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Editorial

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The special section that makes up most of this issue is a distinctive contribution to the broadly influential contemporary interest in materiality that goes by many names, echoing different approaches that include object oriented ontology, speculative realism and new materialism. The inflection common to these essays is a concern with art and/or aesthetics; an effort to join a conversation that Ilona Hongisto, Katve-Kaisa Kontturi and Milla Tiainen argue has been most often heard in the social sciences and philosophy. We'll leave it to them to introduce the essays but for one brief aside. In their essay, 'Framing, Following, Middling: A Methodological Triptych', they discuss Bjork's 2013 film, *Biophilia Live*. They note that the viewer is welcomed to the film by the voice of David Attenborough as the accompanying images begin with a flyover shot that takes the viewer from lush mountains all the way to Bjork's stage in London. Hongisto, Kontturi and Tiainen argue that this 'trope … connects the film to the pedagogic apparatus of nature documentaries'. This example becomes one of many instances in which they (and their authors) engage in subtle and persuasive accounts of what we would call a mapping of relations. It's

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well understood by the authors in this issue that such a formulation echoes Latour's insistence on the 'tracing of associations', an injunction that this is, primarily and importantly, methodological. In the broad field of cultural studies this has influenced both ideas of reorganising our engagement with the world (Heather Love's 'surface readings' and 'thin description') and a rethinking of notions of the intrinsic as in Graham Harman's 'relations cannot exist without relata'. However, it seems to us that it's still worth asking: is a commitment to relationality the same thing as an investment in materialism (in the neo- or any other variety)?

The two essays in our general section are, by turns, timely and provocative. Although Nicolette Bragg and Emma Kowal are both writing about colonialism and hospitality, we couldn't help thinking about the context in which these essays are appearing, as some European nations grope for ways to become hospitable to refugees arriving from Syria and in the United States potential Republican presidential candidates try to outdo each other in proposing inhospitable measures to banish so-called 'illegal immigrants'. Australia, where we're based, has since the beginning of the new century had the dubious distinction of being at the forefront of the international efforts to re-order the postwar consensus around refugees that took form in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, later amended by the 1967 Protocol). In 2001, less that a month before the September 11 attacks on the United States, the Australian Government ordered its armed forces to board the MV *Tampa*, a Norwegian vessel that had entered Australian territorial waters carrying over four hundred (mainly Hazara) refugees who had been rescued in international waters. This disgraceful episode, and particularly its deeply dishonest spectacularisation by conservative politicians, has led in the intervening years to a fearful and xenophobic consensus about the righteousness of incarcerating refugees in off-shore detention centres and denying them refuge in Australia. Kowal and Bragg draw our attention to some much more hopeful but also contentious versions of what Leela Ghandi called 'the politics of friendship'. Kowal's polemic, which is both for and against a very recent ritual in Australia called 'Welcome to Country' in which non-Indigenous people are perhaps (re-) located in relation to colonialism. The essay gnaws at the bones of academic performance, disciplinary presumption and respect versus cant. Who has the right to welcome whom in a postcolonial context? Bragg revisits Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* where there is 'no promise of

reconciliation or atonement' and where the founding and ongoing fictions of the nation must be confronted by its guests.

Finally, Gabrielle Fletcher's 'Self. Propagating: A Strategy of Encounter' is a sharp, aphoristic and painfully funny account of academic, Indigenous and other everyday identities in the midst of uncertainty. We could go on, at some length if given our head, about the pleasures and challenges to be found in the collection of outstanding reviews here. But it's more efficient in these days of so much timing of motion to recommend every one of them to you with a simple claim: you'll be glad you've read them.