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Vibrations of Worldly Matter. ASMR as Contemporary *Musique Concrète*

Abstract

The autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) is a sensory phenomenon, sometimes referred to as a "brain orgasm," which involves pleasant tingling sensations in a body in reaction to certain stimuli. This article analyzes ASMR within the framework of ideas put forward by the *musique concrète* that offered new sensibilities of musical expression and promoted attentive listening to matter. At the same time, we treat sonic practices of ASMR as inspired by the concepts developed by New Materialism, especially the notions of physicality and materiality of sound recognized within the ontology of its vibrational force.

Keywords

ASMR, *Musique Concrète*, New Materialism, Sonic Materialism, Vibration

Introduction

At first, we see hands with elegant, slender fingers and manicured nails. They are making slow, sweeping movements towards the camera—as if they wanted to stroke it, moving rhythmically up and down, dropping gently towards the fleshy, brown cloth spread on the tabletop. One hand begins to stroke the top of the other, and then immediately gets back to caressing the soft fabric in circular motions. After a moment, there is a prop in the frame—a sizable, wooden box for sorted tea bags. The woman, whose face remains hidden, brings the object close to the camera so that we can clearly see its

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shape, the texture of the wood, and the tea bags hidden inside. She begins to play with the box—first, she is tapping the wooden case with her nails, changing the pace from time to time, and then she is stroking, squeezing, and scratching the plastic tea bags, at the same time creating a kind of musical composition made from the impromptu produced sounds.

This description covers only the first six minutes of the over thirty-minute video titled *Intoxicating Sounds ASMR* published on the YouTube channel "Gentle Whispering ASMR" (2016). The video, made by Maria Viktorovna (sometimes referred to as "Queen of ASMR"), is one of the most popular clips on her channel, currently with over nine million views. It was Maria's hands that were stroking the table covered with soft material and then tapping the wooden box. She is an ASMR artist, or ASMRtist for short, i.e. a person who creates and posts their ASMR content on the Internet. Viktorovna is one of the most popular YouTubers making their own videos and she was one of the first ones who were so intent on developing the art of ASMR in online space.

YouTube has quickly become a platform gathering a large community of ASMR enthusiasts who watch and listen to the content created by their favorite artists. The imagination and creativity of ASMRtists know no bounds. Their arrangements use hundreds of various objects which would produce interesting sounds that could give the viewers-listeners a specific sensation of "brain tingles," or a pleasant tickly feeling in your head, and neck, that causes relaxation, calmness, stress relief, and sleepiness.

Before we start analyzing the ASMR artworks in terms of observing if and how they display the new materialist approach to reality, especially to sound as a material object characterized by vibrational force, we will briefly introduce the ASMR phenomenon. After describing its most important properties, we will see in which contexts it is most often examined—what the researchers, investigating the phenomenon so far, have pointed out and why. Thus, we will justify our choice of the unusual theoretical framework co-created by the ideas that might have been mothballed prematurely—the ideas of *musique concrète*, especially those calling for change in our musical sensitivity, as well as those promoting the attentive listening to reality. Ideas of *musique concrète* turn out to be relevant in the case of ASMR, especially in the context of the deliberate blurring of boundaries between the "natural" and "cultural." Experimenting with sound, its material sources and the possibilities of technical processing by a *musique concrète* composer-*bricoleur* is something that is also fascinatingly connected with the concepts proposed by New Materialism, especially with the idea of vibration and the vitality of matter capable of affecting bodies in each vibrational event.

This article aims to indicate the continuity and vitality of certain concepts concerning our attitude towards material, inanimate objects in the world around us, especially their potentiality to create sound understood as a vibrational force—from the prematurely forgotten ideas of *musique concrète* to those concepts of New Materialism that are related to the vibrational-affective, non-human-centered understanding of sound enabling the establishment of relationships between human subjects and non-human material objects. It is an attempt to give an account of the sonic practices of ASMR being an expression of a new materialist approach to reality, which is no longer based on a strictly human, rational, logical paradigm, but instead emphasizes "the existence of a material world that is independent of our minds" (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 39). As we observe in ASMR videos, everyday objects are able to enter into affective relationships based on sound vibrations that move our bodies, which, as a result, provokes a change in the way of thinking about these artifacts. They are no longer treated in a utilitarian, metaphorical or linguistic manner, consistent with their commonsense purpose and *telos* of the technology used, but, at the moment of interaction, they reveal their surprising vibrational properties and the ability to set bodies in motion. Therefore, our choice of a new materialist conceptual framework "which refuses the linguistic paradigm, stressing instead the concrete yet complex materiality of bodies" (21) allows us to focus on a vibrational quality of sound leading to the affective experience rather than to its symbolic meaning.

ASMR: Properties, Subgenres, Contexts

"ASMR" stands for a pseudo-scientific term "autonomous sensory meridian response" coined in 2010 by Jennifer Allen, founder of one of the first Facebook groups and a website about this phenomenon. On the one hand, the name means a physical sensory response "in which individuals experience a tingling, static-like sensation across the scalp, back of the neck and at times further areas in response to specific triggering audio and visual stimuli" (Barratt, Davis 2015, 1). Sometimes, it is also a response to tactile, olfactory or cognitive factors. The most common ASMR stimuli include: whispering, personal attention, crisp sounds, slow or repetitive movements, smiling, aeroplane noise, vacuum cleaner noise, laughing, the sounds of smacking, eating, clicking, brushing, painting, drawing, white noise (Barratt, Davis 2015, 6; Sadowski 2016, 32).

On the other hand, the name "ASMR" identifies the entire technologically-mediated media phenomenon, which includes the activities of ASMRtists, mainly on their YouTube channels. The ASMR community has been using the world's most popular online platform for years, "to create, collect, and exchange videos made to trigger the tingles through a computer screen" (Andersen 2014, 2). Audiovisual recordings are most often classified as short-term relief in dealing with insomnia and stress, with depression and anxiety (Poerio 2016, 120), as well as in moments that require concentration—as a soundtrack for certain activities, e.g. reading, studying. The relationship between the relaxing effect of ASMR "promoting various facets of happiness or subjective well-being" (Del Campo, Kehle 2016, 103), and mindfulness / meditation practices is another important aspect of the phenomenon (Barratt, Davis 2015, 12; Fredborg *et al*. 2018). ASMR artists often treat their activity as a mission to improve the quality of life of the viewer-listener, and it is not just a hobby for them, but a full-time job and a source of income (Silady 2017).

Most of the videos published by ASMRtists fall into one of two subgenres. The first one includes videos focusing on the use of various everyday accessories—Helle Klausen calls them "sound assortments" (2019, 88)—in order to produce interesting sounds and images that will cause a tingling sensation in the viewer-listener. Watching a few random videos in this category shows that the artists are only limited by their imagination when it comes to the range of objects they use. The instruments of artists-experimenters can include such unrelated things as apples, ice cubes, bathtub mats, a furry rug, a vinyl record, and many others. If you want to find out how great the creators' imagination is in this area, simply search the word "ASMR" and the name of any object that comes to your mind on YouTube. There is a high chance that there is an artist who has already made a video with this particular object—stroked, tapped, and scratched from all sides. The category also includes the video of Viktorovna, mentioned in the introduction, where she uses not only the tea bag box, but also an artificial leather make-up bag, a pink hair comb, and a gel eye mask.

The other subgenre, which will only be mentioned briefly in this article, is known as "roleplay" videos "imitating everyday activities such as visiting the doctor, getting a haircut or going to the library" (Klausen 2019, 88). Performances given by artists in the style of "close personal attention" are intended to imitate activities pitched somewhere "between a careful ritual and a routine check-up" (Bennett 2016, 131). They include videos where the artist plays the role of a professional (e.g. a beautician, hairdresser, doctor,

stewardess) and focuses all their attention on the viewer-listener whose head would be located where the camera is. The ASMRtist maintains eye contact with the viewer, leans towards the microphones installed on both sides of the screen and whispers some soothing words, phrases or indefinite sounds. The viewer-listener finds themselves in a position of an object taken care of by the artist who performs various actions to put them in a good mood, or make them drowsy. In addition to their strictly affective effect on the viewer-listener's body, which is supposed to cause pleasant body chills, these types of videos are based on recalling cognitive associations related to "memories of intimacy, care, and attention" (Andersen 2014, 15). What makes the two subgenres different is the fact that the artist in the first one usually stays in the background, showcasing the objects they play with, not showing their face. This would not be recommended in the roleplay videos.

Since ASMR is a new cultural phenomenon, there have not been that many scientific analyses on the topic. The few researchers who have shown interest in this phenomenon usually look at them from the perspective of gender studies, commenting on the clichéd representations of women in videos that are part of the "heteronormative experiences of intimacy" (2014, 10), while partly breaking out of those experiences thanks to the public nature of intimacy presented in the videos or due to the female artists' attempts to control their own representations, including exceeding the logic of the "male gaze" (Sadowski 2016). The optics of performative studies (Waldron 2017) is also used to describe the public intimacy practices in ASMR. Other commentators focus on the peculiar "stickiness" of affect which, by spreading all over the space between bodies, attracts viewers-listeners to the videos constructing a tingling experience (Smith, Snider 2019). There are also those who extract the most important properties from the aesthetic ASMR universe—i.e. sound, whisper, and voice—in the context of either their haptic, multi-sensory effect on the viewer-listener (Klausen 2019) or wider associations with the notions of power, a symbolic and literal case of women using their voice (Iossifidis 2017). However, we have not come across an interpretation of the ASMR through the prism of ideas related to *musique concrète* in connection with New Materialism. We shall see that both the ideas of *musique concrète*, which have been formulated since the late 1940s, and the remarkable triumphs of the latest theories of New Materialism resonate in the works of ASMR artists, especially "sound assortments" examples, and at the same time, they illuminate each other in an interesting way.

A Worthy Successor to *Musique Concrète*?

Sound studies researchers emphasize that the ideas of *musique concrète* remain a vital reference point in modern electroacoustic music (Lech 2017), despite the fact that the ideas of the French sound engineer Pierre Schaeffer, who is believed to be the father of *musique concrète*, are often ignored, which makes them more of a historical curiosity (Misiak 2012). Especially nowadays—in the era of advanced sound processing technology—the ideological plane of *musique concrète* demands to be discovered. Tomasz Misiak (2012, 50) seeks to reveal its inherent never-ending potentialities. He sees its relevance, first of all, in contemporary artistic practice, especially in the artists' approach to experimentation in music, and secondly, in the theoretical foundations of *musique concrète* provoking a change in our way of thinking about, defining, and describing "music." Both aspects seem to be clearly visible in the works created by ASMRtists—mainly in their soundtracks that are a key component of almost every video and can be seen as *musique concrète* pieces.

Musique concrète is a term introduced by Schaeffer in 1948. It means music which is created mainly by using sounds that are commonly seen as non-musical and non-instrumental. A *musique concrète* composer does not want to be limited by traditional musical theories and uses raw material of various origins—"sounds captured from the world around us" (Hyde 2012, 172)—recorded and processed using electroacoustic devices. The sounds used in compositions included both artificial and "natural" sounds: the rumbling noise from vehicle wheels, the swoosh of wind and water, the barking of a dog, the click-clack of footsteps, the sound of a siren, buzzing noises and murmurs. The collected materials were then processed in the studio using various transformation techniques to build a sound collage. Sounds of our everyday lives were taken out of their usual contexts and put into new, unexpected frames—it is worth noting, however, that the sound source in the first pieces of musique concrète was still recognizable despite having been processed. Over time, the sources became more and more blurred.

A *musique concrète* composer is someone who can be called a *bricoleur*, a DIYer creating art based on what is available to exceed the original functions and meanings through appropriate combinations and incrustations of finished elements (Misiak 2013, 98). The artist attentively listens to reality in order to be able to find or generate unobvious, surprising, and sometimes random sounds of the world around us. A *musique concrète* composer—a *bricoleur*, to use Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept—having taken objects out

of their original context, gives them new meanings (156). ASMR creators do this as well, following in the footsteps of DIYers of *musique concrète*. One might hazard a guess that they become *musique concrète* composers the moment they consciously ignore the utilitarian functions of the objects used in their artistic work for the illumination of their unusual aspects and extracting the unobvious sound qualities from them. When it comes to ASMR practices, working with various accessories goes beyond the *telos* of the technology used when crossing the border of pragmatic use of those objects. "Sound assortments" videos show combs and hairbrushes that do not comb the hair, but they are being knocked and scratched to bring out some deep noises; tinfoil and gift wrapping paper do not serve their usual function, but they produce crispy sounds when being tapped on and squeezed by hands; candles in glass containers do not burn, but provide a rough texture to be explored with hands, etc.

In order to find out that sound DIY is in the center of ASMR videos of the "sound assortments" subgenre, let us look at one of the examples where the artist examines various objects in order to produce the most interesting sounds. The video published on the "ASMRSleepyHead" (2019) channel, titled *ASMR IRRESISTIBLE SCRATCHING / NO TALKING / pearls, textured glass, fabric, sponges, etc.* is a typical representation of the subgenre. It shows a performer playing with a few objects that have nothing in common. You will see (and, of course, hear) a glitter bedspread, a glass liquid soap dispenser, a trivet, a string of artificial pearls, and kitchen sponges. When in contact with the artist's hands, and as a result of rubbing the objects against each other, the material gadgets start speaking in various sounds creating an unusual musical composition consisting of the sounds of knocking, scratching, friction, and rubbing. The ASMRtist becomes a composer trying out different paces of scratching and scraping when producing sounds, by using one hand or the other, or both at once, changing the pressure of nails scratching the surface of objects, intensifying or muting the sounds when bringing the accessories closer to the microphone or moving them away from it.

Materiality of objects and the artist's physical commitment when creating their work remind us of the vibrational nature of sound itself, which is an aspect examined by sound studies, especially by theories from the forge of sonic materialism (Cox 2011). Vibrationality of sound is visually emphasized in ASMR by its material sources being openly present on the screen and music being created by the artist almost live, at the time of physical involvement with the props. This type of hands-on approach to creating media content coexists here with the focus on the idea of sound as material-based.

Unlike *musique concrète* tracks, the sources of sound in ASMR are rarely hidden. This is related to the plane of activity that is based not only on sonic stimuli, but also on visual ones that can produce pleasant bodily responses. This context could bring an interesting look at ASMR from the perspective of the recently flourishing field of visual music that combines interest in the visible, material side of music (e.g. musical instruments) with the traditional, audio side (Hyde 2012). We need to remember, however, that ASMR is not always based on a combination of visuality and sound—some videos (such as "Guess the Trigger") show experiments carried out by artists, where part of the fun is to hide the sources of sounds so that they have a more powerful influence on the listener.

The composer of *musique concrète* is somewhere in between composing and listening (Misiak 2013, 113). The author of *ASMR IRRESISTIBLE SCRATCHING* is a *musique concrète* composer since she does not use a score for creating her tingling soundtrack, but composes while extracting sounds from the artifacts she chose for the performance. Therefore, she has a freedom to modify it live when working with gadgets by adjusting the pace, volume, and intensity of actions. The headphones, which artists often wear when filming, are helpful as well—although we cannot see them in the video because it solely focuses on objects shown in the foreground, but all you need to do is find a roleplay video where the ASMRtist does not hide their face to find out that wearing headphones on set is a standard practice. The *musique concrète* composer must listen to what they are creating at a given moment to be able to modify their work on an ongoing basis.

Technical sound manipulation, so symptomatic for Schaeffer's *musique concrète*, is also important in ASMR. This is where the blurred lines between "nature" and "culture" become evident. The sounds that reach the viewer-listener seem "natural," but they are, of course, processed by the "cultural" tools and technical solutions available today, including microphones and computer software. The use of available sound processing technologies has a significant impact on the final shape of the artistic work and the effect it produces in the viewer-listener's body that, as a result, is no longer part of either "nature" nor "culture" *per se*.

At this very moment we can hear in ASMR the echo of the new materialist attempts to "liquefy" the opposition of nature/culture indicating the conventionality of these categories. These attempts are connected directly with the ideas of New Materialism put forward, among others, by Rosi Braidotti, especially with a "non-dualistic understanding of nature–culture interaction" and an effort "to rethink our bodies as part of a nature–culture continuum in their in-depth structures" (2013, 3, 92). ASMR, in a new materialist spirit,

encourages us to think in terms of processes that occur between different subjects-objects and ourselves rather than in terms of the oppositions between "us" and "them." The material objects with their vibrational capabilities can be called the subjects interacting with both the artist's and the viewer-listener's bodies causing them to experience some new affective relationships. As Ewa Domańska puts it, "we tend to see things from a pragmatic point of view; the thing is important inasmuch as it serves people and can be used by them in a variety of discourses […]" (2006, 182). Here, objects seem to go beyond their intended roles and establish uncommon relationships with the human subject.

This kind of processual approach means developing a non-dualistic, non-binary perspective associated with changes in the "Eurocentric paradigm" that implied "the dialectics of self and other, and the binary logic of identity and otherness as respectively the motor for and the cultural logic of universal Humanism" (Braidotti 2013, 15). Some key figures for New Materialism, e.g. Jane Bennett, Elizabeth Grosz or Karen Barad, who build their concepts on the ideas of vibrational voice or music, come to similar conclusions while using the notions of resonance, vibration or diffraction to describe the world. While implementing these categories, they suggest that vibration is the fundamental ontological way of structuring matter, and that it allows to overcome the unnecessary differences between human and non-human, animate and inanimate matter, subjects and objects (James 2019).

We perceive ASMR sonic experiments with the vibrating material objects as blurring the boundaries between what is given and what is constructed (Mąkowska 2015, 149). These are the boundaries between "natural," immanent sonic properties of the given objects and the "processed" sounds created out of them. ASMR sonic experiments illustrate how pointless it is to establish a clear demarcation line between the considered concepts.

There are very specific material objects that play a leading role in the process of establishing various relations between different subjects and connecting them with each other using vibrations. The market for new technology products advertised with ASMR in mind is quite big now—the characteristic binaural microphones, e.g. 3Dio with human-shaped silicone ears, are ideal for creating this type of content because of their unusual sensitivity and attractive appearance. It has been revealed that "binaural recording made the associated tingling sensation more intense" (Barratt *et al*. 2017, 8).[1] In ASMR, tools from the technical production facilities are

[1] Emma L. Barratt, Charles Spence and Nick J. Davis came to this conclusion after examining the answers of 130 people who self-reported experiencing ASMR in online ques-

not oblique in the process of creating a given work of art live or in the final product; on the contrary, they play one of the main roles here. Artists treat microphones, cameras, and headphones as gadgets made of matter, participating in each performance—the process of creating *musique concrète* that is supposed to create bodily shivers. The scratched, kissed, squeezed microphone is like a totem, and the camera—stroked, hugged, and touched—is always at the center of attention.

The new sensitivity towards the world and its materiality introduced by *musique concrète* is in harmony with some of the new materialist approaches to our reality, especially with the ones focusing on the vibrationality and materiality of sound. The ideas of *musique concrète*, reflections of which we have seen in ASMR practices, display attempts to transcend both the nature / culture dichotomy and the strictly human-centered understanding of sound and music. Now, we will look at how New Materialism conceptualizes sound and matter and how these ideas become inspirational for ASMR.

ASMR's Attempts at New Materialism

Since the 1990s, we have been observing a development of the agenda of the theoretical turn known as New Materialism(s) (the term coined by Manuel DeLanda and Rosi Braidotti): a retreat from modernist and humanistic traditions based on a dualistic perception of the world, which have had the greatest impact on cultural theory so far (Dolphijn, van der Tuin 2012, 48). What was the most important step in the new materialist process of adding value to the activity of non-human actors is the so-called turn towards matter, which resulted from noticing the limitations of the linguistic turn and the theory of social constructivism that dominated the humanities over the years.

Voice and sound as such were rarely seen as based on materiality. However, more and more philosophers try to introduce the idea of vibration while focusing on the link between materiality and sound. One of them is Jane Bennett who describes New Materialism as "giving voice to […] vitality intrinsic to matter" (2010, 61). Elizabeth Grosz also perceives vibrations as crucial to life defining them as "oscillations, differences, movements of back and forth, contraction and dilation […]" and "vectors of movement, radiating

tionnaires. A significant number of participants described their sensations as stronger when binaural recording was involved.

outward, vibrating through and around all objects or being dampened by them" (2008, 55). In addition, she draws attention to the affective potential of vibrations moving bodies in a pleasurable way which reminds us of the tingling sensation of ASMR: "There is something about vibration and its resonating effects on material bodies that generates pleasure, a kind of immediate bodily satisfaction" (2008, 32). According to Grosz, "the visual and sonorous" artworks based on the accommodated and framed worldly vibrations, "capture something of the vibratory structure of matter itself; they extract color, rhythm, movement from chaos in order to slow it down" (2008, 19).

Many researchers are eager to use these ideas in their studies. Nina Sun Eidsheim, interested in the multisensorial phenomenon of music, wants to "redirect thinking about sound as an object, as with the figure of sound, toward a reconception of sound as event through the practice of vibration" (2015, 3). According to Eidsheim, "singing and listening are better understood as intermaterial vibrational practices" (ibidem), not necessarily as associated with the human-centered understanding of sonic events. Here, the sound is mainly associated with vibrations of certain frequency occurring in a given material medium, and not only with those that reach the human ear (Friedner, Helmreich 2012). These findings lead to rethinking the level of involvement of human and non-human factors in co-creating a musical composition, as well as moving away from focusing on aurality as the most important feature of sound.

The vibratory quality of sound connects humans and non-humans by setting their bodies in motion. Vibrations of sound waves, even if initiated by a human being, always have the ability to move all bodies made of matter, and thus to improve their vitality and potential for further activity. This way, the vibrations draw our attention to the connections made between human and non-human actors. In the new materialist context, it is emphasized that "vibrations create relations" (Fast *et al.* 2018) which connect different bodies throughout a given event. This way, bodies—always fluid and in motion—interact with each other in a vibrational affective event, creating new dynamic connections, constantly becoming, not freezing in familiar forms.

Sonorous artworks of ASMR play on such approach to sound as vibratory structure of matter captured in an affective entanglement of bodies. This structure is revealed in the form of a "feeling with no name" (Sadowski 2016, 160), "a kind of immediate bodily satisfaction" (Grosz 2008, 32). The tingling sensation felt in response to various stimuli is an affective response to the vibrations produced by the interaction of various human and non-human bodies. Bodies of ASMR recipients—affected by sound vibration, with an

awakened tingling response—are stimulated by movements captured and produced by other bodies and thus they are in a state of potentiality, in the unfinished phase of becoming. The body experiencing ASMR is a sensitized and fluid body, as the vibration felt inside is short-lived, fickle, changeable, and elusive.

We have already established that stimuli intended to cause ASMR in this emerging body are usually inseparable from the visible source of sonic vibrations. Indeed, ASMRtists put material sources of vibrations in the center of the tingling experience. Physical props are always treated by the artist's hands with anointment, like sacred artifacts with magical properties that are being invoked during tactile interaction. In a typical ASMR video, the object set in motion by the artist spreads vibrations which are captured by a sensitive microphone and passed on to the recipient, leading to a physical response. Let us look at one of the videos from the "Caroline ASMR" (2019) channel where Caroline slowly plays with numerous objects, discovering their sonic possibilities, showing a childlike astonishment on her face. The video includes sounds produced by a pink textured pillow, a studded leatherette women's bag, a bear figurine, a string of wooden chili peppers, a jute sack, etc. With a gentle smile on her face, the artist sets the objects in motion, causing vibrations reaching the bodies—of the viewers-listeners and her own. We can clearly see the reactions of Caroline's body—her smile strengthening and her body slightly trembling when she feels the vibrations of matter coming on.

The type of approach to matter represented by Caroline is similar to what Jane Bennett called "childhood sense of the world" that "draws attention to an efficacy of objects in excess of the human meanings, designs, or purposes they express or serve" (Bennett 2010, 20). This kind of amazement at the world and its existing entities, whose common-sense, "adult," practical purpose is irrelevant here, facilitates a deeper understanding of the vitality of matter. Such an attempt by an ASMRtist to look at the objects-props stripped of meaning in a "fresh" way, without preliminary suppositions, in order to be able to further feel and pass their vibrations spreading in all directions and touching different bodies, is one of the main ideas underlying the ASMR artistic practices.

As we pointed out, New Materialism, with its proposal to look at sound in a way that goes beyond the limiting human understanding, as an idea of vibration that develops affective relations between bodies and connects human and non-human material entities emerging in a given vibrational event, can be a source of some inspirational ideas blossoming in contemporary ASMR artworks.

Conclusions

The article has examined how ASMRtists use the idea of sound's materiality in their creative activity. In the article we suggested the accuracy of certain concepts—the ones proposed by *musique concrète* style and New Materialism theories—concerning a contemporary attitude towards material reality. We recognized both of them as being occupied with the idea of "wider-than--human" understanding of sound as vibration that is capable of establishing affective relationships between humans and non-humans during the artistic performance.

Thanks to the analysis of selected ASMR videos, we have found that these artistic practices show a new materialist approach to matter and material objects that goes beyond a strictly human, rational, and practical understanding of them. ASMR practices emphasize a certain activity of the material objects which do not serve humans in accordance with their intended purpose but instead reveal surprising sonic-vibrational properties capable of affecting humans and their bodies. In addition, it was noticed that definitions of sound do not begin in ASMR with a focus on the human ear—it is not by accident that most videos feature the material objects, not humans, in the foreground. An ASMR artwork is treated here, as Elizabeth Grosz would say, as a sonorous event that accommodates and frames the vibration of the worldly matter.

ASMR may have significant consequences for our understanding of the idea of (non-) human "music", the issues of vitality of matter and our relationships with it, or the definition of "subjectivity." ASMR, operating as a lens, focuses our attention on the vibrations of worldly matter, indicating its affective potential. Here, material objects are being put in the spotlight and treated like subjects with their ability to attract all our attention, occupy every single minute of the video, pour out lavishly from the screen and seep the sonic vibrations directly into our ears and bodies.

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