. Narrativisation also defines what you *must* do, that is, Super Mario's genre. As a platform adventure game, in order to win, the player must overcome a series of obstacles across an array of levels with various opponents to rescue a kidnapped princess. In this sense, as Manovich argues, narrative teleology in contemporary database structures is a continuation of the "dominant semiological order of the twentieth century – that of cinema."[112] Though database and narrative are two competing types of imaginations, they nevertheless continue to produce hybrid forms between them. More recently, and more relevant in a post-cinematic context, is the contemporary practice of transmedia where narrative and multimedia narration remains dominant.

Distinct from a transmedial approach to narration, Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* privileges the database over narrative and is, therefore, more relevant to a post-cinematic framework. Particularly, when considering the constructivist film and its privileged role in the theorization of digital media by Manovich, and the film's influence in music video aesthetics. Using stills from "Vertov's Dataset" as a visual index, Manovich notes "Vertov can be thought of as a major 'database filmmaker'… [and] *Man with a Movie Camera* [as] perhaps the most important example of a database imagination in modern media art."[113] Central to this chapter's discursive framework, in his 10th principle, Manovich compares a digital object's interface, operating system, and programming language, to "at least three levels" in Vertov's film; "the story of cameraman shooting material for the film… the shots of the audience watching the finished film in a

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[111] The term comes from *The Matrix* DVD where a "white rabbit" (which in the film takes Neo to Trinity, thus beginning his adventure) took the viewer to behind-the-scenes content. This is yet another example of the film as the paragon of many transmedial approaches which have since become the norm.
[112] Lev Manovich, "Database as Symbolic Form," 50.
[113] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, xxiv.

movie theater… [and] the film itself, which consists of footage recorded in Moscow, Kiev, and Riga… If this third level is a text, the other two can be thought of as its metatexts."[114]

This described interaction between the three levels in Dziga Vertov's film; its respective "text" and "metatexts," is important, as it is part of Manovich's project to "digitize" pre-informatic aesthetic concepts. For example, Manovich reframes artists such as "Giotto and Eisenstein not only as an early Renaissance painter and a modernist filmmaker, but also as important information designers."[115] This approach, which reinterprets formal aesthetic elements as affordances and data, and the viewer as an user, shifts from formal concerns with author, text, materials and representation, to "the operations a particular medium allows for " with medium having now become cultural software.[116] Moreover, the three textual levels in *Man with a Movie Camera* are replicated in BACHELORETTE's televisual, performance, and narrative spaces. Using Manovich's approach to cinematic form as an informatic function, recursion can serve as a framework for contextualizing how Björk-Gondry deterritorialize music video narration through a cyclical logic. That is, how these authors break with the conventional linear ordering of classical cinematic narrative. This is not specific to either Björk and/or Gondry either; as Vernallis notes, "videos are rarely teleological, and the same is true of pop music."[117]

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

In one the earliest interviews of Björk on MTV, the Icelandic singer recalls how she met Michel Gondry and brought him on as the director for her first music video as a solo artist:

> "At that point, [Michel Gondry had] just made videos with no money for his own band…
> and I could just see that his creativity is so, so brilliant; his sense of humor is so subtle and
> funny… I just went to him in Paris and met him, and told him kind of what I wanted; not
> too detailed, just some basics, sort of like, 'I want it to be about animals, and how they look
> at humans, and how humans are ridiculous, and definitely the animals have to win in the

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[114] *Ibid.,* xxv.
[115] Lev Manovich, *Postmedia Aesthetics,* 5.
[116] *Ibid.,* 5.
[117] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music* Video, 17.

end because it's about damn time… I want it to be earthy, like wood, like kind of a home-made video…' and he did everything from that point… he's brilliant, and he's an absolute character as well."[118]

This anecdote about the inception for HUMAN BEHAVIOUR illustrates, Björk and Gondry's lo-fi, yet experimental and collaborative approach to music video as a practice. It also situates this music video within the early aesthetic style of the media form. Limited by low budgets, music videos in the 1980s had to embrace the minimalism of their technical and material resources, often compensating through the prominent pop-persona performance of the video star. In HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, the music video for the first single from Björk's *Debut*, Björk and Michel Gondry bring a sense of child-like irreverence to the visual aesthetic through a playfully lo-fi, do-it-yourself cartoon-surrealist style, complete with a hunter resembling Bugs Bunny's nemesis, Elmer Fudd. This style, which has since become Gondry's signature aesthetic in feature films such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)*, The Science of Sleep* (2006)*,* and *Be Kind Rewind* (2008), has infused Björk's pop-persona throughout her career as one contingent on a radical Otherness, as likely to be of extraterrestrial origin as from a parallel magical realm; she exists in a realm beyond logic and reason. On meeting Björk for the first time to discuss the music video for the song "Human Behaviour," Gondry explains,

"Our references came into the conversation very fast — how we liked certain types of movies, Eastern European animation films, a low-tech and high-tech combination, hand-made stuff. It was very quick," he says. "I remember on the menu [there] was a wood imitation cover and she said 'I like this texture — I see myself in a house with this texture.' We talked a lot like that."[119]

Loosely based on the Soviet short film *Hedgehog in the Fog*, directed by Yuri Norstein,[120] HUMAN BEHAVIOUR presents its three settings, the video's performance space, story space,

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[118] "Björk - Come to Me, Aeroplane and Interview on MTV's 120 Minutes (1993)." (5:50-6-46)
[119] Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter,* 70.
[120] "Hedgehog in the Fog [Yuriy Norshteyn, 1975] HQ."

and televisual space,[121] under a full moon's reflection. As in surrealist cinema, the line between reality and consciousness is blurred, making it unclear as to whether the video's events are happening within, or outside Björk's mind. Her cabin, engulfed by a forest in the dead of night, signals to the causal relations (if any) between the video's multiple diegetic events. The video makes ample use of rear-projection to give its stage set (a signifier of the minimal budget for an artist's first video) a sense of movement and dynamism. By playing with depth-perception and scale, the video's oneiric feel is magnified by tilting reality slightly askew. This signals to the on-screen events as being subjective "projections" of Björk's consciousness into the diegetic reality of the music video as fantasies, dreams, and/or memories. Likewise, the use of stop-motion animation contributes to both the video's and Björk's otherworldliness by juxtaposing live performance with animation. Gondry is thus able to craft a visual tableau which would otherwise be too expensive to stage, while simultaneously remaining stylistically consistent to the video's DIY aesthetic.

Figures 1.3: **Hedgehog in the Fog and HUMAN BEHAVIOUR.** *Yuri Norstein's short animation was an influence on Björk and Gondry's music video.*

The video starts with the diegetic sound of a car approaching the camera which, not being part of the song's soundscape, grounds the viewer into the video's diegetic reality before the song's proper beginning. Without the presence of Björk in any capacity, this shot, as a sound-image enunciation signifies the presence of Gondry as an author beyond the music-lyrics and performance-persona dyadic elements, which are usually the domain of the musician (in this case, Björk). In spite of this realist grounding at the onset of the video, the flatness of the projected image against the pro-filmic events happening in front of it, give the frame an animated aesthetic, even though

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[121] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video,* 10.

they are rendered as live actions shots. Moreover, the lighting in the profilmic is affected by that of what is projected behind them, in a sense unifying the foreground and background planes of the diegesis. For example, as the car goes over a hedgehog who's just entered the frame, the car's shadow covers the small animal as it drives over the frame. This shot will be replicated halfway through the video, but with Björk kneeling to avoid getting run over. In this sense, the visuals are intent on fooling the viewer's eye, with the frame reproducing the perceptual motion of handheld camerawork (another realist technique) as it follows its main figures making their way through the rear-projected forest.

It soon becomes evident that the cabin interior is rear-projected as well; following a comic-book thought bubble above Björk, the cabin's walls give way to the forest outside, further blurring the division between inner and outer spaces (here on the performance and narrative planes). In Björk's represented consciousness, we see her walking in front of the bear, with the hunter behind them both. As the bear gives chase to Björk, one is unaware of the events' temporal ordering. Nevertheless, she escapes via flight, landing atop a tree, before eventually falling from it. Björk is then revealed to be of elfish size, barely reaching the hunter's head as he lays on the floor. With the opening shot replicated, but now with Björk as the hedgehog, the bear is subsequently revealed to be the vehicle's driver. Through such parallelism, the video presents a set of ontological equiv-alences; Björk (woman) as porcupine, bear as hunter (man), and moth as food (a moth flies out of an open tin-can and onto Björk's plate). In fact, the video's narrative constantly alludes to a dietary chain in which the bear, not man is the apex predator. In this sense, by decentering the perspective away from human narratives, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR alludes to the post-cinematic (de)subjecti-vation processes of a contemporary media "ecology," which verge on a post-humanist framework.

Throughout HUMAN BEHAVIOUR the series of events appear non-linearly, reflecting through narration, its oneiric narrative. The only event outside any inferred causal or food chain happens on the televisual plane, as cosmonaut Björk plants the Soviet hammer-and-sickle flag (perhaps as a nod to *Hedgehog and the Fog*, perhaps as a political statement) on the moon while her voice carries down to Earth. Re-entering Earth's atmosphere without a ship, Björk's cosmonaut suit melts away in the stratosphere as she falls, giving way to the outfit she has worn throughout the video. Through an eyeline match, Björk continues to fall, but now into the bear's mouth, sati-ating its hunger. The video concludes with nature triumphant (Björk's requested the ending) as the

bear throws his arms up into "V," a master of his own little world. In 2010, Björk stated that in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR,

> I was in a way pretending a little bit to be David Attenborough and I'm looking at the humans like an anthropologist and I'm trying to work out what their behavior is. The visual element is a very important way to express yourself. I mean, that was one of the things I thought was helpful, for example, with being really involved with the videos; if people watch and listen at the same time, they understand the nature of the song quicker. There does exist a visual representation of every music, inside you know what it looks like, and its better, *truer*, to send it away from you in the right packing, or outfit.[122]

As Björk-Gondry's first music video, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR sets themes, concepts and practices which will "outfit" their subsequent collaborations, particularly, those in the *Isobel* trilogy. Narratively, the tensions between humans and nature, with nature triumphant in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR become central themes in both ISOBEL and BACHELORETTE's narrative logic. Along with the perceived otherworldliness, or rather Otherness, of Björk, these themes are important to the music video trilogy, wherein modernity is surrealistically overcome by the connection and reconnection of Isobel with nature. Moreover, by challenging an anthropocentric subjectivity and treating humanity itself as Other, Björk-Gondry's *Isobel* trilogy alludes to a collective subjectivity beyond humanity's; that of nature. In fact, through the framing in the image-sound dyad, both Björk and the Bear are sutured into the viewer's subject position, as we are made to identify with two points of view parallel to one another, and against that of the hunter; the Other of nature. In this sense, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR offers a commentary on modernity and technology, and how they shape the construction of identity. This post-humanist framing becomes even

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[122] "Björk - Interview." (3:23-4:10). Furthermore, Mark Pytlik notes that for Björk, "[t]he culture shock inherent in the move from Reykjavik to London manifested itself in some unconventional ways. The independence bred into her by Iceland's cultural and physical remoteness became an agent in the way Björk interacted with her new surroundings. In a way that few others might, she seized upon her own otherness as cause for celebration rather than castigation. And, although horribly outnumbered, she fancied herself the observer rather than the observed. The resulting anthropological bent of many of the lyrics on *Debut* (namely the Desmond Morris-as-New-Bohemian angle of "Human Behaviour") were a direct result of this outlook; it's no coincidence that she'd spend the next year publicly proclaiming Richard [sic] Attenborough a personal hero." (65)

more salient in ISOBEL, as Björk resolves the inherent contradiction between nature and technology by hybridizing both of them in order to fight for nature.

ISOBEL

In the retrospective documentary *Inside* Björk, commissioned by One Little Indian (Björk's label) to coincide with the release of her 2003 *Greatest Hits* album,[123] the artist states "for every album I've done there's been one character that does the albums… The *Debut* character from the photograph, from the cover, is sort of a very shy, slightly polite, kind of newcomer; I think that's how I felt."[124] Reflecting Björk's experience in London as a freshly arrived immigrant, the narrative of HUMAN BEHAVIOUR draws on an alternate persona who is both fascinated by, and alienated from, a species intent on separating itself from its natural environment. On the other hand, the lead persona for *Post* is "kind of, that wide-eyed girl, from the country still, but she's been in the city for a while at that point, and she is consuming the city and the city is consuming her."[125] For every one of Björk's songs, she continues "there is a story behind it… With most of my collaborators, if it's music-makers, or photographers, or video directors, I will tell them the whole story." [126] As the second video in Björk's mythography, ISOBEL continues to inhabit Gondry's pop-surrealist world, now accentuated by the video's monochromatic palette.[127]

This imagery evokes the formalism of early cinemas through the use of pictorialism as a visual strategy. Pictorialism, as Colin Burnett notes in "Hidden Hands at Work," emerged in the first decade of the 20th century, and is a photographic style which "uses lens and lamp diffusion in the form of gauzes and scrims, as well as developing techniques, to soften and thereby 'aestheticize' the photographic image and make it worth of the status of legitimate art."[128] François Nemetä, Gondry's assistant during the shoot of ISOBEL states that his "crew used a Mitchell S35 camera with a varispeed, 'to be able to rewind the camera and do superimpositions/masks, as Melies used

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[123] Dibben, *Björk*, 195.

[124] "Inside Björk - The Documentary." (17:18- 17:47).

[125] *Ibid.,* (17:58 – 18:11).

[126] *Ibid.,* (18:31 – 18:57).

[127] Though Mauren Turim notes that Björk and Gondry's videos for "'Isobel' (1995) and "Bachelorette" (1997) are music video's version of the film narrative and sequel," the former in fact constitutes a sequel to HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, and the latter, the *Isobel* saga's third chapter. "Art/Music/Video.com," 105-106.

[128] "Colin Burnett,"Hidden Hands at Work," 123.

to do in the 1900's.'[129] This illusionist aestheticization of the cinematic image in ISOBEL accentuates what Sjón, the song's co-writer and Björk's long-time lyrical collaborator, describes as the song's "dreamlike language."[130] As co-lyricists, Sjón and Björk, conceived of Isobel as a natural force who confronts her fears, even though she "doesn't dare to be all there in the world, because it is too much."[131] Though the story in ISOBEL is explicitly one of isolation, implicitly, it may be also said to be about overcoming alienation through instinct in the face of modernity and reason. As Björk states, ISOBEL is:

> [B]asically a story of a girl who was born in the forest, and as she grew older, she realized that the pebbles on the forest floor were actually baby skyscrapers… As she became a woman, she found herself in a big city, and basically clashed with civilized thoughts… [Calling] herself Isobel, because of the isolation [in the forest], there she would collect moths and train them to send out her message… a message of instinct… to fly all over the world."[132]

The tension between instinct and reason, between nature and technology in ISOBEL, continues Björk's thematic concerns introduced in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR. However, if in the latter video this tension is evident by the performance of the characters in the narrative (Björk, the Bear, the Hunter), in the former, this tension is emphasized through editing and framing of the video.

Distinct from classical cinematic editing, which relies on the dynamic between long, medium, and close-up shots, ISOBEL deterritorializes the "grammar" of classical cinema as a "language" through techniques inherited from avant-garde cinema. In classical cinema, framing and editing shots build towards discursive clarity; if characters, spaces, and time-relations are well-defined, the viewer is able to understand a story through its *mise-en-scène*. Central to this function is the continuity editing system, which renders cuts between shots invisible through complementary techniques such as cutting on action, or the 30° and 180° rules. On the other hand, music video editing, usually referred to dismissively as "MTV editing," is usually perceived as disjunctive,

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[129] François Nemetä, "Q&A; with François Nemetä"
[130] "Inside Björk - The Documentary." (19:09 – 19:12)
[131] *Ibid.,* (19:23 – 19:39)
[132] *Ibid.,* (19:55 – 20:42)

drawing attention to a song's musical formal elements instead of clearly defining coherent spatio-temporal relations amongst figures, objects, and other onscreen elements. As Vernallis notes, as particularly responsive to musical elements, music videos "elucidate aspects of the song, such as rhythmic and timbral features, particular phrases in the lyrics, and especially the songs sectional divisions… [or it] can provide a counterpoint to the song's rhythmic structure."[133] Music video editing maintains the sense that any of these musical elements can be emphasized, at any time, over the course of the music video.

As such, ISOBEL is significant, not only in its ability to bring to the fore musical elements through its editing, but also because of its rendition of what Vernallis calls music video's micro-rhythms.[134] In a post-cinematic context, microrhythms are important since "[f]ine, changeable, and tangible things of the world — dust, water, smoke, and clouds — may be more insistently depicted today because digital cameras have become so adept at capturing detail."[135] Invoking Michel Chion, Vernallis concludes that "visual microrhythms function well within audiovisually rich media, because they resemble musical processes."[136] Even before its high-definition transfer online (which truly emphasizes this quality in the music video), ISOBEL had already been transferred onto 35mm film for cinematic projection.[137] As such, the video's interplay between light, shadow, and water-infused reflections and projections are much more detailed than other videos which might have been shot on lower-resolution formats, or not received a full-scale 35mm blow-up.

More elegant that HUMAN BEHAVIOUR's handheld framing, the camerawork in ISO-BEL is deliberate and steady, while at the same time, more visually abstract, especially due to its editing style. In HUMAN BEHAVIOUR water serves as Björk's performance space: the artist sings parts of the chorus while lying in a river and directly across the "fourth wall." In ISOBEL, water becomes even more prominent in the formal composition of the video, not only in its *mise-en-scène* (as a screen and instrument), but also, as an editing technique used to transition between shots and scenes. As ISOBEL begins, the orchestral arrangement of horns over the video's flowing

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[133] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 27

[134] "Chion calls the fine pattern that can occur in the images for narrative film – the mottling of light, the smoke from a candle – visual microrhythms." *Experiencing Music Video*, 27

[135] Vernallis, *Unruly Media*, 217.

[136] *Ibid.*, 217.

[137] Nemetä notes how "when the video turned out to be so good and beautiful, we had a projection of the finished video for the crew in a cinema in London. So it means that a 35mm positive copy was printed, unlike 99.9% of actual music videos." "Q&A; with François Nemetä"

water, flickering trees, and reflecting sunlight, evokes an expository documentary. With war planes laying on the bank of a river, surrounded by Björk-Gondry's signature surrealist nature, brings to mind war reportages and nature travelogues. Evolving from a classical flute composition to the electronic beats which form the basis of the song, and consequently that of the video, the music accentuates the micro-rhythms in the flow and shimmer of the running water. As the river flows upstream, we are immediately made aware of the video's surreal logic.

The use of miniature and stop-animation in ISOBEL is complemented, as noted, by other editorial and photographic tricks, such as superimposition, reverse photography, and graphic matching. As Björk makes her first appearance onscreen, she is fiddling with the modulation knobs on a piano/synthesizer hybrid which creates both image and song from its chamber. As such, it serves as a metaphor for the music video as an audiovisual construct. As water fills the piano, the flooded chamber creates a screen wherein Björk is able to watch herself, or a version of herself, projected on water, as children watch alongside her. This is the first of Björk's doubling in the video; both as myth narrator (in the performance space) and as protagonist (in the narrative space). These two modes of subjectivity are important, as they allude to a blurring of identities between fiction and reality, and to Björk and Isobel's subjectivities as a unified dyad. In fact, as the narrator, Björk often addresses the camera directly, breaking the cinematic fourth wall singing the lyrics, while on the other hand, Isobel the character, does not. Sometimes, however, narrator and protagonist are unified in Björk, the performer, through cinematographic tricks.

In this sense, a series of superimposed shots are particularly relevant. At 1:02, with both of the shots' cameras pulling into and away from Björk, one plane of the superimposed image is that of Björk as narrator, while the other, following the exact same camera movement and framing, depicts Isobel, not singing, but emulating Björk's direct-address performance (thus representing the song's double-address), and at 1:45, a similar shot is filtered through leaves and without the dolly-in and out. This hybridization of Björk's subjectivities through formalist editing techniques reflects, not only that of the musical instrument she plays in the beginning of the video (a digital/analogue, visual/aural assemblage) and that of superimposed images, but also the sense of Björk as a parallel Self, or Other, to herself. More narrative abstract than HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and BACHELORETTE, what ISOBEL lacks in narrative clarity, it gains in the tactility and materiality of its images and editing. Particularly, when it invokes the expressive qualities and inventiveness

of silent, black-and-white formalism, from Méliès early experiments, as already noted, to the sur-realism of *L'Age d'Or* (1930) and the Expressionism of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)*,* and *Metropolis* (1927).

Through superimposition, Isobel's relationship with nature is emphasized, alluding to yet another ontological equivalence between Björk's persona and nature. The black rock and gloomy skies which frame certain shots, are reminiscent of Björk's native Iceland, though this connection is not made as explicit as in latter videos, such as *Jóga* (the video was in fact shot in Wales). As a metropolis rises out of the forest, it is soon crawling with ants – perhaps an allusion to Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). In the face of this infestation, Isobel counters it by "growing" airplane-moths out from lightbulbs; a resolution to the contradictory logic of nature and technology through hybridization. As the moth biplanes converge into formation, their onscreen framing once again evokes wartime expository documentaries, further signaling to the tensions between nature and modernity.

Figure 1.4: ***Björk as Nature.*** *Through superimposition and other photographic tricks, the singer and nature are presented as one throughout ISOBEL.*

As such, the instinct of nature defends itself against human rationality (as it did in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR) in the video's last shots, while Björk's dual-persona (as an eye and face; her two "I"s) comes together visually. Subsequent images hint to the logic of both music and nature as

reigning victorious over that of narrative and techno-logic, with a particular emphasis on subjectivities beyond that of humans. This post-humanist framing is important, as it places natural instinct over human reason. In this sense, it anticipates Björk-Gondry's BACHELORETTE. As the singer herself stated, after *Post*, "the *Homogenic* character becomes like a warrior, and not a warrior with weapons that wants to fight back, but somebody who wants to fight with love."[138] The *Homogenic* album cover (assembled by the late British fashion designer Alexander McQueen) shows Björk in a pastiche of transnational warrior clothing; African throat rings, a Mongolian hairdo, and a Japanese kimono. This multiculturalism at the visual level, can however be contrasted with Björk's explicitly nationalistic aim for the album: "to invent Icelandic modern pop music, with volcanic beats and very over-romantic, patriotic strings."[139] By tying together different techniques from previous videos, BACHELORETTE concludes the *Isobel* trilogy. In this last video, Gondry expands his pop-surrealist aesthetic by juxtaposing colour and black-and-white; stills and moving images. More importantly, the narrative strategy of this music video is a useful metaphor for understanding recursion as a structural model for non-linear narration.

BACHELORETTE

At the narrative level, BACHELORETTE is also the most concise and clear "micronarrative" in the trilogy. This is due in part to the story being directly tied to its narration; that is, the process of narration becomes its own grounding element, giving the video a sense of coherence and unity. This unity, at the representational, diegetic level, lies beyond that of the song itself as the basis for the video; that is, of the song as a base case in a recursive sense. As the video becomes increasingly recursive, that is fragmented, it creates a narrative mise en abyme, with each segment repeating the videos' core narrative in the past tense through different media, as it is simultaneously affected by processes in the present tense. Increasingly miniaturized, it is emblematic of recursion and the breaking down of a problem into smaller sets in order to be resolved. This strategy deterritorializes spatio-temporal and narrative causality through an increasingly minimalist *mise-en-scène*, with the performance, narrative, and televisual spaces influencing one another throughout the video. Music, image, and lyrics in the music video, as Vernallis observes, "are to

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[138] "Inside Björk - The Documentary." (26:03 – 26:16)
[139] *Ibid.,* (28:20 – 28:25)

some extent blank… each possess their own language with regard to time, space, narrativity, activity, and affect… [they] even possess a distinct sense of time."[140] The dynamic between these components in BACHELORETTE signal to the multimedia construction of the music video through its recursive narrative strategy.

The video begins with an establishing shot of a cabin in the forest, while Björk narrates the events taking place on the monochromatic screen. The setting and black-and-white photographs allude to the country cabin in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR as well as to the cinematography of ISOBEL. As Björk digs a ditch, we hear her voice-over; "one day, I found a big book buried deep in the ground." Bearing her face, the pages in *My Story* are blank, and just as Björk's states out loud that "it started writing itself" we see words begin to appear on its pages. Björk's discovery is presented in a way which subverts cinema's cardinal rule of "showing, not telling" by doing both simultaneously, while its black-and-white palette, with celluloid scratches and flickering around the frame, signal to a visual past tense. This visual style, as noted, creates a sense of continuity from the silent-film aesthetic of ISOBEL, while the latter fragments, are reminiscent of the vibrant colours of HUMAN BEHAVIOUR. With its three "past tenses" enunciated differently (Björk's narration, the black-and-white footage, and the auto-poetic book), the sense of doubling and parallelism from the previous videos continues, now extended to the temporal logic of the music video itself.

As the song swells into the soundscape, the voice-over narration fades away just as it begins to repeat itself, and the book's autopoetic pages take over the narrator function in the video. With the narrative now narrating itself, carrying on autonomously both onscreen and in the book's pages, we learn that *My Story* is guiding Björk towards an already written future in the city, full of love and success. When her book is adapted into a play, Björk's success increases, bringing with it, the collateral damages of fame into her present, as well as that of the city itself and its citizens. Whereas causal relations between HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and ISOBEL are not clearly delineated, those between ISOBEL and BACHELORETTE are more clearly so, at least visually. As noted, for Maureen Turim these two videos (ISOBEL and BACHELORETTE) constitute "music

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[140] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 13.

video's version of the film narrative and sequel, telling the story of a wild child in lush superim-posed imagery discovering urban culture through installations of toy fighter planes, after which the same girl becomes a woman reacting to her life in the city."[141]

In music video, the narrative, performance, and televisual spaces tend to remain separate from each other (thus retaining their own truth-value and temporality).[142] However, in BACHE-LORETTE they are intricately linked by the folding of narrative, performance, and televisual events and spaces into one another. Rendered in colour, the performance plane's time-signature is distinct from black-and-white narrative segments which precede, and continually intersect in the video. In this sense, the performance plane's temporality, visually enunciated in the present tense, is closest to that of the narrative events, as they appear and repeat in real-time onstage, with the theatre audience serving as surrogate for that of the video. On the other hand, the self-revealing book, which serves as Björk's "city-guide," recounts a yet-to-come future in the past tense as the book's events, read and enacted by Björk onscreen, are represented linearly by alternating black-and-white photographs with moving-images. This strategy subverts the linear causality of the story, and creates a performance plane in which past, present, and future tense are collectively enunciated by the folding of the narrative plane of causality into the televisual plane of narration.

In the context of the music video, *My Story* is told three times; once in the narrative space which serves as the grounding and surrealistic space of narration, once in the onstage adaptation of the book as a stage production which serves as the performance space in both the video and the narrative, and once more in the recursively fragmented production within the production. These three narrations all share the same narrative elements; Björk's discovery of the book, her train journey into the city, her pitch to the publisher, the printing and success of the book, the meeting with the theatre producer, and the play itself. As the narrative space becomes increasingly frag-mented onstage, Björk's book grows in size, until the story begins to disappear from the pages of book following her break up with the publisher in the black-and-white narrative space. At that point (as in the ISOBEL video) nature takes over the theatre and the city, with Björk traveling back through the narrative spaces and to the forest setting of the beginning. The video ends with Björk in the forest, in colour and singing. All three spatio-temporal planes having converged into one singular diegetic present, with the split between the narrative and its narration also resolved.

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[141] Turim, "Art/Music/Video.com, 105.

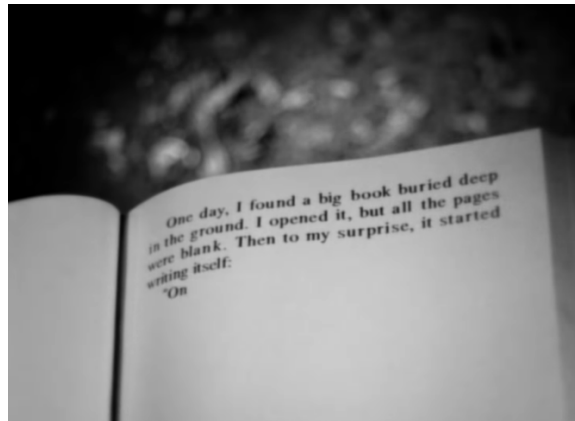[142] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 10.

*Figure 1.5: **Recursion as Narration**: Increasingly fragmented into the performance space of "My Story" onstage, the book's autopoetic narrative and narration affects BACHELORETTE's performance, narrative, and televisual spaces until Björk returns to nature in the video's finale, unifying them, and thus "resolving" the narrative.*

At its simplest, BACHELORETTE is the story of a girl, given a gift of which she has no control over, but which nevertheless helps her to conquer a newfound city. Dealing with the commodification of love, self, and art, BACHELORETTE serves as a commentary of celebrity culture, and on the contradictions of authenticity within the spectacles of capital. More importantly, it deterritorializes the Broadway musical setting by dissolving the distinction between its narrative and musical numbers, as well as that between the narrative and the narration process itself. By fragmenting it into one another, the database aesthetic in BACHELORETTE makes the interaction between diegetic narrative and its narration process drive the musical number's *mise-en-scène* as a mise en abyme. Therein, fragments, continuously replicated within each other, representationally signify how recursive processes function and how a resolution can be attained by resolving the base case of an algorithm. In the case of BACHELORETTE, the resolution is the return of Björk

to nature after exploring the temptations of the modern city. As such, the narrative and narration in BACHELORETTE are both recursive and cyclical.

Conclusion: Music Video Narration as Cinematic Deterritorialization

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, ISOBEL, and BACHELORETTE are emblematic of how deterritorialization (that is, the breaking of habitual convention in a practice or language), can serve to create a signature audiovisual style while re-inventing past cinematic techniques through new technologies. In this music video triad, which constitutes Björk and Gondry's contributions to the *Isobel* music video saga, narrative and narration are neither representative of cinematic linearity, nor of music video's cyclical structuring. Instead, by narrating the story serially, each video retains its own truth-value and temporality, and is expressed in its narrative autonomy and internal logic. This is perhaps most evident in the deterritorialization of narrative cause-and-effect in the music videos, as they collectively elaborate on the Isobel myth non-linearly, while also rendering realist visuals slightly abstract.

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and its do-it-yourself, cardboard surrealism uses rear-projection to attain the dynamism of the struggle between nature and man. The black and white, high-contrast photography in ISOBEL uses superimposition to create parallels between the titular character and nature itself, while alludes to religious and military iconography. Isobel (Björk's alternate persona) is represented as an ecological Joan of Arc, raising armies and cities from nature itself. BACHELORETTE breaks down the video's narrative into miniaturized fragments which co-exist and are influenced by one another in the process of narration. With the narrative structure quite literally within the narration process, this video is the most succinct audiovisual explication of recursion as a mode of database aesthetics wherein the rules of assemblage lie within the entity itself.

Though individually, each video deterritorializes the cinematic image and linear narration through different techniques. They are all multiples of the unified *Isobel* trilogy. In this sense, the trilogy represents how database aesthetics and more linear aesthetic frameworks can function simultaneously in the music video through a larger narrative structure as its undercurrent. In fact, it is through the process of narration that Björk's music and lyrics, as the video's driving expressive components, find their counterparts in Gondry's diegetic images and sounds. In this sense, as Vernallis notes, if one were to "generalize about the syntax of the music video image, one might take

the musical phrase as the most significant unit."[143] In this context, a video's song may be its most deterritorializing element, pushing the formal thresholds of editing through rhythm, narrative through lyrics, and narration through repetition. As *de facto a priori*, a music video's song thus serves as its recursive base-case (which in a way mirrors video's archeology as a sound technology, before it was adapted for visual representation). Soundtrack songs from films, as in the case of 'I've Seen It All' from *Dancer in the Dark*, also signal to how music videos often serve as part of larger transmedia narrative experiences along with more conventional cinematic texts and par-atexts.

With the collaborative nature of the music video, wherein song and image continually in-form and redefine one another, this chapters thus serves as the basis for the next chapter's theoret-ical framing of music video authorship as collective and self-authored, that is, recursive. Though the next chapter will use language which seemingly assigns authorial agency to its formal ele-ments, this is only done so as to avoid the centering of any one subject in relation to the music video's poesis. Instead, the music video will be conceptualized as composed by three dyadic ele-ments which signify the labour which produced it. For example, though the image and diegetic sounds in a video may be designated as having been directed by Michel Gondry, by speaking of the image-sound dyad as a subject in-itself, Chapter 2 aims to account for the labour behind its construction (be it costume and set design, special effects, or other types of craftmanship). This is important since, first and foremost, a music video is defined by the performer's music-lyrics which serve as its basis and as a template for the visual composition in a music video, with the director's sound-image modulating the performer's onscreen persona-performance. As such, this latter dyad can be said to be where intersects the previous two dyads, the music-lyrics of the musician and image-sound of the director intersect.

As this chapter has argued, Björk and Gondry's collaborative music videos for the Isobel myth reflect the practice's avant-garde and experimental cinematic genealogy, while also decen-tering human subjectivity through its formal assemblage and thematic motifs. In this sense, the avant-garde's concern with "refusing linear narrative in preference for devices grounded in a kind of polyphonic discourse (following Mikahil Bakhtin) that mirror, double, split, echo and multiply

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[143] Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video*, 37.

the projected image" begs the question of form, not only as politically-contingent, but also bearing on notion of subjectivity by asking "[w]hat is it we see? "What is the destiny of image?"[144]

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[144] Leighton, *Art and the Moving Image*, 36.

Chapter 2.

Networked Authorship as Collective Performance

A media entity with an incredibly polysemic structure, the music video has been classified by scholars in many ways – among others, as a medium, a form, a genre, a hyperbeing, and a supertext.[145] Genre is a useful category to situate the music video in-between cinematic canons and new media forms. Yet as a specific genre, the music video also needs "new theoretical frameworks."[146] This chapter thus follows on the first chapter's consideration of the music video as a cinematic genre, but more importantly, aims to contribute to the theoretical landscape of the music video by positing that its song, images, and performer, when recursively fragmented, yield three compositional dyads: 1. music and lyrics, 2. image and sound, 3. performance and persona. These dyads, functioning synergistically, are "transformed as they become part of a new entity."[147] The defining characteristic of the music-video as a cinematic genre lays in its inherent hybridized formal heterogeneity; that is, its ability to place song and image in a relation of co-presence through the use of ground-breaking new technologies and audiovisual approaches. Carol Vernallis argues that as post-cinematic objects "music videos can now become the anchor rather than the source of discontinuity," and asks "[h]as the form of music video become the supertext?"[148]

Having previously considered Björk's highly collaborative aesthetic practice as it relates to music video narration in the first chapter, this chapter proposes that the creative agency and discourse associated with music video authorial practices are autopoetic and networked. From this perspective, the author-figure in the music video has "shifted from a seemingly unified entity to a more complex and shifting entity."[149] Theoretically, this author-figure overlaps with the authored object itself through the collaborative process implicit in the aforementioned dyads of the music video. This process, distributed throughout multiple nodes of agency and intention (performer and director, for example), renders the music video a composition by networked subjects, contingent

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[145] Vernallis in *Unruly Media* refers to the music video as a "new entity" (237), "a heterogenous medium" (225), a "genre" (2), and a "new hyperbeing" (211). Jason Middleton and Roger Bebe in *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones* refer to it as a "media form" (2), as does Steven Shaviro in *Digital Music Videos* (30).

[146] Gina Arnold, Daniel Cookney, Kristy Fairclough and Michael Goddard. *Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media Music/Video: Histories, Aesthetics, Media*, 4.

[147] Vernallis, *Unruly Media*, 237.

[148] *Ibid.,* 182.

[149] Busse, "The Return of the Author," 50.

on the dynamic between music video's compositional dyads, as they inform and collaborate with each other. The music video may thus be understood, not only as a post-cinematic supertext, but more provocatively, as a networked-subject in itself; as an authorial hyperbeing.[150]

Following on Michel Foucault's notion of the author as a discursive element "capable of being either subject or object," this chapter presents the music video as both a self-authored object and as a networked subject.[151] This theoretical perspective is useful to counter what Paul Sellors signals as the problem for a theory of collective authorship, namely, that "there is no collective mind, or 'superagent' within which to locate collective intention."[152] Indeed, if as Jonathan Gray and Derek Johnson suggest, "[t]he author is a node through which discourses of beauty, truth, meaning, and values must travel, while also being a node through which money, power, labor, and the control of culture must travel…" it is not that far-fetched to conceive of the music-video authorship process itself as networked and autopoetic.[153] Focusing on the collaborative, non-hierarchical dynamics involved in the creative processes of the music video, this chapter describes post-cinematic authorship as a collective performance of elements, predicated upon the de-subjectification of labour, performance, and composition. As a media form marked by heterogeneity, collective authorship in the music video is inherent in the collective structuring of its creative process and is representative of a post-cinematic mediascape dominated by technologies and techniques based on collaboration and sharing.[154]

Whereas Chapter 1 focuses on Björk-Gondry's collaborative music video practice as a deterritorializing intervention on audiovisual representation and a reconfiguration of narrative conventions into a multi-media framework, this chapter examines less narrative structure than authorial processes of meaning formation in the music video, as they construct an interactive, collaborative work. Applying a formal analysis to Björk-Gondry's ARMY OF ME, this chapter is in-

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[150] Vernallis notes that "we may think of the music-image relationship as a new hyperbeing," *Unruly Media*, 211. Vernallis credits this notion, of music and image dynamics as a hyperbeing, to Kay Dickinson and her work *Off Key: When Film and Music Won't Work Together.*

[151] Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Methods, Epistemology,* "What is an Author?" 210.

[152] Sellors, *Auteurs and Other Myths*, 122.

[153] Gray and Johnson, "Introduction," *A Companion to Media Authorship*, 4

[154] "Facebook, Twitter, Final Cut Pro, blogs, Youtube, and Pinterest [make] collaborative, fused, remixed authorship all the more obvious *and normative.*" Johnson and Gray, *A Companion to Media Authorship,* 5.

formed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's second tenet of minor literature, collective enunciation. This tenet serves as a marker, not only for authorship, but for subjectivity in a post-cinematic condition. As such, agency and intention in the music-video may be understood as an interactive, networked process of collective de-subjectification. This means that identifying collective authorship in the music videos is less about recognizing the exchange of competence and agency between a performer and a director, and more about a complex process of creative participation involving multiple actors, agencies, and interactions.

By analyzing how music videos' formal elements interact in order to create affective experiences, one may conceptualize the music video as a recursively autopoetic object. What this means is that the compositional rules of the music video are defined by its own formal elements. Signifying modes of networked authorship in post-cinema, my analysis of the music video in this context will therefore point at the importance of collective performance amongst the medium's formal elements. Towards this theorization, the concept of recursion is an important signpost. At its most simple, in computer programming, recursion can be understood as a process of consecutive fragmentation wherein an algorithm's solution is attained by sequentially breaking it down to less and less complex equations until said algorithm is resolved. A common joke amongst computer programmers is that "to understand recursion, one must first understand recursion," meaning that the solution to a problem lies within the problem itself. For this chapter's purposes, an aesthetic process of self-authoring may be defined as recursive, as it is contingent on the fragmented formal elements which compose it, hereafter defined as dyads.

With this collective process, or a performance between dyad, as the sum total of all collaborative creative processes behind them, the lyrics-music, image-sound, and performance-persona dyads in the music video serve as signifiers for all of the material labour which produced them (not only those discursively privileged, i.e., director). Through non-representational signs such as texture, colour, and camera movement, these compositional fragments in ARMY OF ME depict a dystopian world wherein nature has been fully assimilated by technology and the modern city. This distinguishes Björk-Gondry's second collaboration from the utopian sensibilities of nature triumphant in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and the *Isobel* trilogy. Tinting their signature pop-surrealism with a dystopic, science fiction sensibility which reflects the late capitalist world of the mid 1990s, ARMY OF ME broke new ground in representational technology and was censored due to

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its narrative. More importantly, it is a great example of how the dyadic elements in a music video perform recursively to create the affective textures which define it as an aesthetic form.

Performance and Intention in Recursive Authorship.

Contingent on notions of collective and categorical intention, the consideration of performance as a mode of production situates the discussion of post-cinematic authorship within a distinctive lineage, such as the interaction amongst a multiplicity of autonomous agents found in theatre, dance, or orchestra music.[155] Just as the members of a theatre troupe, a dance ensemble, or an orchestra perform according to their colleagues' own performances, in post-cinematic authorship, all contributing actors (including the audience at the reception level) perform according to their interactions with other contributors, or elements. This approach differs from how cinematic authorship has usually been formulated. As Paul Sellors points out, due to the literary legacy of cinematic authorship as a concept, "film theorists and critics have questionably characterised film authorship as an act of individual expression, despite the collective nature of production."[156] In the context of post-cinema, collective enunciation may refer either to non-individual or shared credits in an individual audiovisual work or multiple contributions to inter- or trans-media forms by more than one contributing subject. As a practice, this is particularly true of the music video where creative contributions across different media are responsible for its formal construction. These musical and visual elements, rather than being assigned to a singular subject (whether it be a performer or director), can instead be de-subjectified into compositional dyads. These dyadic elements are themselves the result of multiple autonomous and creative agents.

By recursively breaking down the formal composition of the music video into music-lyrics (usually assigned to the creative agency of the singer), image-sound (the director's realm), and performance-persona (where the singer and the director's contributions intersect as music video's

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[155] The film-set as orchestra has been a metaphor often used to specify the collaborative nature of film production; Sellors notes, "[w]e can use the example of a symphony orchestra to illustrate this point. Is the performance of a symphony an aggregate of individual performances motivated by the belief that by performing one's part one is contributing to the performance of a piece, or is each individual performance motivated by the collective intention 'we will perform this symphony'?" Keith Grant, *Auteurs and Authorship,* 123. Also, Bruce Kawin notes that in film "the composer is often the writer, the director is often the conductor, and the orchestra is a vast array of professional, from actors to lab technicians." Kawin, "Authorship, Design, Execution," 190.
[156] Sellors, *Film Authorship*, 111

uniquely specific audiovisual event), the creative process in music videos may be defined as net-worked through the collective performance of these dyadic elements. Rather than referring to a music video as being authored by Michel Gondry, for example, we may instead analyze the contributions of the image-sound dyad to music video's formal construction. This dyad would include, not only the contributions of Gondry as a media production manager, but also those of the cinematographer, costume, set, and sound designers, as well as any other participants within music-video's *mise-en-scène.*[157] In the same sense, at the level of music-lyrics, though Björk is privileged as songwriter and singer, a recursive approach to authorship accounts for the contributions by other songwriters; lyricists, composers, engineers, and producers, without having to invite critics to "perform an act of 'psychobiography.'"[158] These dyads, remediating one another in the authorship process, render the structure of the music video as autopoetic; as dictated by its own internal rules of assemblage. This does not mean that music video's constitutive elements assert creative agency over the formal construction of the video per se. Rather, with no one element being dominant, they continually influence one another in equal measure during the poetic process, if perhaps to different degrees. Formally, this is the specificity of the music video as a post-cinematic entity; its ability to remediate music, images, and performances into a distinct object where its authorship cannot be easily assigned to a singular subject. Instead, the music video is the product of a multiplicity of creative processes as they interact on screen an become a unified networked object.

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[157] Colin Burnett, through his intentional flux model recommends that "film and media scholars pursue a number of avenues of study that will undoubtedly alter our understanding of authors. Among these, it recommends conceiving of authors as creative 'managers' in order to refine our sense of the flow of practical intention between authors and their teams." "Hidden Hands at Work," Burnett, 128.

[158] Sellors, *Film Authorship* 34.

*Figure 2.1: **Mise en abyme in ARMY OF ME:** The effect created by placing a subject between two mirrors is a simple way of understanding recursion representationally; that is, as an increasingly fragmented algorithm of similarly composed functions.*

In this context, the notion of categorical and collective intention is important in post-cine-matic practices where substrate media are heterogenous and authorship is distributed. Ted Nanni-celli and Malcolm Turvey argue that in a post-cinematic condition, it is worthwhile to consider the categorical intentions of artists, as they determine "the kind of work they make… Rarely, for ex-ample, does one genuinely attempt to create a poem and end up with a photograph."[159] Categorical intentionality thus differs from intentionality in meaning, in that the former is objective at the point of creation, and the latter is subjective at the point of reception. That is, artists can only hope for their work to be interpreted as intended, but that work is nevertheless constructed as a specific type of work from its onset. Categorical intention is also significant relative to collective modes of cultural production. As Richard Dyer observes in "Entertainment and Utopia," what a collective cultural form (such as entertainment) "is assumed to be, is basically decided by those people re-sponsible (paid) for providing it in concrete form."[160] The importance of collective labour in media production lies in the agency exerted by the workers themselves over a product, and in their com-petency in successfully achieving the categorical conventions of a specific medium, practice, or

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[159] Ted Nannicelli and Malcolm Turvey, "Against Post-Cinema," 38.

[160] Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 467.

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genre. For the purposes of this chapter, particular attention will be given to how music video conventions relate to non-representational signs in Björk-Gondry's second collaboration, ARMY OF ME.

As Richard Dyer argues in "Entertainment and Utopia," non-representational signs; music, colour, texture, movement, rhythm, and melody, are icons of "resemblance at the level of basic structuration."[161] Historically overlooked by film theorists, these signs are nevertheless crucial to understanding how utopian impulses manifest in popular entertainment forms, such as the music-video.[162] The music-lyrics dyad is central in this regard, as it serves as the "problem to be solved" in a recursive sense; that is, it is the music-lyrics dyad, which when broken into fragments (such as its musical phrases) serves as the basis from which to represent a song audio-visually. However, rather than solely focusing on lyrical components (which often dictate a music video's narrative framing), this chapter inspects how musical patterns dictate how "non-representational signs – colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, camerawork" are rendered on screen.[163] As Björk remarks in the 1997 BBC documentary *Modern Minimalists*, "what has happened very much this century, especially the latter half, is that people have moved away from plots and structures, and moved to its complete opposite, which is textures."[164] Taking into consideration this statement by the Icelandic performer, though important, the plot of ARMY OF ME will not be the primary concern of this chapter.

ARMY OF ME, the first music video for Björk's second album, *Post*, depicts humans, not only as fuel or as parts in a machine, but more importantly, as commodities, curated and displayed in museums for public viewing.[165] In a loose sense, this narrative thread anticipates post-cinematic modes of subjectivity in an era of constant surveillance by self, capital, and the state. Evoking, not only capitalism's contradictions but also its dystopic tendencies, ARMY OF ME is best defined as a surrealist science fiction. This genre's approach to technology, nature and self has served Björk's thematic concerns well throughout her career. This is evident in other music videos, such as her

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[161] *Ibid.,* 468
[162] *Ibid.,* 468
[163] *Ibid.,* 468
[164] "Björk - Modern Minimalists." (7:41- 7:56).
[165] Mark Pytlik notes that "Björk had worked with a variety of different directors for the five *Debut* videos, and often with diminishing returns. For 'Army of Me,' she retreated back to the familiar warmth of Michel Gondry, who had begun to establish himself as one of MTV's brightest lights." Pytlik, *Wow and Flutter*, 94.

collaboration with Chris Cunningham, ALL IS FULL OF LOVE, which Steven Shaviro calls an exploration into the erotic life of machines.[166] In the context of ARMY OF ME, the dystopian sensibilities of late 20th century capitalism are rendered affectively through the video's narrative, but more importantly, through its non-representational components. The video's camerawork, for example, uses groundbreaking technologies to signal to emergent digital modes of subjectivity, just as the internet was becoming increasingly dominant in the culture of the mid-1990s.

ARMY OF ME

Wearing a martial arts outfit and driving a giant SUV, Björk's persona in this surrealist dystopia is that of an action-hero (the song was included in the soundtrack for the 1995 sci-fi film *Tank Girl*), with the video's narrative concluding in a violent, climactic explosion and the rescue of a young gentleman-in-distress. If Björk demanded nature be triumphant over man in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, in ARMY OF ME it is humanity which triumphs over the throes of the institution. The oppositional settings in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and ARMY OF ME can be said to reflect an aesthetic concern in Icelandic cultural production, wherein the "contrast between country and city… can be understood as a response to the sudden shift from rural to urban life that occurred in Iceland during the twentieth century."[167] For Nicola Dibben, this opposition between nature and city is often eradicated in Björk's work "through visual processes in which the urban is sublimated into the rural,"[168] as in the ISOBEL music video. This dichotomy can be understood as "an expression of a Utopian desire for the supposed innocence and simplicity of rural life."[169] With a mostly urban setting, ARMY OF ME represents a world where the opposite is true; the rural has been sublimated into the urban, giving the video its sci-fi dystopic affect, expressed through Björk and Gondry's otherwise utopian pop-surrealism.

In "Utopian Punk" Peter Webb and John Lynch trace a trajectory in Björk's approach to utopian sensibilities which extends to her audiovisual aesthetic, particularly in her collaborations with Gondry: "from utopia as tied to a location or place to something defined as a process of

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[166] Steven Shaviro. "The Erotic Life of Machines."

[167] Dibben, "Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music Video and Music Documentary Author(s)," 140.

[168] *Ibid.,* 141

[169] *Ibid.,* 141

actualization in a transitory moment of unification."[170] In this sense, Björk-Gondry's music video authorship can be tied into the concept of *utopian punk* as an unified collective process of actualization through collective performance. Elaborating on Bill Martin's musical description of Björk's first band – The Sugarcubes – and their post-punk stylings, Webb and Lynch categorize utopian punk as embodying Björk's aesthetic tactics and strategy by "being a productive relationship of experimental, collaborative, and technological elements driven by a clear sense of becoming."[171] This approach reflects punk as a popular movement wherein radical styles mirror radical politics, with autonomy, hybridity and anti-essentialism serving as its theoretical pillars, and collaboration as its practical methodology.[172] Tracing British punk's ideological evolution, from the nihilism of the Sex Pistols, to the "thought-provoking" activism of The Clash and Crass, Webb and Lynch note how the punk figure went from being perceived as a social outcast to an "anarchist of theory and action, as revolutionary, and as interventionist in a critical and constructive way."[173] This notion of utopian punk has continued in Björk's work beyond The Sugarcubes and is an important signpost to understand how the music-lyrics dyad in ARMY OF ME – being both representational and non-representational – serves as the music video's recursive base. The song "Army of Me" thus serves as the first element in a recursive authorship process which will be defined as autopoetic. Such an authorship process is best understood as contingent on the relational dynamics amongst ARMY OF ME's elements functioning and performing as a networked entity.

As such, to begin analyzing the interaction between the three compositional dyads in a music video, it is worthwhile to first briefly consider how the production process of its song, that is, of ARMY OF ME's music-lyrics dyad, dictates its dystopian sensibilities. A sense of both the politically engaged punk and the movement's aesthetic rubrics are imbued in the song and its musical structuring. Graham Massey (member the electronic trio 808 State and Björk's collaborator on her first and second albums, *Debut* and on *Post*) states that "Army of Me" was an attempt "to try something that was quite hard… I remember that song being almost instantaneous… It's very simple: one drumbeat, one sequence — the rest is like dressing on top."[174] Sampling a sped-up

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170 Webb and Lynch, "'Utopian Punk': The Concept of the Utopian in the Creative Practice of Björk," 314.
171 *Ibid.,* 314.
172 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.*
173 Webb and Lynch, "'Utopian Punk," 314.
174 Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter,* 89.

drum sequence from Led Zeppelin's "When the Levee Breaks," this description could easily be transposed onto the conventional punk rock aesthetic of the late 1970s. "Army of Me" is also significant as a pop song, as it uses a musical mode usually not associated with the genre (and in this sense, deterritorializes the musical genre). Musicologist Ethan Hein regards the Locrian mode as not a particularly pop-friendly scale, recognizing that for Björk "the instability of Locrian mode is a feature, not a bug… [hammering] the bassline and melody into your consciousness through extreme repetition until it begins to make a strange kind of sense."[175] On the lyrical level, Björk has stated that the song was "written to a relative of mine who had been a bit out of order for a while."[176]

Björk's intention for the song was to make her own sense of self more aligned with her public persona; "*Debut* had been such a polite, shy album… [but] it wasn't really me. Maybe 'Army of Me' was an attempt to balance it out."[177] While recording *Homogenic* in 1997, Björk reflected on her time as an Icelandic punk, when being neither polite nor shy was part of her or her friends' personalities. Björk's reflection on that time reflects ARMY OF ME's narrative, since as the singer stated, her and her friends were "a bunch of 16-year old terrorists… art sort of terrorism… sabotaging what we thought was really snooty."[178] This collective sense of community against elitism has been present in Björk's work throughout her career; as Webb and Lynch note, via Gilles Deleuze, Björk's "practice has arguably been far more rhizomatic than arboreal in nature… [That is,] the defining emphasis throughout Björk's career has been one not of influence per se but *collaboration* and extension into new territories."[179] This deterritorializing approach in Björk's music video practice cannot be said to be wholly her own, since Michel Gondry was also a punk drummer, and it was the music-videos for his band which originally caught Björk's attention.[180] This punk sensibility is important since it is the music-lyrics dyad which serves as the base case (the

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[175] Hain, "Musical Simples: Army of Me." Also, Bennet, "A Song that Actually Uses Locrian."

[176] Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter*, 172.

[177] *Ibid.*, 172

[178] "The South Bank Show: Björk." (16:53 – 17:12).

[179] Webb and Lynch, *Utopian* Punk, 325.

[180] "Although he's now commonly regarded as one of the industry's most pioneering music video directors, France-born Michel Gondry had a comparatively scant resume when Björk first contacted him in 1993. Ever the talent scout, she'd seen an obscure video he'd done for his own band, Oui Oui, and was interested in meeting up to discuss the possibility of working together on the video for 'Human Behaviour.'" Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter* 70.

problem to be solved) in the recursive authorship process. As such, it is the music-lyrics which defines how the image-sound and performance-persona dyads subsequently perform with one another. With ARMY OF ME's music-lyrics dyad embodying a punk rock aesthetic via electronic production methodologies and its lyrics concerned with self-empowerment through direct action, it follows that the image-sound and performance-persona dyads would build upon the song's hard, yet simplistic structuring, to depict a pop-surrealist, cyberpunk dystopia.

*Figure 2.2: **"Art sort of terrorism."** A screencap from the French broadcast of "The South Bank Show" shows a teenage Björk amidst ruins while she recollects her life as a young Icelandic punk.*

Björk and Gondry's D.I.Y. ethics and the notion of aesthetics as praxis – that is, of punk music's thematic concerns with "disruption, mistrust of authority, starkly juxtaposed collage art, and anarchist political lifestyle elements, all tied into a 'Do-It-Yourself' philosophy'" – take HUMAN BEHAVIOUR's pop-surrealist aesthetic into a more explicitly political territory in ARMY OF ME.[181] Continuing on the oneiric trajectory from HUMAN BEHAVIOUR is more nightmarish than dreamy, with double-deck hyper-Hummers using diamonds as fuel extracted from humans by gorilla-dentists. The video's narrative depicts humans, not only as fuel or parts in a machine, but more importantly, as art-commodities curated and displayed in museums for public viewing, while

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[181] Webb and Lynch, "Utopian Punk," 316.

in the background, the monotony of digital bureaucracy carries on, ubiquitous as ever. As a representation of early anarchists' tactic of propaganda by the deed, the finale of ARMY OF ME renders Björk as a revolutionary, or a terrorist, depending on the audience's reading. Either way, her political goal is a personal one; to liberate a comrade from the throes of institutional confinement.

This narrative thread is worth noting as it prevented the video from debuting in the States following the terrorist bombing of Oklahoma City's IRS office by Timothy McVeigh.[182] On the controversy Gondry responded by saying that:

"[P]eople said to me it's like we were doing terrorism on modern art… Which never occurred to me, you know? To me, the bombing was one of those contrasting ideas… It was funny that to wake him up, she has to explode a bomb near his ear because he's so deeply asleep! I don't think there was any condescending thought about terrorism — it was too cartoonish and it had nothing to do with political elements."[183]

This reaction to ARMY OF ME, where its censorship was contingent on the assumption of a specific meaning on behalf of the creators of the music video, is representative of the intentional fallacy in authorship studies. Predating the post-structuralist death of the author in 1954, William K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley argue that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art."[184] As Kristina Busse notes this theory remains enticing since authors "in the power struggle over meaning… tend to lose ground somewhere between releasing control over their creation and the introduction of cultural and psychological influences."[185] Considering the usefulness of authorial intention vis

[182] "Unfortunately, between the time that it was filmed and ultimately serviced to television stations, America's complexion had changed drastically. Timothy McVeigh's terrorist bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City had killed 168 civilians and injured over 500 others; right or wrong, national sensitivity to any similar imagery was at an unprecedented high. Out of respect to the issue, MTV pulled "Army of Me" from their playlist before they ever got a chance to air it." Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter,* 95.
[183] Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter*, 94.
[184] Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," 3.
[185] Busse, "The Return of the Author," 53.

a vis interpretation, it is justifiable to instead emphasize the performative aspect of the compositional dyads in a music video, through their non-representational qualities, rather than through a textual reading of implied or explicit meaning by the authors.

Considering the non-representational aspects of the music-lyrics dyad and its techno-punk aesthetic, the darker tone of ARMY OF ME can be said to be directly inflected by the Locrian bassline which serves as the affective pillar of the song. "Army of Me," as the basis for the recursively authorial process of ARMY OF ME, no doubt contributed to the music-video being "misread" as politically violent, and to it being subsequently censored. In this sense, the music-lyrics dyad has a direct effect on the dyadic image-sound and performance-persona elements, as well as on the receiving spectator. That is to say that the latter, representational dyads follow the affective tone of the former, non-representational dyad (though all three dyads eventually come to affect both representational and non-representational signs alike). The political importance of non-representational signs in both cinematic and musical genres cannot therefore be understated, as it is their conventions which will often inform how a work is received. In this sense, if musicals hold the promise of something better in order to resolve contradictions in capitalism, other genres, such as the dystopian science fiction of ARMY OF ME, do so inversely; through the reassurance that things could always be worse. Representing a social reality removed or alternate from its contemporaneous historical condition, sci-fi can both justify and critique the inadequacies of capitalism, depending on the use of its conventional motifs and themes.

For example, just as non-representational signs clue us into utopian impulses such as *energy, abundance, intensity,* and *transparency* in the musical, in science fiction they can also evoke dystopian impulses such as *scarcity*, *exhaustion*, *dreariness*, and *manipulation*. By extrapolating these inadequacies into deterministic, ahistorical futures (most of which lie outside capitalism, or after its fall) capitalism's increasing shortcomings become normalized rather than critiqued. Rather than reality threatening utopia, as in musicals, sci-fi dystopias instead normalize capitalism's inadequacies. The image-sound dyad in ARMY OF ME shows how non-representational signs, as per Dyer, can be coded in the music video through cinematic genres beyond the musical. Such genres, like science fiction, are more aligned with everyday lived realities. Lacking a clear performance space which coincides with that of the narrative and the televisual as in the musicals described by Dyer, it is the non-representational signs associated with TV news which are the most

useful in assessing the dystopic sensibilities in the narrative of ARMY OF ME and on the cinematography, camerawork, and editing of its image-sound dyad. This dyad, of course, being itself contingent on the music-lyrics dyad as the base for the video itself. These signs: cinematography, camerawork, and editing relate to the scarce, dreary, and exhausted sensibilities which embody contemporary society's dystopic affects in the context of modern spectacle, subjectivity, and art.

Energy, as Dyer points out, is inflected in TV news through the "speed of series of sharp, short items."[186] In the case of ARMY OF ME, this can be seen in the image-sound dyad's micronarratives which, though surrealist in their randomness, nevertheless evoke an uneasy sense of dreariness and scarcity, at least until the video's climax.[187] These sensibilities reflect those that come from inhabiting dystopia as it becomes increasingly normalized. In dystopia, after all, there is no sense of the teleological progress of democratic-liberal ideology, as dystopia is itself, democratic-liberalism's (and its economic counterpart, capitalism) logical conclusion. Moreover, the narrative in ARMY OF ME challenges representational signs as observed by Dyer since the persona depicted by Björk is not "nicer than we are" (she uses violence to accomplish her goals) and the situation is not "more soluble than those we encounter."[188] Nevertheless, the narrative in ARMY OF ME, as the representational space for the three dyadic elements, anchors "the necessarily more fluid signification of the non-representational elements," and thus remains at their service.[189]

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[186] Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 470.

[187] Björk drives until her truck breaks down due to a faulty component, a human, who then crawls out of the engine all the worse for the wear; Björk gets a toothache and sees a dentist, a gorilla who extracts a diamond from her mouth and attempts to then steal it. They tussle until Björk is victorious. Winning her diamond back, she escapes running as it increasingly grows in size and weight; she drops the diamond into her truck's engine, restarting it. The shaking wakes up a corporate drone in a nearby office. She drives to a museum, walks inside with a carry-on bomb and sneaks past a suspicious receptionist, sleeping guards, and distracted patrons. Björk finds "Exhibit 25," and places her explosives next to his sleeping head; she whispers into his ear and runs out of the museum covering her own. As patrons notice Björk's action and grow agitated, the bomb goes off, with the museum's facade now reading "M U M" as the other letters fall off; Björk's target wakes up and she walks back into the now blown-up museum. Guards and patrons lie on the floor unconscious, as she embraces the sleeping beauty. The image freezes and turns sepia. Björk cries stop-animated diamond tears. It is worth noting here that, although the male figure is implicitly Björk's love-interest, there are no explicit cues in the music-video to suggest this reading; it could just as well be her brother or a friend.

[188] Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 468.

[189] *Ibid.,* 469.

*Figure 2.3: **Contemporary Dystopia**. The "Trump Era," which culminated with the takeover of the United States Capitol by right-wing paramilitaries on January 6, 2021 and with the second impeachment of the 45th American president on January 13, 2021 for his role in the attempted coup, is a great example of how liberal democracies can easily be subverted from within by extreme political actors. REUTERS/Leah Millis/File Photo.*

As such, ARMY OF ME uses its narrative elements to emphasize the song's musical patterns through the *mise-en-scène* and its colours, textures, movement, melody, and camerawork, as well as its micro and macro rhythms (both within the image and in the materiality of its edits). Rhythmically, Hain observes that "Army of Me" is a very simple song: "a stream of six sixteenth notes ending on an eighth note. The pitches… [with] wide interval leaps [which] further challenge your sense of where the harmonic center is. The distorted synth timbre adds to the dark mood."[190] The song's Locrian mode, due to a diminished fifth, is not prevalent in the major scales of pop music, since it gives compositions an unstable and directionless affect. The lyrics, sung in C major, avoid hitting Locrian's most dissonant note, its flat fifth. This note is significant as it separates Locrian from its more melodious counterpart, the Phrygian mode. Though the bassline uses Locrian's flat fifths during the verses, Björk's melody grounds the song as more conventionally pop, precisely by avoiding them. In this sense, the music-lyrics dyad is fragmented, not only as non-representational and representational, but also affectively. With the musical element's dark tonality juxtaposed against the smooth melody of the lyrics, "Army of Me" is emblematic of Björk's

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[190] Hain.

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approach to pop music as avant-garde and is perhaps one of the reasons that her aesthetic sensibilities mesh with Gondry's own DIY pop-surrealism so well.

Using ARMY OF ME's musical structure, as highlighted in this brief music theory intervention of its recursive base (the song "Army of Me") we can begin to analyze how, as the video's music-lyrics dyad, it defines the affective qualities in the sound-image dyad. That is to say, how it can imbue a sense of both the dystopic (commenting on the late capitalist condition at the end of the 20th century) and the oneiric (continuing Björk-Gondry's surrealist aesthetic from HUMAN BEHAVIOUR). This is particularly significant when framed within science fiction, as one can break down recursively how the image-sound dyad performs – through textures, colours, and camerawork – the repetitive, dissonant qualities of the music-lyrics dyad in order to non-representationally render the inadequacies of dystopia.

As the song's driving bassline kicks in, a young man sleeps in a capsule and a handheld camera moves close. Behind him, the city moves past in the background through a rear-projected moving-image, in a stylistic tactic reminiscent of HUMAN BEHAVIOUR. A set of metal teeth, or *grills* (an adornment usually associated with hip-hop culture as a signifier for newly attained wealth), moves up and down to the song's pulsating beat, and the city is revealed through a dolly back. This performance of dancing teeth in the image-sound dyad is analogous to Björk's persona dancing (it is later revealed to be her teeth) without having the singer actually dance on-screen, which would diminish the dystopian tone of the video. As such, the image-sound dyad, through the music-lyrics' beats, de-subjectifies the performance element, which is central to the music video genre as conventionally understood. In this sense, it deterritorializes the performance-persona dyad, while at the same time, reifying it in the context of the narrative framing. Gondry's image-sound dyad thus allows for an onscreen performance, but without a clearly defined subject, such as Björk or her persona (as in BACHELORETTE).

The subsequent shot is a digital sequence-shot, significant on its own terms due to the influence it has had on science fiction as a genre. For Pytlik, ARMY OF ME "was the first to utilize stop film motion techniques to achieve a rotational transition between two points of focus, a technique later popularized by *The Matrix*."[191] Others note that Gondry developed the technology for the Rolling Stones' LIKE A ROLLING STONE. Since both videos came out in 1995 (Björk's

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[191] Pytlik, *Wow and* Flutter, 172.

video in April, the Stones' in October), bullet-time's genealogy remains uncertain, as the technology is significantly more evolved in LIKE A ROLLING STONE. Noriko Kurachi observes in *The Magic of Computer Graphics* that, Image-Based Rendering was used by Gondry to show "characters frozen in midair… and provided inspiration for the "Bullet Time Shots" scene in *The Matrix…* where a camera whizzes through a room filled with people frozen in mid-motion."[192] In interviews Gondry has for the most part also credited the Stones' video as bullet-time's inception. Nevertheless, Gondry's use of the technology to emphasize a sense of cinematic realism by moving through space without an edit is a perfect example of how music-video's three elemental dyads can perform collectively to render a song audio-visually, and thus autopoetically author the music video as such.

First, one may consider the music-lyrics dyad, as composed by Björk and her songwriting team. Divided into Locrian and Phrygian modes, the latter functions as a musical overlay to help resolve the otherwise dissonant harmonies of the former. The lyrics' smooth flowing melody also serves as a counterpoint to the rhythm section's repetition and tonal oscillation. This contrast between the music's vibrating rhythm and its lyrical melodies can be said to manifest in ARMY OF ME's image-sound dyad through its camerawork and editing. Integrated through its use of computer (rather than stop-motion) animation to flourish the *mise-en-scène*, the image-sound dyad achieves a sense of continuous movement where editing is not only "invisible," but becomes itself a part of the camera's movement without necessarily being "spliced" together in the celluloid sense of a conventional edit.

Though ARMY OF ME is coded as science-fiction, Gondry's image-sound dyad carries his pop-surrealist tactics from HUMAN BEHAVIOUR in order to represent the sonic textures of the song. As the camera tilts up from a gray-bearded man driving a small convertible – which also serves as undercarriage for Björk's truck – we see moths and fireflies plastered on the engine's grill. These insects, which perform visual motifs and narrative functions in Björk-Gondry's *Isobel* trilogy (HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, ISOBEL and BACHELORETTE), are used in ARMY OF ME to instead emphasize the electronic textures in the music-lyrics dyad. Through the insects' vital microrhythms of fluttering wings – themselves in performative motion as their wings carry them away and beyond the frame – the musical textures in Björk's music-lyrics dyad perform a diegetic

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[192] Kurachi, *The Magic of Computer Graphics*, 145.

function in the hybrid digital-analogue image component, rather than functioning independently in the music-lyrics dyad. In this sense, the video's music-lyrics dyad is directly remediated by the image-sound dyad through the insects' flying away one onscreen. This is a good example of how one element (here the song, as recursive base) is directly affected by other formal elements in their collective performance, as no one element remains unchanged in the networked authorship process. All dyads are constantly performing with one another, remediating and being remediated, and therefore in a state of continuous, collective, autopoetic authoring.

At the sound level of the dyad, as in Björk-Gondry's other collaborations, ARMY OF ME also uses diegetic sound to ground the diegesis' fantastic universe into a sense of reality. However, it does so in its climactic conclusion, and emphasizes the violent act for which the video was censored. As such, and counter to HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and its utopian natural setting, the use of diegetic sound in the representational image-sound dyad, rather than setting an idyllic rural environment, emphasizes the violence of modernity. Moreover, the use of CGI in the image-sound dyad enhances the miniatures, scale, rear-projection, and cardboard *mise-en-scène* from HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, but now to embody the sensibilities of a city beyond both reality and modernity (though a hunt-or-be-hunted sensibility remains). CGI also takes the performance-persona dyad beyond the confines of the song-lyrics dyads, rendering it in a more realistic framing since the video does not really rely on a performance space. Björk's absentee performance is therefore significant, as it emphasizes more the persona aspect of the performance-persona dyad. This is contingent on the narrative elements of the dystopic setting; she is seen singing only three times in the video, and only for mere seconds. In the video's beginning, she sings the first verse as she drives her car into the metropolis; then at the dentist's office, walking down a hall of mirrors, she sings a part of the chorus; and when driving to the museum, the only lyrics in-sync with the image (and in a more diegetic sense, than in being perceived as actually sung) are the video's eponymous lyrics, "…*army of me.*"

This approach in the performance-persona dyad emphasizes, like the image-sound dyad as previously discussed, the contrast in the tonal modalities of the verse and chorus, not only in the counterpoint of the music-lyrics' melodies, but also in its driving bassline, which becomes a bit brighter during the chorus (thus partially resolving the verse's tense dissonance). However, it is the verse's performance space which concerns us here, as Gondry's image-sound dyad uses its proto-bullet-time morphing technique in order to render space continuous in a single sequence-

shot. This realist tactic, in the Bazinian sense, codes the video's dystopic sensibilities as more reality-contingent than fictive, while at the same time drawing attention to the performance of the digital/analogue hybrid technologies which compose the image and embody its dystopic affects.

This hybrid sequence-shot is preceded by a shot of a young man sleeping in a glass chamber. With the city in movement in its rear-projected background, the shot uses the same technique as in HUMAN BEHAVIOUR's opening, but with the subject remaining on-frame rather than entering it, and the rear-projection moving laterally rather than head-on. Unlike HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, there is no diegetic sound to ground it as representationally realistic. Instead, it is the familiarity of the city which grounds us in reality. As noted, most of the video takes place in its narrative space, rather than in its performance space or televisual space, and one of the few purely televisual elements in ARMY OF ME is that of the metal teeth dancing to the music's rhythm before the city is introduced, which as noted, signify the musician's conventional performance in the music video.

From its framing and editing, there is an equivalence made between the bouncing metal teeth and Björk's engine in truck which becomes relevant later in the video's narrative. The camera's movement is slow and controlled, and the lack of editing conveys a sense of dreariness given its pace, particularly, against the techno beat and bass. As the moths and fireflies exit the frame, Björk begins to sing "stand up, you've got to manage…" Uncut, the camera now moves into Björk, as the city moves past her, rear-projected and reflected upon the truck's windshield. Perhaps, needing to capture the low light-source of the rear-projection, there is a discrepancy in the cinematography as the digitally manipulated shot begins its course into the next framing. Whereas this past section is rendered in a darker blue hue, reminiscent of day-for-night,[193] as the camera begins its digitally manipulated "pan" from the truck's frontal view to its lateral one, the image becomes significantly brighter, gaining a green tint for the remainder of the sequence-shot. This morphing-transition thus serves as a digital bridge between two different angles, which are lit and shot separately, and though it uses a proto-bullet-time technology, it nevertheless performs its task spatially, rather than temporally (as it would later do in Gondry's LIKE A ROLLING STONE and the Wachowski's *The Matrix*).

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[193] This technique uses smaller aperture and filters to simulate night during daytime shoots.

Figure 2.4: **Proto-Bullet Time in ARMY OF ME:** *Separate shots, digitally integrated into a single camera-movement, show how the three dyads in a music-video; music-lyrics, image-sound, and performance-persona perform to create an affective experience.*

In this sense, the shot functions more in accordance with a Bazinian notion of realism – as a continuous representation of cinematic space – than the more conceptual representation of spatial movement in a time held still. Barely two seconds long, the shot nevertheless gives an otherwise simple camera movement an uncanny sensibility, that of *manipulation*; this perfectly sets up the video's dystopic reality. As such, the three shots depicting Björk driving her truck into the city may be considered as a unified multiple; that is, as one continuous, 47-second long, analogue/digital hybrid sequence-shot, which uses its realist framing to ground ARMY OF ME's dystopic affects with those of our own digitalized condition.

In fact, most of this introductory sequence-shot represents its reality as not entirely indistinct from our own, with its most surreal elements following the shot's conclusion. As the shot continues, post-digital effect(s), the camera descends from Björk's cabin down to just above the ground, she sings, "I won't sympathize… anymore." The *mise-en-scène* is emblematic of Gondry's image-sound, continuing to use the light textures of cardboard and construction paper against the weight of what is actually constructed with them, such as Björk's tank and the city itself. Outside the frame, as the chorus kicks in, Björk's performance-persona carries on, "and if you complain once more, you'll meet an army of me." Pedestrians walk on the sidewalk, all moving in the same

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direction. Meanwhile, an Oliver-type child in a news-cap watches Björk's eight-wheeler driving past him. Craning from the street and across sidewalk, the camera enters an adjacent building, as Björk continues driving down the street outside. In the building, there are three offices. In the first, a man sleeps; in the second, another one works; and in the last, a security guard is startled by the weight of Björk's titanic vehicle outside. The image's greenish hues are emphasized by the offices' fluorescent lights (a cinematography technique that comes from white-balancing under those conditions, and which would be later narrativized for the *Matrix*'s hyperreal version of 1999) The guard's office, however, is not part of the sequence-shot hybrid as described here, rather it is intersected by a cutaway of Björk slamming her steering wheel as her car falters.

This fragment of the video is representative of how music video's three dyads; its music-lyrics, image-sound, and performance-persona collaborate with one another in order to render affectively the video's cinematic genre (science fiction), and to recursively author the music video through the dynamic amongst its elements. First the music-lyrics' cyberpunk aesthetic, defined by a simple, repetitive bassline and countertonal melody creates a sense of uncanny familiarity, signaling to a world both future and present. Following that, the image-sound dyad uses its compositional colour, textures, and camera-movement to translate the music-lyrics' dissonance onto the visual filed, and through computer-generated editing, meld a sense of continuous spatial reality with one of simultaneous manipulation, thus reflecting asymmetrical power structuring in a dystopian culture. These two aesthetic trajectories converge in the performance-persona dyad, which, while mostly lacking a performance space, relies on Björk's action-hero persona to ground the viewer in the narrative; this further situates the video's diegesis closer to reality than to a constructed, performative world.

As stated, Gondry's image-sound dyad often includes diegetic sounds which serve to ground Björk-Gondry's fantastical narratives and visual elements realistically, as is the case in the introductions of HUMAN BEHAVIOUR and BACHELORETTE. However, in ARMY OF ME, this realist tactic comes towards the song's conclusion, further emphasizing Björk's destructive act by *not* aestheticizing it through the performative contributions of the music-lyrics dyad. As per Dyer, TV news' emphasis on "violence…with an eye to climactic moments" signify utopian desires for intense affects, particularly, against the monotony of modern-day capitalist dreariness.[194]

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[194] Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 471.

However, after the explosion in ARMY OF ME, the intensity which preceded it in the sound-image's faster-paced editing and camera movement, is countered by the diegetic sounds of nothing but flickering lights as the museum's structural framework falters. This gives the video's final moments a truly apocalyptic sensibility, as the aural textures of bending metal accentuate a dystopic affect. In this sense, the music video's conclusion recursively resolves the song's punk aesthetic, as well as Björk's concern with the destruction of elitist art. From the song, to the images, and to performance, the video's autopoetic authoring lies in how non-representational signs relate to one another. They are continuously being remediated by one another, until authorial agency appears more contingent on their de-subjectified interactions than on one subject-author, be it Björk or Michel Gondry.

Conclusion: Collective Performance as Recursive Ontology

With the music-lyrics dyad serving as the recursive base for the music video, and the image-sound and performance-persona dyads following the fragmented and counter-tonal structures of the musical composition, ARMY OF ME's dyads remediate one other as they collectively perform with one another on the screen. In this sense, they influence each other and engage in a process of creation which may be said to be autopoetic and collaborative. The scarcity which underlies the surrealist narrative of the video (Björk sings "it's too exhausted" as she drops a diamond into her teeth-engine to restart it), can be said to be a commentary on the dystopian tendencies of late capitalism in the 1990s. However, mostly abstaining from evaluating narrative and structures of narration (as was the focus of Chapter 1), this chapter was concerned with the performance of the dyadic elements in ARMY OF ME, and particularly, how they come to render non-representational signs, such as texture and colour, to inflect a dystopian sensibility to techno-punk song.

The manipulation of reality in dystopia, for example, is evident in the image-sound dyad and its use of bullet-time digital representation. The suturing of different camera angles and subjectivities into a single shot hints at the pervasive control of capital over how the everyday is perceived. Through the music-lyrics' repetitive bassline and Björk's disaffected performance-persona, the dreariness of capitalist monotony is emphasized, while the sickly green-fluorescent hues which tint the offices and signal to an ever-present sense of exhaustion from exploitative labour. Dystopia's fragmented social fabric and scarcity of resources have their parallel in the textures of

the city's artificial skyline, whether as reflected video on glass, or as projected celluloid on a screen.

The video's driving affect is therefore one of quiet, yet constant decay, and much of the non-representational, dystopic textures in ARMY OF ME arise from the juxtaposition of different audiovisual technologies. Using 16mm celluloid, video, and computer-rendered images to embody the sensibilities of a historical condition defined by unresolvable oppositions, ARMY OF ME's affective tonality signals an end to history. By emphasizing a unified multiplicity, the integration of different technologies can then be said to serve as a critique against a sense of teleological development wherein nature is overcome by technological "progress." Moreover, bullet-time representation, which came to epitomize visual culture at the 20th century's end, anticipated post-cinematic experiences of the 21st century, and can even be said to serve as a metaphor for such experiences. By representing a singular moment from a multiplicity of perspectives, bullet-time signifies how transmedia is contingent on the formal unification of multiple sites, subjects, and practices around a singular narrative event, or universe. In this sense, the use of bullet-time in ARMY OF ME anticipates post-cinematic modes of non-hierarchical representation and image assemblage which reached their zenith in music video practice in the ecologically-oriented music video JÓGA, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3.
Björk as a Minor and Post-Cinematic Author

In "Hunter," the opening track for Björk's third album *Homogenic*, the Icelandic artist sings "I thought I could organize freedom, how Scandinavian of me…" These lyrics, hinting at the origins of Iceland as a Danish colony, should not be assumed as signifying a sense of pride towards the colonizer of the Nordic island-nation. As Björk herself stated in 1997, as "a colony for six or seven hundred years, [Iceland] was treated very badly by the Danish… we were not allowed to play music and dance."[195] In 2005, Björk remarked how she and the Icelandics of her generation, and inspired by late 1970s British punk, had "finally started to ask ourselves what it meant to be Icelandic and how to feel proud of it instead of feeling guilty all the time, like animal creatures colonized by Denmark for 600 years."[196] In many interviews, Björk has also juxtaposed the political dynamic between Iceland and Denmark with her own personal and troublesome relationship with Dane director, Lars Von Trier on the set for *Dancer in the Dark*. These declarations place Björk parallel to Iceland, in a postcolonial relationship with Denmark.

As in the case of "Hunter" (which serves more as a critique of Danish colonization than as a tribute to a shared sense of Scandinavian culture), postcolonial themes are recurring in Björk's work. For Björk, Icelandic nationalism is antithetic, as "Hunter" states, to "the organizing" – or rather, in a colonial context, the subjugation – of the colonized and their freedom. An Icelandic individual is after all, she contends, "fiercely independent; so self-sufficient, it's arrogant."[197] Björk's sense of an inherent radical independence, of anarchy, in Icelandic culture is almost paradoxical in the context of a national identity. She observes that "people invented anarchy in [another] country 100, 200 years ago, and Icelandic people were like, 'so?'"[198] In this sense, to the Icelandic singer, anarchy existed on her island long before it was theorized as a political ideology, while at the same juxtaposing anarchy with a sense of national identity. This further signals to Björk's thematic concern to resolve opposing tendencies, such as the sublimation of the natural and the technological into one another (as analyzed in previous chapters). In this context, through Michel Gondry's hybrid digital-analogue image technology, JÓGA represents Icelandic nature

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[195] "The South Bank Show: Björk." (12:00).

[196] In Nicola Dibben, "Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music," 133.

[197] "The South Bank Show: Björk (15:39).

[198] *Ibid.,* (15:39).

both as a cultural unifier, and as the embodiment of a postcolonial people's unbridled energy and freedom.

   As Webb and Lynch observe, there are "a number of oppositions within the creative practice of Björk—local/global, space/time, purity/hybridity—that function to drive an unsteady sense of temporary coherence within each project."[199] In the context of postcolonial Iceland, purity and hybridity serve as an all-encompassing dichotomy in the work of Björk (i.e., the purity of nature vs. the hybridity of technology). Hybridity is important in a postcolonial context for Avtar Brah and Annie Coombes who observe that hybridity remains a "key concept in cultural criticism, in post-colonial studies, in debates about cultural contestation and appropriation, and in relation to the concept of the border and the ideal of cosmopolitanism."[200] As a concept, hybridity is central in the framing of JÓGA as representative of Björk as a minor music-video author, contingent on both her own post-colonial subjectivity, and on the digital assemblage of images by Michel Gondry (which extrapolates the hybrid bullet-time imaging technology from ARMY OF ME). As argued in Chapter 2, the anarchic sensibility in the work of Björk and Gondry mirrors their punk upbringing, as well as constituting an intrinsic part of Icelandic culture. This political sensibility may have contributed in making British punk music particularly appealing to Iceland's youth, pushing them to forge a national identity outside of a Scandinavian context.[201] As Björk notes, her generation "discovered that what really mattered was not what you could do but what you really did… We used this power to state a musical declaration of independence."[202] This statement defines a national identity through a punk ethos that is essentially anarchist – again, one of many contradictions that Björk unifies in her work though hybridization.

   Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir contrasts Icelandic postcoloniality against other postcolonial experiences in "The New Nordic Cool: Björk, Icelandic Fashion, and Art Today," describing Icelandic

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[199] Webb and Lynch, "Utopian Punk," 324.

[200] Brah and Coombes, *Hybridity and its Discontents*, 1.

[201] Webb and Lynch note that "the anti-imperialist and proto-nationalist movements of liberation in Africa had given young people a self-confidence and belief in their abilities to generate their own cultural awareness. Iceland has its own history of being a Danish and Norwegian dependency but gained independence and a sense of cultural distinctness in 1944. Independence has been a strong cultural theme in Iceland, and for Björk it finds expression throughout her work, for example, the track 'Declare Independence' from the album Volta (2007)." "Utopian Punk," 321

[202] Dibben, "Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music," 133.

hybridity as "not rooted in cultural diversity, or in tension or contestation with the colonizer, but in its position on the border of Europe."[203] Defining the notion of postcolonial hybridity through Nestor Garcia Canclini, as "not only the mixing of ethnic or religious elements but the products of advanced technologies and modern or postmodern social processes,"[204] Sigurjónsdóttir argues that Icelandic postcolonial hybridity accounts for the aesthetic and technological cultural production of the nation as it attempts to define itself against that of Europe. From a position of otherness, Iceland nevertheless continues to exchange of ideas with the continent.[205] With Iceland considered a developing nation following World War II, the tensions between its rurality and the metropolises of Europe is one which remains salient in the work of Icelandic artists. As Nicola Dibben argues, in Björk's "artistic output the natural and technological are unified through a variety of musical and visual devices, making her work a prime example of this eradication of oppositions."[206] The resolution of further opposing dichotomies in the music videos of Björk-Gondry, such as those between the organic and the artificial, the popular and the avant-garde, the digital and the analogue has also been a constant theme in their work. This is evident, for example, in the unification of low-technology solutions and digitally manipulated images by Gondry and in the eclectic beats, pulses, and textures of Björk's music, all juxtaposed against her own raw, Icelandic-infused style of singing.[207]

The unification of nature and technology is therefore itself representative of Iceland's "so quick, it's violent" economic and technological progress, wherein, as Björk notes, the island-nation "developed in eight years what say, England, did in 400 years."[208] Furthermore, Nicola Dibben observes how,

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[203] Sigurjónsdóttir, "The New Nordic Cool: Björk, Icelandic Fashion, and Art Today," 240-1.

[204] *Ibid.,* 241.

[205] *Ibid.,* 241.

[206] Dibben,"Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music," 142. Also, Nicola Dibben, *Björk.*

[207] Folk music historian, Njáll Sigurðsson notes how Björk sings in a traditionally Icelandic manner, using "her voice in a very specific way, there is a specific sound, in her voice… It's not a singing voice, not exactly, it's not a speaking voice; it's somewhere in between." "The South Bank Show: Björk," (12:55 – 13:18).

[208] "The South Bank Show: Björk," (11:45 – 11:53).

"Iceland has undergone rapid economic and social change over the past 100 years. There has been a shift from rural to urban living, from agriculture to mechanized fishing and the metal industries, closer ties to the United States of America and the emergence of a class system. From being a colony of Denmark for 500 years, Iceland gained independence in 1944 and was until recently the fifth richest nation in the world (measured by Gross Domestic Product per capita), with a tiny population of 320,000 people. Nationalist fervour has remained central to Icelandic politics and thinking since independence, partly due to perceived dangers such as the British invasion in 1940 and subsequent presence of a US military base at Keflavik from 1941 to 2006, and the cultural threat brought about by global media."[209]

JÓGA – Björk-Gondry's fifth music-video, and the first video for *Homogenic* – is the paragon of this hybridity. With abstract representations of Iceland's natural grandiosity, JÓGA foregrounds the music video's televisual space in its image-sound dyad; that is, it lacks both a performance space (wherein the singer and/or band is seen performing the video's song) and a narrative space (wherein a music video's narration, if any, takes place). JÓGA's image-sound dyad thus deterritorializes conventional music-video representation, both in the context of the practice's larger canon, but also in previous Björk-Gondry collaborations.

As the performer, and following the representational conventions of the music video, Björk appears as the main subject in most of her videos. In the *Isobel* saga, where the narrative centers on Björk's relationship to nature and the modern city over the course of several videos (of which Chapter 1 analyzed the first three; HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, ISOBEL, and BACHELORETTE), her persona and performance are those of the artist's mythical, Other self. In JÓGA, however, she is featured for a mere twenty seconds in the three-minute piece, including ten seconds in the introduction, and ten seconds in the end. At the end of video, she is represented along with Iceland (which is the true subject of the video) as a digital avatar, creating a representational parallel between them. Rendered entirely in the video's televisual plane, JÓGA's *mise-en-scène* is more concerned with the textures, colours, and movements of Icelandic nature dancing to Björk's music-

[209] Dibben, "Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music," 144.

lyrics. Through digitally manipulated aerial views of Iceland's mountains, ridges, forests, and rivers, the televisual space of pure representation also becomes the performance space, but with Icelandic nature rather than Björk as the performing subject in the video.

*Figure 3.1. **Björk as Icelandic Avatar**: The Icelandic singer appears briefly and only at the beginning and the end of JÓGA. Focusing the music video's attention on Icelandic nature, it is Iceland that is the video's true subject and performer.*

Lacking a narrative (and therefore a narrative space) the image-sound dyad in JÓGA overlaps with that of the performance-persona, rendering Iceland and its nature as both the physical setting and performing subject. More significant, however, is how the Bazinian notion of cinematic representation (as a realistic depiction of temporal and spatial relations in-frame), is hybridized with the cubist-inspired notion of montage as a juxtaposition of multiple, often simultaneous, vantage points as theorized by Sergei Eisenstein.[210] This is achieved by drastically improving upon Michel Gondry's morphing technology from ARMY OF ME and LIKE A ROLLING STONE, which renders asynchronous fragments as spatio-temporally continuous. Emphasizing colour, texture and movement, as well as spatial representation, the image-sound dyad in JÓGA may be best defined as "abstract-realist." This dyad, however, also performs (in a much literal sense than in previous chapters' examples) with the minimalist string-octet and the assemblage of live-recorded, then modulated beats in the music-lyrics dyad. Nicola Dibben points out that there is a "mimesis of natural phenomena (such as the 'noisy' character of beats on 'Jóga' from Homogenic (1997)

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[210] Eugene Lunn calls Eisenstein's approach to editing "as a changeable construction of variant and conflicting viewpoints and objects." Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism,* 50.

which Björk and critics likened to 'eruptions')."[211] This mimetic aspect can be interpreted as a form of realism at the level of the music-lyrics dyad, which is itself modulated by digital technologies. The digital-analogue hybridization of Gondry's sound-image in a sense reflects this musical aesthetic.

Considering this, JÓGA takes the formal deterritorialization of cinematic and music video conventions (as argued in Chapter 1) and the collective performance of compositional dyads (as argued in Chapter 2) to become representative of postcolonial aesthetic hybridity. This is achieved by formally integrating two distinct, if not altogether mutually exclusive, classic film theories to the cinematic image; Bazinian realism and Eisenstein plasticity. This hybridization of representational strategies through the digital image, in the context of Iceland as postcolonial nation, renders JÓGA as the most post-cinematic video of the Björk-Gondry collaboration, and sets up Björk herself as a minor author.[212]

Decolonizing Utopia

In the context of cinematic practice, the minor *auteur* was elaborated upon by Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. In this text, Deleuze distinguishes between the classical political cinemas of the Soviet Sergei Eisenstein and the American Frank Capra, and the modern political cinemas of Alain Resnais, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, Glauber Rocha, Pierre Perrault, and Jean-Louis Comolli.[213] In the chapter "Cinema, Body, and Thought" Deleuze posits that the basis for a modern political cinema is that in it, "the people no longer exist… the people are missing."[214] This differs from the classical political cinemas of Soviet Russia and capitalist America, in which, as Deleuze states, "the people already there, real before being actual, ideal without being abstract."[215] Distinct from these cinemas, minor cinema functions differently in that

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[211] Dibben, "Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music Video and Music Documentary," 136.

[212] As Icelandic curator Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir notes, "creativity in Iceland over the last decade is often associated with Iceland's postcolonial condition, represented in the constant need for reevaluation of identity… More than anyone else, [Björk] has influenced visual culture and contributed to the growth of the creative grassroot space that sparked the attention of international media in the early twenty-first century." Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir, "The New Nordic Cool: Björk, Icelandic Fashion, and Art Today," 241.

[213] Deleuze, "Cinema, Body, and Thought", 216.

[214] *Ibid.,* 216.

[215] *Ibid.,* 216.

20th century cinematic propaganda, whether Soviet or American, proved the limits of political cinema to be "the supreme revolutionary or democratic art, which makes the masses a true subject" to instead make them conform to the ruling ideology.[216]

That is, rather than representing the masses so that they could see themselves, through the cinema, as united under an ideological banner, the political cinemas of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes were used to instead *subject* the masses to their respective authoritarian ideologies. Therefore, invoking Franz Kafka, Deleuze notes that "cinematographic art must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people… but of contributing to [their] invention."[217] For Deleuze, popular genres such as action franchises, become central to political aesthetics as a minor practice.[218] "American, Egyptian or Indian serials" Deleuze argues, are the very material for the minor filmmaker to deterritorialize, and to extract, through the process of collective enunciation, "the elements of a people who are still missing."[219] The popular, in the context of genres, is therefore relevant as a political project as well. It is worthwhile to then consider how the signature style of Björk and Gondry's collaborative practice, as both an avant-garde and a pop aesthetic, signifies yet another mode of postcolonial hybridity in which the tension between high and low art are resolved. Moreover, beyond audiovisual representation, and at the level of their music videos' recursive base, that of its music-lyrics, Björk has often referred to pop and folk music as interchangeable. Its opposite embodied in classical composition.

In the 1997 documentary *Modern Minimalists with Björk*, for example, the singer states that "in the middle of the century, from completely opposite angles, from folk music or pop music… [to] serious music or classical music, both decided to shake off all that armour of the brain, and start very simple, with minimal things."[220] For Björk, a music of the people must have a sense of playfulness and elegant simplicity. This turn to minimalism in folk/pop music is perhaps most relevant in punk's deconstruction of classical rock composition (with its long solos and over-

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[216] *Ibid.,* 216.
[217] *Ibid.,* 217.
[218] *Ibid.,* 217.
[219] *Ibid.,* 217.
[220] "Modern Minimalists with Björk" (0:52-1:14)

wrought lyrics), into the fast-paced three-chord structure and politically accented lyrics which defined the genre in the late 1970s.[221] As such, minimalism is not restricted only to musical composition but allows room for political immediacies, such as punk's anti-elitism ethos and utopian demands for the impossible.

Emphasizing her pop-as-folk, anti-elitist approach to musical composition in 2005's *Inside Björk*, the singer unequivocally notes that, "I truly feel in my heart that I am doing music for the everyday person. Like, I could've so easily gone and become a composer and done some avant-garde music, in some corner, for the 'chosen'… but I never wanted to do that."[222] In 2010, when she received the Polar Music Prize, Björk stated that, "I almost prefer to call pop music like folk music, because it is the music of the people; the beauty of simplicity. As much as I like very complex things, I love very simple things too, and for me you have to have both."[223] This sensibility to pop music, is however, not a latent development for Björk. As early as 1997, at the conclusion of *The South Bank Show*, she outlines her aesthetic priorities pronouncing:

> [N]umber one, two, three, four, and five, and all the way up to 73; I'm a pop musician and I make music for everyone, not for VIP, or educated people… It has to be *pop* music that everybody can be relate to. So, it's a challenge, it's an experiment, and I haven't got a clue if it'll work or not, but you have to try.[224]

The South Bank Show is significant, as it captures first-hand the recording process for *Homogenic*, and the singer's explicit formal and thematic intention with the album; to invent Icelandic pop

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[221] As Robert Niemi explains, "Punk was more than a reaction to rock's decline into bland, commercial decadence; it was, at base, a barbaric yawp against Western liberal capitalist society; a bitter denunciation of contemporary corporate hegemony and its attendant evils; rampant, soulless commercialism, economic stagnation, massive inequalities of power and wealth, cultural vapidity, and a general sociopolitical climates of disenfranchisement, alienation, and despair." Niemi, *History in the Media: Film and Television*, 268.

[222] "Inside Björk - The Documentary." (48:35)

[223] "Björk - Interview." (0:20)

[224] "The South Bank Show: Björk," (49:00)

music.[225] Musically, this album aims to reconcile electronic music with more a classical composition. It thus synthesizes yet another set of opposing aesthetics.

What is important to note regarding Björk's approach to pop music as folk music (as a music *by* the people and *for* the people), is that it elevates, or sacralizes, the pop music genre (or at least Björk's interpretation of it) into a more politically oriented practice. In the context of JÓGA, the avant-pop audiovisual style of Björk and Gondry's collaborative practice can thus be said to represent an avant-*populist* style, rather than a merely avant-*popular* one. This means that it is an aesthetic practice contingent on political engagement, as well as being one of entertainment. This distinction is important in the context of a minor aesthetic, as formal deterritorialization and collective enunciation are not exclusive to Björk-Gondry's practice. That is to say that most music videos, by necessity, break with classical cinematic conventions, while other, more collaborative-produced videos are collectively enunciated. It is Björk's specificity as a postcolonial, Icelandic environmentalist, which renders JÓGA an instance of minor expression. Björk-Gondry's signature style, an audiovisual hybridization of pop and avant-garde aesthetics, becomes most explicitly political and salient in JÓGA's representation of Björk, nature, and Iceland as recursive subjects. That is, as entities self-embedded into one another, wherein Björk represents Iceland, Iceland represents nature, and nature represents Björk. This is most obviously stated at the video's end when Björk's heart becomes the island (as nature) of Iceland (as nation) itself. [226]

In the context of Björk as postcolonial subject, the musicologist Nicola Dibben (who has published extensively on Björk and her music in both academic and curatorial contexts, as well as contributing to the app-album *Biophilia*) notes:

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[225] "I made a conscious choice that the beats for this album would be very simple, almost naïve, but still, very natural, but very explosive, like they're still in the making which for me is very much Iceland. And we would collect very slowly over a period of almost a year a library of noises. Iceland is geographically the youngest country on the planet, its' still changing and growing and very raw." *Ibid.,* (38:30)

[226] "Representations are first and foremost always a form of presentation… [and] any individual instance of representation entails a specific combination of codes and conventions drawn from the full array of cultural discourses available at any one time… Dyer and Foucault remind us that it is this complex network of discourses which not only delimits and constricts what can be said but equally importantly make saying possible in the first place… Without understanding the way images function in terms of, say, narrative, genre, or spectacle we don't really understand why they turn out the way they do." Railton and Watson, *Music Video and the Politics of Representation*, 37.

Björk's personification of nature in 'Jóga' manifests the idea of a post-colonial Iceland forging a new identity. The music video represents Iceland's most geologically and politically significant symbolic landscape: Pingvellir, the home of the Mountain Woman, the historic seat of the Icelandic parliament, and a visible site of the mid-Atlantic ridge which is the source of Iceland's geological activity. The construction of the landscape as nation in 'Jóga' is achieved through a web of audio-visual references.[227]

Such audio-visual references in the representational image-sound dyad (which as noted functions as both the performance and televisual space in the video) need to first be contextualized against the music-lyric dyad in JÓGA. Particularly, when considering Björk's own authorial intention when writing *Homogenic*, which was to create a patriotic album and invent Icelandic pop music. As Webb and Lynch observe that the song:

[C]ontains a lead melody performed by cello and strings in a Western orchestral style sitting on top of a set of slowly emerging filtered and distorted drum patterns that utilize dub reggae and break beat production techniques, providing a sense of space and timelessness and a musical reference for an internal journey that slowly opens up as the track progresses.[228]

At the musical level, Björk's hybrid approach thus integrates the pathos of classical string octets with the dynamism of her electronic modulated samples, which were gleaned by Björk herself from Icelandic nature using a portable 4-track recorder. This contrast between classical strings and modern beats is integrated by both genres retaining a sense of simplicity, even as the song steadily opens up towards its conclusion, wherein it achieves an affective sense of completion, mirroring the sense of JÓGA as a journey into Björk 's interiority. This is important in the context of JÓGA's music-lyrics dyad. It creates an equivalence between Björk's interior emotional process and the exteriors which serve to signify Iceland as a unique nation, defined by the beauty of its

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[227] Dibben, "National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music Video and Music Documentary," 137.
[228] Webb and Lynch, "Utopian Punk," 323.

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land and natural resources. Björk and Iceland are, in this sense, two mutually inclusive entities in the process of becoming. Björk is Iceland's interior voice and Iceland is Björk's extended body.

Pointing to the centrality of the Icelandic landscape in JÓGA, Mark Pytlik, in the biography *Björk: Wow and Flutter*, quotes the singer who said that with this music video she "really had a sort of Icelandic national anthem in mind… Not the national anthem but certain classic Icelandic songs — very romantic, very proud, very patriotic. Mountains, glaciers, that kind of thing."[229] Written in an Icelandic countryside cabin following four years of touring for *Debut* and *Post*, Björk's self-enforced isolation allowed her to reacquaint herself with her native country through its natural beauty. Worth noting, JÓGA does not use the musical track from *Homogenic* but a "radio-edit" almost two-minutes shorter. Though not the first time that one of Björk 's singles was edited to accommodate the friendly three-to-four minutes of radio and television play, the video version of the song is significant as it shifts the song's focus from Björk's own interiority (through her voice and lyrics) to that of the Icelandic landscape.[230] For instance, by emphasizing JÓGA's modulated "volcanic beats" against Iceland's ever-shifting landmass, at 1:11, rather than returning to the string arrangement which preceded Björk's second verse at 1:19, in the *Homogenic* version, JÓGA inserts an instrumental break which only happens in the album at 2:32. Returning to its refrain at 1:33 ('emotional landscapes) and chorus at 1:48 ('state of emergency'), JÓGA's coda begins at 2:35 until the song's end at 3:12. This shift in the music-lyric dyad, as the basis for the video, will necessarily bear on the image-sound dyad as constructed by Gondry and his team.

With the second verse from *Jóga*, which is more concerned with the performer's interior state ("all that no one sees, you see") altogether missing from JÓGA, this missing verse is reflects the absence of Björk as the video's central subject. More importantly, by shifting its focus onto the chorus (centered on "landscapes") in the music-lyrics dyad, the role of Iceland as the main representational subject is emphasized in the image-sound dyad. This also serves to highlight the role of Icelandic nature as a stand-in for Björk, that is, as the performer in the video. This is relevant considering that Björk asked herself, when conceptualizing *Homogenic*, "[w]hat am I made of?'… Iceland is full of fucking ruptures, very raw lava… There's snow blizzards and people might die

[229] Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter*, 185.
[230] Unlike "Jóga," "Hyperballad" had different videos for each version, with the longer version included in Gondry's *Director's Label Series* DVD.

because the weather's terrible — all these kinds of things. I wanted to get closer to what that is."[231] From this personal anecdote one may surmise that Björk's intention for *Homogenic* was to create a parallel between the volcanic ruptures of Iceland and her emotional ones at the time she wrote the song. By emphasizing these ruptures in its audiovisual space, it seems logical that JÓGA would omit a verse speaking more to Björk's subjectivity and interiority.[232] Emphasized through repetition and intersected only by the volcanic beats of the song, the chorus describes objective natural events as analogous to subjective internal ones.[233] As such, lyrics like "emotional landscapes" and "state of emergency" become more easily transposed to the video's image-sound dyad, as it emphasizes Icelandic natural landscapes as central elements of a shifting nation.

Following on Webb and Lynch's notion of *Jóga* as an internal journey, Dibben explores this sense of interiority in *Jóga* in "Subjectivity and the Construction of Emotion in the Music of Björk" wherein she argues that the lyric, "state of emergency" refers to:

> [A] process of self-discovery and becoming… Björk's identification with her native Iceland encourages it to be recognized as a visual metaphor for her sense of selfhood…[which] can be read both as a reference to the nation state of Iceland, a country subject to geographical change, and as an intense emotional state belonging either to Björk as an individual, or to some other virtual subject.[234]

This notion of a virtual subject, Dibben notes, is informed by Lawrence Kramer's argument that "listeners hear music in terms of the subjectivities it allows them to experience."[235] For Kramer, after all, "the basic work of culture is to construct subject positions… [and music] meant to be listened to with a degree of focused attention addresses itself to an actual or virtual subject position

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[231] Pytlik, *Björk: Wow and Flutter,* 121.

[232] Björk's lyrics missing lyrics in JÓGA, "all that no one sees, you see, what's inside of me, every nerve that hurts, you heal, deep inside of me…you don't have to speak," represents Björk's inner struggles relative to the song's subject, her best friend, Jóga.

[233] "Emotional landscapes, they puzzle me, then the riddle gets solved and you push me up to this. . . State of emergency, how beautiful to be! State of emergency, is where I want to be."

[234] Dibben, "Subjectivity and the Construction of Emotion in the Music of Björk," 187.

[235] *Ibid.,* 171.

that the listening subject ventures to."[236] At the level of the image-sound dyad, this is relevant, since as previously stated, Björk only appears at the beginning and end of JÓGA. This placement in the video allows her to serve as a recursive subject for the image-sound dyad; in her first appearance she is represented in a profilmic, realist space, and in the last, as a digital subject in a digital space. More importantly, the representational dominance of Iceland in the televisual and performance spaces renders it as the privileged virtual subject of the video, as it signifies the subjective emotional ruptures of Björk. Representing her inner states, Gondry's image-sound dyad in JÓGA follows the minimalism of its music-lyrics, but as in ARMY OF ME, it is infused with an abstracted sense of a spatially continuous reality through digital imaging.

Bearing on such notions of realistic cinematic representation, Pytlik suggests that JÓGA could be mistaken for a geological documentary, while also signifying the retreat of Björk from the public eye following an attempt on her life by a deranged fan. For the music journalist, JÓGA "succinctly captures the spirit of Björk's new, uncluttered headspace. With its long, sweeping shots of the Icelandic geology… it is also a patently uncommercial offering, one perhaps more easily mistaken for a documentary on plate tectonics rather than an MTV-friendly music video."[237] However, if we consider Björk-Gondry's thematic concern with contrasting, comparing, and integrating the city and the country as contradictory places (even as utopian and dystopian counterparts), it would perhaps be more accurate to state that JÓGA is coded more like an avant-garde documentary rather than a natural one. Perhaps it is in the vein of a modernist city symphony, but it one which represents the movement in nature, as inflected with the nascent digital image of the late 20th. The political stakes of this framing reflect Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas' praise for Chris Marker and his experimental approach to documentary.[238] As these authors note, by bearing witness to concrete political realities and rendering a situation beyond the "film image of purely artistic fact," the documentary, in its many forms, is "perhaps the main basis of revolutionary filmmaking."[239] For Getino and Solanas, realism and abstraction in the documentary are not mutually exclusive. Their critique of both the Hollywood system and of *auteur* cinema operates within modernist revolutionary aesthetics, which assigns an equivalence of form to ideology.

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[236] Kramer in Dibben, "Subjectivity and the Construction of Emotion in the Music of Björk," 171-172.
[237] Pytlik, *Wow and Flutter*, 129.
[238] Getino and Solanas, "Towards a Third Cinema," 931
[239] *Ibid.*, 931.

In this sense, Gondry's use of morphing technology to uncannily move through space, in order to represent the auratic beauty of its manifold Icelandic landscapes, stands apart from other Björk-Gondry music videos whose form is not as explicitly linked to an ideology such as post-colonial nationalism and which, though often deterritorializing (that is, breaking with the conventions or practical habits of classical cinematic production and narrative structures), nevertheless retains a loose sense of a story and/or a performance by Björk. Instead, Gondry's technology-forward production methodologies are used in JÓGA to seemingly integrate the realism of the Bazinian cinematic image, with the cubist-oriented abstraction of Eisenstein's montage in order to present JÓGA as minor cinema; a cinema in which, as Deleuze would state, the people (except for Björk, the author) are missing. This new form of representation necessarily falls outside any schematic conceptualization of Eisensteinian montage and Bazinian in-frame camera movement, allowing us to not only conceive, but also experience, a new cinematic subjectivity; one beyond pure spatial realism and temporal plasticity. In this sense, and beyond its technophilic tendencies, JÓGA integrates these two classical film theories and formative dichotomies. These theories, concerned in their own way with a distinct notion of the unified cinematic image, whether through in-depth composition and the sequence-shot as praised by Bazin, or through Eisenstein's fragmentation of the image via montage and *mise-en-cadre*, are hybridized in Gondry's image-sound dyad and the analogue-digital assemblage of bullet-time representation.

Again, the concept of hybridity becomes relevant here, but now in a technological context. In *Between Film, Video, and the Digital*, Jihoon Kim defines hybrid moving images as "an array of impure image forms characterized by the interrelation of the material, technical, and aesthetic components of existing moving image media – namely, film, video, and the digital."[240] Therefore, when discussing Gondry's image-sound dyad in JÓGA, one may focus on the performance of a multiplicity of representational fragments – photochemical, electronic, and digital – which are, in Kim's words, nested within, and beyond the contours of the frame. This concept of nesting has an affinity to Eisenstein's notion of oppositional/compositional fragments in the frame, the image, and in montage itself. Moreover, the notion of a cinematic fragment is also present in Bazin. For the French theorist, any film is "always a series of fragments of reality pictured on a rectangular frame of fixed proportions. The order and duration of these fragments determine their meaning…

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[240] Jihoon Kim, *Between Film, Video, and the Digital*, 3.

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style arranges fragmented reality along the aesthetic spectrum of the narrative."[241] Therefore, the concept of compositional fragments, and subsequently, of aesthetic hybridization, can help us begin to reveal how JÓGA reconciles "the opposition between aestheticism and realism."[242]

As conceptualized in chapter 2, the music video can often be framed as an auto-poetic cultural product, that is, as a media form composed by the collective and recursive performance of its fragmented compositional elements; the image-sound, music-lyrics, and performance-persona dyads. The latter dyad is significant in how a music video is conceived, since the performance by a singer or a band is arguably one of the minimal requirements in a commercial video. It also signifies the intersection of contributions by both the director and the musician (or rather, by the image-sound and music-lyrics dyad). However, a performance by Björk – whether of her music, or acting in a narrative, is for the most part absent in JÓGA. Lacking clear and coherent performance and narrative spaces, the video is nevertheless not devoid of an on-screen performance. It is Iceland's depiction through digital images in the televisual space which fulfills the role of performer in the video, with the discursive functions of the performance-persona dyad extending instead to the image-sound dyad. In this sense, the televisual space in JÓGA doubles as its performance space. That is to say that it is through the colours, textures, and camera movements of the *mise-en-scène*, that Iceland, rather than Björk, becomes the performer of JÓGA's music-lyrics. Underscoring Iceland's performative dimension in the music video is relevant if we consider, as Dibben does, that in JÓGA, Björk personifies Iceland, and Iceland embodies Björk. In this sense, though Björk is representationally absent, she remains a part of the *mise-en-scène* conceptually.

It is perhaps necessary here to further elucidate on the concept of a cinematic fragment in the context of digital hybridization. Through digital technologies of representation, the spatio-temporal realism elucidated by Bazin — where the sequence-shot allows the viewer more agency over the interpretation of the cinematic image — can co-exist in the same frame with the assemblage of asynchronous spatio-temporal events as practiced by Eisenstein — where the juxtaposition between cuts creates new layers of meaning. Jacques Aumont notes in *Montage*,

[I]t is not by chance that Eisenstein never used the word план (shot, in fact little used at that time), but rather the words кадр (frame) and кусок (piece, sometimes abusively ren

[241] Bazin, "Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of Liberation," 233.
[242] *Ibid.*, 215.

dered as fragment). The former refers to an essential quality of any image, its material and symbolic boundary, while the latter refers to the fact that for Eisenstein, precisely, a 'shot' is only a piece of the discourse being articulated and not capturing of an event in its duration.[243]

In Aumont's analysis, frame and fragment are not equivalent, as "the frame has to do with editing, and with montage, because it is an aspect of the fragment."[244] Therefore, whereas frame relates to how the profilmic is selectively composed within the camera's contours, the fragment relates to how it is assembled through editing. In the case of JÓGA, different framings are brought together into continuous fragments which create the illusion of continuous profilmic reality through the hybrid, analogue-digital image of the morphing technology invented by Gondry. Following a musical metaphor in the context of JÓGA's framing of profilmic reality, the composition of Icelandic nature into cinematic images, and their editing through montage, are not only "moments in the treatment of objects," but movements toward a unified audiovisual symphony.[245] That is, though they are composed separately, it is through these different framings, which when brought together by digital means, that the aesthetic significance of each fragment becomes apparent, because they come to depict Icelandic nature as the subject and performer of JÓGA's music-lyrics dyad.[246]

Michel Gondry's assistant during the filming of JÓGA, François Nemetä, reminisced how the team would drive through Iceland for a couple of hours each day, stopping to mark locations on a map during the pre-production process of the music video. These locations would then be filmed from a helicopter the next day or photographed from the ground. On Björk's brief performance, Nemetä said that "Björk would lie on the beach and pretend to sleep. We were walking around her, taking pictures of her, and then take the [helicopter] to fly above her and shoot her from up there."[247] This brief anecdote reflects how JÓGA was conceived from the beginning as an assemblage of analogue framings, which when digitally morphed and integrated into one another, would go onto constitute hybridized, digital fragments. These fragments, of alternating close-ups

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[243] Aumont, *Montage*, 29.
[244] *Ibid.,* 37.
[245] *Ibid.,* 39.
[246] *Ibid.,* 39.
[247] "Jóga."

of rocks, moss, plants and water on the ground with wide, aerial shots of Iceland's rivers, mountains, hills, and banks, depict Iceland from multiple points of view, yet work to represent the nation as a singular natural wonder. The opening shot described by Nemetä (of Björk laying on the beach) lasts 14 seconds and depicts the Nordic Sea's blue waters and its waves cresting white upon the black, volcanic soil of Iceland. From high above, the camera slowly moves into Björk laying on the volcanic beach. In this shot, the artist's clothing mirrors the ocean's blue/white palette, creating a parallel between the singer and Icelandic nature, as well as continuing to use water, as in previous videos (particularly, ISOBEL), as a motif to link nature and the singer as parallel entities. This is the only time that the singer is captured realistically in the video, and even then, the digital melding between shots renders her silhouette as almost paper-like in its flatness. This is contrasted to the video's closing shot, where she appears as a 3D digital avatar, as the camera swirls around her. From the opening of the video, it becomes evident that both colours and textures are the most important features in JÓGA's image-sound dyad.

Throughout the video, these elements are further emphasized by both the profilmic camera-movement, as well as through the digitally-created illusion of a moving frame. As explained above, with JÓGA lacking a proper performance or presence by the singer in its diegetic spaces, it is through the textures and colours of the image-sound dyad that Icelandic natural elements are made to "perform" (e.g., dance). In this sense, there are several levels to this performance as a stand-in for Björk's. The first movement of the dyad music-lyrics lasts from the beginning of the music video until about 1:11 into it, when the beat break happens. This section includes the first verse of the song and the chorus, and is more concerned with depicting Icelandic nature realistically, with the digital morphing of the camera restricted to it simply moving to the rhythms of the lyrics and gliding along to the string arrangements of the music. As such, in this section it is the camera, rather than nature, which assumes the role of performer and serves as the virtual subject in the video's performance-persona dyad. Since the captured natural elements are not digitally manipulated, outside of their melding into continuous shots across space and time, the editing is less concerned with cutting on-beat as is conventional in the music video. Rather in-frame renditions of rocks, plants, water, and skies alternate, and are often contrasted within the same shot in both texture and colour (e.g., the black of the rocks, the green of the shrubbery; the orange, brown, and red of the other rocks; and the blues and greys of frozen and flowing water).

Such colours and textures in JÓGA create a sense of dynamism, which reflects the movement of the camera. Every level of shot composition (both in frame and as assembled fragments) gives a sense of vitality, making Iceland not just the anthropomorphic embodiment of Björk, but a living concept of national identity. This vitality is prevalent in the second part of the music video. Following the aforementioned "movement," a bridge of volcanic beats in the music-lyrics dyad coincides with volcanic rocks popping off the frame. This signals the appearance of Iceland as the video's performer, "dancing" to the electronically-modulated rhythms of Icelandic nature. This performance makes the music serve an almost diegetic function in the image-sound dyad (in a manner similar to that of the fireflies in ARMY OF ME). The technique of rendering musical arrangements as diegetic sound carries on, as the image-sound dyad depicts the splitting of Icelandic ground, and of the nation's mountains and lakes "sliced" cleanly across to reveal the volcanic activity which lies within.

*Figure 3.2: **Textures and Fragments**. Wide and close-up shots of Icelandic nature are juxtaposed against digital renditions and hybrid analogue-digital compositions of Iceland to create the illusion of natural elements in a state of musical performance.*

As the chorus kicks back in, the video returns to the representational strategy from the beginning, depicting nature without digitally modifying it, and with a few short fragments in between of the rocks and other natural elements in a performative state, though not as prevalently as during the beat break. Meanwhile, in the music-lyrics dyad, the chorus line "emotional landscapes" depicts grand aerial shots, creating yet again a parallel between Björk's subjectivity and that of nature in performance. This parallel between the island nation and the singer is most obviously rendered at the video's conclusion, where Björk's heart is shown to be a volcanic cavern, which then reveals Iceland deep within her. Again, there is a representational contrast between the pro-filmic depiction of Iceland and of Björk as a digital avatar.

Conclusion: Björk and the Aura of Icelandic Nature

1997's JÓGA uses hybridity at the level of the cinematic image to signify tensions between natural conservation and economic development in 20th century Iceland. Though technology is not explicitly represented in the video, it is very much present through the digital treatment of the profilmic natural landscapes in the video. These natural landscapes, which serve as signifiers for a particularly distinct postcolonial condition, represent a utopian Iceland, untouched by technology, and therefore, peripheral to Europe and its industrial legacy. Through the aesthetic approach of JÓGA, Iceland functions as the main subject and performer in the video, with Björk as the voice of the frigid island-nation. Raw and rebellious, it is nonetheless tender and powerful as well.

In many ways, the video, with its documentary sensibility, serves as a call to appreciate the natural resources of Iceland and anticipates Björk's own work as an environmentalist in the years to follow. On her environmentally centered website Björk remarks that "I would like to point out Iceland's uniqueness: Iceland and its pure untouched nature are synonymous. If that is lost our uniqueness is lost. Just as if Paris lost its fashion, New York lost its skyscrapers, Los Angeles its Hollywood."[248] This statement simultaneously places Iceland on the periphery of modernity and adjacent to hegemonic centers of cultural production. Dibben notes that:

"[T]he internationalism of Icelandic popular music works against the idea of Iceland as a 'peripheral' nation within a world context and demonstrates that it has a distinctive contribution to

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[248] Dibben, "Nature and Nation: National Identity and Environmentalism in Icelandic Popular Music," 130.

make. Some Icelanders directly attribute their pride in the Icelandic nation to its increased inter-national profile within the popular music industry."[249]

For Björk, Icelandic nature, as much as its cultural contributions, remains as much a signifier for the nation's individuality and character, as it is an unreproducible, auratic entity. In Björk 's most romantic of conceptions, Icelandic nature remains a living work of art to be preserved, and JÓGA, serves her most explicit declaration of love.

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[249] *Ibid.,* 134.

Conclusion

The Music Video in a Post-Cinematic Condition

Through the perspective of Björk and Michel Gondry's 1990s music video oeuvre as a minor mode of authorship, this thesis has identified the post-cinematic traits of their music videos via the heterogeneous nature of the media form itself, which "both remediates and is remediated… [building] on expressions known from other media – mainly popular music, cinema, and television… [while at the same time exerting] influence on these media."[250] To be sure, most commercial music videos and music video producers or artists might not be considered minor in the Deleuzian-Guattarian sense, but the music videos by Björk and Gondry adopt and subvert the dominant language of film while maintaining their creators' signature style. By considering socio-political situations, such as the relationship between technology and nature, these videos also reflect a thematic concern that can be directly linked to Björk's work as an Icelandic environmental activist and stand apart from other more commercial music videos.

To briefly summarize the previous chapters and their relation to the tenets of minor aesthetics, as influenced by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, the first chapter followed a formal analysis of the *Isobel* trilogy, and treated Björk-Gondry's music video practice as a post-cinematic genre due to its formal deterritorialization of classical cinema's linear and teleological ordering. Reflecting the structuring of database aesthetics through the concept of recursion as a model, the second chapter argued that recursive narration in the music video extends to its ontological makeup through the dyadic elements which compose it as a heterogeneous form; that is, music video's image-sound, music-lyrics, and performance-persona. With a mind toward collaboration as a foundational pillar, these dyadic elements were said to collectively perform with one another on screen, and thus, to recursively enunciate the specific affective and audiovisual textures in a music video. More importantly, the performance of heterogeneous, yet autonomous elements, was said to non-representationally signify modes of collective enunciation as subjectivity.

Through the framing of collaborative recursion as an autopoetic process and structure, the music-video was said to function as a post-cinematic hyperbeing. This theoretical consideration reflected Deleuze and Guattari's statement that in minor literatures, "there isn't a subject; *there*

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[250] Mathias Bonde Korsgaard, *Music Video After MTV*, 5.

are only collective assemblages of enunciation."[251] Elaborating on this tenet, but now from a political perspective, the third and last chapter emphasized the postcolonial sensibilities in the music video JÓGA through its approach to the representation of Björk and Iceland as a unified dyadic subject. This chapter thus complemented the previous' formal analyses of Björk-Gondry's deterritorializing, collective practice, to frame their work as ultimately constituting a minor aesthetic, contingent on Björk's subjectivity as a female author and environmental activist. With these considerations in mind, Björk was said to resolve formal, aesthetic, and conceptual contradictions through hybridization, in the context of her postcolonial Icelandic identity.

The central contradiction resolved through her work, and which framed this thesis' discursive intention, is how her collective approach to cultural production renders her oeuvre's authorial subjectivity as that of a networked entity, while also simultaneously figuring as its central node. That is, although music and lyrics, for example, are often considered an expression of inner genius and subjective interiority (in the most Romantic conception of authorship), in the case of Björk, they are almost always the result of her highly collaborative, punk-influenced ethos, which extends to every facet of her work. As Björk herself stated in a 2001 interview, "I can obviously work with anybody I want… I've worked with the same people since I was 16, so it's a small group of people that used to be punks; they're not very fond of the establishment."[252] Part of this group, for example, is the Icelandic poet Sjón Sigurdsson, with whom Björk has collaborated on the lyrics for the *Isobel* mythography, as well as for the *Dancer in the Dark* soundtrack, *Selmasongs* in 2001. However, it is her music video collaborations with Michel Gondry (which have consistently been considered part of music video's canon since HUMAN BEHAVIOUR), that have truly set the stage for her influence in audiovisual, cinematic, and post-cinematic contexts.[253]

From a post-cinematic perspective, it is worth to note that as a practice and cultural form, the music video has been particularly responsive to the transition from the analogue, mass-media monoculture of late, post-modern capitalism, to the differentiated flows of what Carol Vernallis has called the contemporary "media swirl."[254] This ability to adapt is due to the music video being well-situated within the structures of culture and capital for four decades since its inception.

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[251] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 18
[252] "Björk -- Harald Schmidt Show Interview."
[253] "Rolling Stone did the 100 Greatest videos according to their critics, and it already ended up on the Top 100," "Björk - Come to Me, Aeroplane and Interview on MTV's 120 Minutes (1993)."
[254] Vernallis, *Unruly Media*, 3.

Though formally defined by the use of inexpensive video technologies by musical artists and directors, as a cultural object, it was Music Television's (MTV) 1981 launch which laid the foundation for the music video to become the audiovisual entity as it is understood today. Co-founded by Warner Brothers and American Express, MTV became a new assemblage of corporate media and banking, demanding a new type of media idol native to the format. MTV's first on-air music video, The Buggles' VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR, signaled to a remediation of pop-stardom through its lyrics, wherein the performers' visual allure overshadowed that of their musicianship. More importantly, music video stardom may be said to be symptomatic of privatization *as a technology of the self*, with the music video star serving as paragon of the neoliberal subject.[255] It is perhaps no coincidence that, as a self-privatized subject, the emergence and dominance of music video stars paralleled that of neoliberalism in the United States and United Kingdom.

Moreover, by reassembling various media and components (e.g., music, lyrics, images, and filmic references) into a distinct media and cultural product, the music video is also a definitive post-cinematic practice. Not only in terms of its production, but also in its contemporary modes of online circulation. Central to the conceptualization of the music video as a post-cinematic practice is the role the pop star itself. Steven Shaviro argues that pop stars like Björk have, in our post-cinematic condition, become "figures upon which, or within which, many powerful feelings converge; they *conduct* multiplicities of affective flows."[256] These contemporary, post-cinematic pop stars of networked culture signify an emergent mode of subjectivity, concurrent with an emergent stage of capital, just as the music-video star signified its neoliberal stage. In the age of social media, Foucault's *homo oeconomicus* has given way to the *homo datum*, who like Grace Jones' CORPORATE CANNIBAL, "retains a certain dense materiality, even within the weightless realm of the digital."[257] The post-cinematic star thus embodies the subject of contemporary *surveillance-cognitive* capital. This stage in capital is not concerned with the disciplining of bodies, but with the commodification of affect as data.

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[255] This *Homo Oeconomicus*, Foucault argues, is an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of earnings. *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 226.
[256] Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect*, 10.
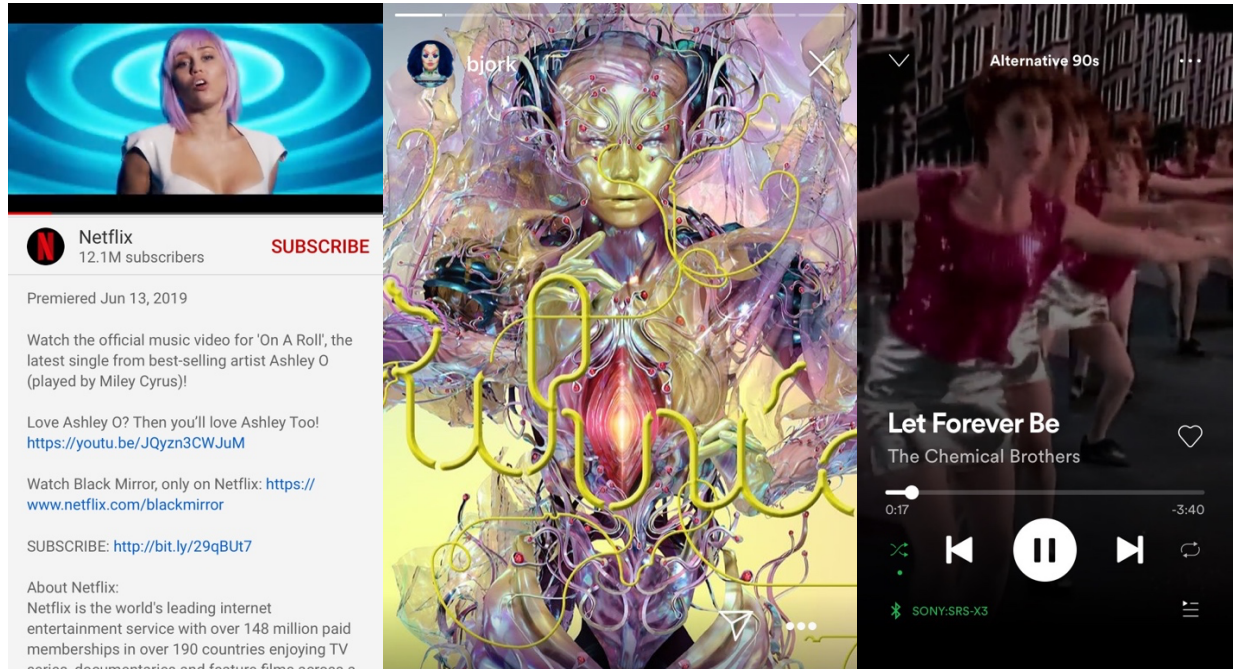[257] *Ibid.*, 13.

Figure 4.1: **The Music Video as Social Media.** *Artists on YouTube, Instagram, and Spotify use the music video in different contexts; as paratext for a TV show (on YouTube), as audiovisual art for an album (on Instagram), and as accompanying visual material for a song (on Spotify).*

As such, pop stars who, like music video practice itself, have been able to adapt to post-cinematic media networks are now privileged in the flows of network capital, and particularly, in those of *data-affective economies*, where algorithmic prediction dictates how content circulates and to whom (with Netflix, YouTube and Spotify as the most relevant platforms). Succinctly put, new algorithmic regimes of control concern themselves with the subject as *data* rather than with the subject as a *body*. As a useful metaphor, Shaviro argues that Grace Jones' CORPORATE CANNIBAL is representative of Deleuze's society of control; "characterized by perpetual modulations, dispersed and 'flexible' modes of authority, ubiquitous networks, and the relentless branding and marketing of even the most 'inner' aspects of subjective experience."[258] Extrapolating from the music video as the apex of pastiche, hybridity, and the post-modernist aesthetics of late-capitalism in the latter 20th century, music video's second life in the networks of social media and algorithmic capitalism have made it a significant cultural product in the context of post-cinematic aesthetics and audiovisual, digital economies.

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[258] Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect*, 6.

Contemporary pop stars and other post-cinematic celebrities thus occupy a cultural space in which the Situationist spectacle and the Foucauldian panopticon have been fully weaved into the social fabric through digital media practices and the habits they engender. Always under the public scrutiny, post-cinematic pop stars as Shaviro notes, are "*icons*, which means that they exhibit, or at least aspire to, an idealized stillness, solidity, and perfection of form. Yet at the same time, they are fluid and mobile, always displacing themselves."[259] This experience of excessive fame as a mode of constant surveillance and modulation, can now be said to have been "democratized" in the era of social media. By surrendering privacy, subjects in a post-cinematic condition may gain affective influence which may then be captured, commodified, and monetized. Just as the self-disciplining subject molded himself into institutions of power, self-surveilling subjects now modulate their subjectivity into the flows of capital through social media. As such, post-cinematic pop stardom and celebrity may be understood as a modulation of control, surveillance, and spectacle, wherein persona and performance become a medium in themselves.

The Music Video After Björk

The interactive media and installations by Björk in recent years are representative of the prevalence of the music video as a cultural form in post-cinematic ecologies, while her work continually expands on the aesthetic boundaries of the music video, bringing it further into the setting of the museum and art gallery. Simultaneously, her transmedia approach, which embraces groundbreaking technologies, such as Virtual Reality, has redefined the music video as both a genre and practice. This is particularly evident in 2011's *Biophilia* and its highly-acclaimed cellphone application and accompanying film, as well as in the more recent *Vulnicura,* a Virtual Reality album released on video game platforms in 2019. These works are important as they function as non-narrative modes of transmedia which do not easily conform to the concept as defined by Henry Jenkins. In fact, *Biophilia*, voiced by David Attenborough, can more easily be considered to have more documentarian tone than one of a transmedia narrative.

Björk's political positioning, as both a transnational popstar and an environmental activist, has inflected her work with the thematic immediacies of a minor author, which are contingent upon her identity as an Icelandic, postcolonial female artist. This is important for theorizing her music

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[259] *Ibid.*, 10.

videos as representative of minor authorship, a concept which Alison Butler has applied to women's contribution to contemporary cinema. According to Butler, "to call women's cinema a minor cinema, then, is to free it from the binarisms (popular/elitist, avant-garde/mainstream, positive/negative) which result from imagining it as parallel or oppositional cinema."[260] Björk's importance as an author, and particularly, as a minor one, resides not only in her innovative use of audiovisual technologies and her concern with ecological issues, but also with her collaborative approach across artistic disciplines, from musical and lyrical composition to music video production, film and stage performance, and, during the past decade, digital multimedia and VR platforms. Another discursive framework within which we can consider Björk's cultural practice as a case of minor authorship is that of gender-oriented approaches to globalized media practices.[261] In this sense, though Björk continues to produce music videos to support and promote her albums, she does so outside the medium's normative formal and circulatory conventions, deterritorializing how music videos circulate.

Björk's music videos in the 21st century have been more contingent on recorded live-performances, DVD sets, installation media, as well as online and interactive experiences. However, even during the 1990s MTV era, Björk's work (particularly with Gondry) stood out against other music videos which merely functioned as adverts for a song. It is in this context that Björk's importance as a post-cinematic author emerges. In 2014, Björk's "hybrid software application," for her album *Biophilia*, became the first object of its kind to be curated into the Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) permanent collection. Paola Antonelli, senior curator for MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design, noted that the interactive, audiovisual rendition of Björk's 2011 album reflected Björk's "interest in a collaborative process," now extended to her fans as interactive users.[262] Along with curating *Biophilia* into its permanent collection, MoMA also commissioned a music video installation from the artist (as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles had done a few years prior for *Biophilia*'s MUTUAL CORE). The video installation, based upon the glacial 10-minute composition 'Black Lake' (from Björk's then-most-recent album), *Vulnicura*, reunited her with MUTUAL CORE's director, Andrew Thomas Huang.

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[260] Butler, *Women's Cinema: The Contested Screen,* 20.
[261] Rosanna Maule, *Digital Platforms and Feminist Film Discourse*, 6.
[262] Antonelli, "Biophilia, the First App in MoMA's Collection"

*Figure 4.2: **The Pop-Star as Museum Artist.** The covers for Björk's discography are exhibited next to post-cinematic works such as "Black Lake." The latter, having been commissioned by MoMA in New York for a retrospective honoring the artist.*

As the center-piece for Björk's 2015 retrospective on her 30-year music video career (including instruments and costumes), the dual-screen installation was a highly personal work, aestheticizing the singer's divorce from film artist, Matthew Barney. While it may be categorized as a music video in one sense, to simply categorize BLACK LAKE as such, would also belittle the work and detract from its value. Emphasizing Björk's avant-garde approach to pop-culture, BLACK LAKE is a testament to Björk's contributions to music video(s), performance, and audiovisual practices, as well as her commitment to collaborative creation since her earliest works.[263] As the artist herself has stated, "I've got no interest in working with people who do what I tell them to do, you know? There's just no point, I might as well just do it myself then. So, I'd much rather work with people who are as strong as me, and preferably stronger."[264]

It is precisely this attitude which Antonelli references when she notes that Björk's collaborative process in *Biophilia* includes "not only other artists, engineers, and musicians, but also splendid amateurs—the people that download and play the app/album."[265] In this sense, institutional art's acknowledgement of Björk as a modern artist (in this case through the museum as post-cinematic site) has validated, not only her own work and the music video in general, but also, her

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[263] Through interviews with several of Björk's collaborators throughout her career up till the early 2000s, Mark Pytlik's *Björk: Wow and Flutter* draws attention to the artist's collaborative approach at every stage. As Markus Dravs, engineer for Björk's second album *Post*, notes "[w]hen you work with Björk, you are one of her closest relatives… you are almost like her brother." Elaborating further, Pytlik follows that, "[p]rogramming chops or musical virtuosity weren't always a prerequisite for being included in the family, either. Björk prized enthusiasm as a virtue on par with technical aptitude." (127)

[264] "The South Bank Show: Björk," (24:44).

[265] Antonelli

collaborative methods which remain distinct from more classical and liberal approaches to art curation centered on notions of singular authorship.

This ongoing sacralization[266] of the music video is in this sense significant, as it is a continuation of the music video's own auteurist turn during the "alternative" culture of the early 1990s.[267] This event subsequently led to a canonization of music video directors during the 2000s through digital media such as DVDs, and online video platforms such as iFilm, YouTube, and Vimeo. For Diane Railton and Paul Watson, the internet has given the music video more complex modes of distribution, and subsequently "the relationship between video and song is reversed… [and it is] the video itself which has become the primary product, something which is valuable in its own terms." No longer considered a disposable form, the informal canon of music videos online has been accompanied by that of major galleries and museums which both exhibit and archive music videos; this was the case with Björk's MoMA exhibition. Worthy of institutionalization, the music video can no longer be dismissed as "transitory and worthless."[268] Having thus collaborated with some of the most renowned audiovisual artists of the last 30 years, such as Michel Gondry, Spike Jonze, and Chris Cunningham, Björk has consistently transcended the boundaries of music and video aesthetics through the seemingly interactive dynamic between the musical, visual, and performative elements, while often integrating analogue and digital effects to incredible affect, such as the sampling and remixing of geological events to create the beats for her album, *Homogenic*.

Beyond this extension of the music video to the screens and sites of both mass and high culture, the aesthetics of the music video have also become increasingly tactile, interactive, and malleable through the touchscreens of tablets and smartphones. As an aesthetic practice, the music

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[266] Olufunmilayo B. Arewa notes that the process of sacralization in the 19th century (as in the 21st) "reflected a broader societal shift… surrounding cultural categories that came to be categorized as high culture… such as Shakespeare and opera." "Making Music," 71.

[267] Derek Johnson and Jonathan Gray note that "authorship has helped constitute the hierarchies between media, considering how literature and film have been legitimated through claims of the genius and vision of individual auteurs compared to forms of cultural production marked as more commercial or collaborative in television, videogames and emerging digital media – in which competing claims to authorship have now worked to construct new structures, practices and ideals of creativity," *Companion to Media Authorship*, 7.

[268] Diane Railton and Paul Watson, *Music Video and the Politics of Representation*, 6-7.

video has continually been reconfigured through the popular, short-form re-mix videos which circulate on social media, with "TikTok" being the most recent example. Furthermore, online video platforms such as YouTube and Netflix have also provided wide circulation to both established and emerging music video artists and are devoid of the temporal or censorship limitations presented by both broadcast and cable television. Thus, now being able to extend well beyond the length of a specific "radio-friendly" song (between 3-4 minutes), to the length of a short film (generally understood as less than 45-60 minutes), many contemporary long-form music videos have increasingly come to resemble cinematic productions (accompanying budgets included). Some, such as Beyonce's 2016 album-video, *Lemonade*,[269] invoke cinema's narrative-illusionist tradition with a clear story presented in three acts, while others, such as Paul Thomas Anderson and Thom Yorke's 2019 ANIMA, carry on with more experimental and abstract modes of cinematic production.

This online availability and accessibility of music videos and other previously unavailable audiovisual content (as well as an ever-mounting avalanche of new audiovisual products) via myriad digital archives, databases, and platforms, as Malte Hagener et al. argue in, *The State of Post-Cinema*, has "forever altered" the rubric of *what* and *where* the cinema is, not only beyond the photochemical index and apparatus, but also because it encompasses "large parts of moving-image culture previously deemed unworthy of serious attention."[270] Therefore, as both a concept and practice, post-cinema may ultimately be best understood as a cinema which refuses to die and which continues to linger on everywhere; within the confines of institutional museums, galleries, and cinemas, as well as throughout the audiovisual databases and platforms which we watch everywhere via our computers, touchpads, and smartphones. As a media form able to circulate these circuits effortlessly, the music video is emblematic of this contemporary post-cinematic condition in culture, with Björk and her collaborative music videos and video art as especially significant for the better part of two decades.

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[269] Steven Shaviro notes that *Lemonade* "is important for its formal innovation, as it condenses videos for all the separate songs on the album into a continuous movie with a more or less unified narrative." *Digital Music Videos*, 6.

[270] M. Hagener et Al, *State of Post Cinema*, 8.

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