IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

Annalisa Colombino & Paolo Palladino

Published online: 19 Nov 2019.

Submit your article to this journal ⃗

View related articles ⃗

View Crossmark data ⃗

Le Croisic 11 by Roger Martin.

annalisa colombino

paolo palladino

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
human and non-human animals, movement, and bio-political existence

introduction

We live in a bio-political age. The gravitational centre of political existence today has shifted from juridical constructions of sovereignty towards modes of governance that are more dispersed and predicated on maximising the productive capacities of corporeal subjects. One of the obligations of life in this age is to think about human existence as the existence of the human as animal, and so much so that the relationship between human and non-human animals must become the defining existential problematisation. As Foucault once noted "for millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (*History of Sexuality* 143). In other words, questions about the relationship between humans and aspects of their existence that are shared with other animals are long-standing, but they have also acquired greater resonance at different points in time, sometimes defining a historical period. As a result of the historical importance that corporeal existence has assumed today, the relationship between human and non-human animals – the hitherto under-examined site wherein to inquire about the ways in which bio-political governmentality "places [human] existence as a

living being into question" – exercises considerable attention within and without academic contexts. Put simply, the relationship between human and non-human animals has become an obligatory matter of concern (Calarco).[1]

In this paper, we contribute to the further articulation of this matter of concern by examining a recent commemoration of transhumance, a pastoral practice involving the structured, seasonal movement of herds and herders, aiming thereby to engage with Buller's provocative proposition that movement is key to reaching a better understanding of the relationship between human and non-human animals (see also Hodgetts and Lorimer).[2] Whilst Buller does not clarify what movement is to him and seems to understand movement primarily as an observable phenomenon, we articulate different conceptions of movement, exploring their implications for the understanding of the relationship between human and non-human animals. Specifically, we examine movement at work in two fields of investigation, namely empirical and theoretical. In the empirical field, movement is the observed feature of relations between human and non-human animals. In the theoretical field, movement is instead conceptualised as involving relations between self and other and as entailing either a dynamic of becoming otherwise, a process of finding oneself, or an oscillation between singularity and multiplicity. Thus, in a manner very similar to Wadiwel's discussion of non-human animals' capacity for resistance, we examine conceptual categories in action, but our approach is not so much deconstructive as an exercise in heterology (Buchanan).[3]

We approach the task of capturing the relationship between contemporary bio-political existence, the lives of non-human animals, and movement by turning to *TransHumance*. This performative commemoration of transhumance offers great scope to examine the proposed multiple conceptions of movement and their bearing on the relationship between human and non-human animals. We begin by introducing how this performance spurs us to imagine diverse modes of co-existence, and we focus particularly on how the equine, blinking gaze, which the

authors of *TransHumance* have adopted as their signature and appears intermittently throughout the performance, prompts us to pay particular attention to movement itself. Then, in the third section of this paper, we examine how transhumance, as the historical pastoral practice which *TransHumance* seeks to document, offers two perspectives on movement and its implications for the relationship between human and non-human animals. We show how these two perspectives bring to light the violence of the relationship between human and non-human animals but offer little scope for any overturning of the latter's subjection to such violence. In the fourth section, we examine *TransHumance* as a work of art, aiming to explore other conceptions of movement which the horse's blink triggers. We suggest that the blink operates in a way which denaturalises movement and opens up the possibility of thinking about movement differently. We begin to do so by turning to Marchesini's (*Etologia*) and Cimatti's (*Filosofia dell'Animalità*) philosophical reflections on human existence and its relationship to the lives of non-human animals, aiming to offer an interpretation of the blink as registering the presence of another subject and as provoking the movement of becoming otherwise.[4] The two philosophers' debate is important today because it focuses on the possibility of attributing subjectivity to non-human animals. This issue is considered key to advancing our understanding of "real" animals (Haraway, *Species*) and, importantly, to fostering a different politics of living together, a politics which is attentive to the needs and desires of non-human animals with which we share our existence.[5] Our examination of movement shows that the attribution of subjectivity to non-human animals reproduces the violence of their contemporary subordination. It points out that the articulation of the conditions for co-existence requires a reconceptualisation of existence beyond the divisions between human and non-human animals that the "anthropological machine" operates (Agamben, *The Open*).[6] Therefore, in the fifth and final substantive section, the paper turns to Nancy's work which, despite its radical non-

anthropocentrism (Bingham 492), has rarely been mobilised to consider the relationship between human and non-human animals.[7] This discussion is again sparked by the blink, which we now equate with the act of touching, a sensual act that is pivotal to Nancy's articulation of a non-anthropocentric conception of existence. Drawing on this work, we propose a conception of movement as oscillation and examine what it may entail for rethinking the relationship between human and non-human animals. Our ultimate aim is to advance an understanding of this relationship that is not prey to the humanism underpinning the attribution of subjectivity to non-human animals.

why *transhumance?*

TransHumance is a multi-sited and multimedia performance, which the company Théâtre du Centaure first presented in Marseille in 2013.

The manifesto for the performance (Théâtre du Centaure, *Manifeste*) is particularly interesting. It combines words and images to convey the post-humanist ambition to transcend all division between human and non-human animals, the individual and the collective. Thus, one of its poetic declarations reads as follows:

> I want close my eyes and dream of something
> extraordinary:
> Animals and humans walking together.
> It could be you, it could be me, but not quite.
> It would be us.
> I want to dissolve myself, I want to be a flock
> on the move, a swarm of bees, a flight of
> swallows […] (Our translation)

It is a self-consciously revolutionary manifesto (see also Théâtre du Centaure, *Dossier Pédagogique*). In keeping with this transformative mood, the style is modernist and minimalist. At the same time, the play with words that lends the performance its title also evokes the traditions of transhumance. This is a practice that today is enjoying renewed interest, at both the cultural and institutional levels, and we would wish to add that such attention should be understood as stemming from

movement itself, as much as from the assembly of human and non-human animals.[8]

At the same time, the cinematic rendition of this manifesto (Théâtre du Centaure, *TransHumance*) moves the critical register away from modernist, revolutionary abstraction to the contingencies of time and place, and, in so doing, exposes a number of fissures within the fabric of its critique of the division between human and non-human animals. This cinematic rendition begins with a visual evocation of past configurations of the relationship between human and non-human animals. These include references to pre-modern trading relations between Marseille, Florence, and Rome, which were built primarily around sheep and their wool, as well as reminders of later, colonial associations with the Maghreb, which the cinematography extends into the present, by transforming Berber horsemen into the ululating denizens of Marseille's dilapidated Quartiers Nord. These narratives are drawn to a close by bringing non-human animals back into the contemporary urban space, challenging its partitioning of the lives of human and non-human animals by juxtaposing the majestic horses and flocks of urban pigeons, proverbially no better than rats with wings. The pigeons scatter as a feminine centaur rides into the city, standing on three horses running together and in unison. The abolition of difference and the freedom that this movement is supposed to actuate are delivered by the final frames, which intercut images of horses running freely through the streets with images of schoolkids laughing and running through the very same streets. All are free. Yet, just as the worried expression of a motorist leading the entry of the centaur into the city betrays the staging of all this movement, so does the occasional glimpse of the tethers corralling the horses on which the centaur rides. Movement thus enables the abolition of difference and the realisation of freedom, but the coordination of the multiple and diverse bodies so released also seems to rest on the operation of power. As a result, the cinematic rendition could be regarded as pointing unwittingly to the dynamics of revolutionary process, allowing the viewer to observe the ever-present working of power and

Fig. 1.   Animaglyph; reproduced by kind permission of Théâtre du Centaure, 2017.

the impossibility of getting rid of the anthropological machine differentiating and ordering relations between human and non-human animals. History, in other words, matters.[9]

The complexity of the transhumant apparatus, if not the assemblage, which *TransHumance* seeks to commemorate, is captured in a photograph of one of the living sculptures produced as part of the performance (Théâtre du Centaure, *Les Animaglyphes*).

As the centaur, with the aid of watchful sheepdogs, corrals sheep into an "animaglyph" on the stony and barren Crau, the sculpture offers a visual representation of power and its ordering of the apparatus' component parts (Fig. 1). In so doing, it opens up all the problems involved in imagining how humans and non-humans might live together, how the human animal might melt into "a flock on the move, a swarm of bees, a flight of swallows" (*Manifeste*). At the same time, there seems to be something more at work in *TransHumance*, which is related to movement, but also beyond movement. This excess is conveyed by a horse's blinking eye, which features on both the cover of the textual rendition of the manifesto and Théâtre du Centaure's home page (Fig. 2).

The horse's blink serves as a very useful reminder that movement and stasis enjoy a complicated relationship, which Muybridge and Marey famously explored in their photographs of human and non-human animals in movement, photographs in which the horse featured prominently (MacMahon and Lawrence). We propose to extend to the examination of movement, animal bodies and the moment of vision which they thus initiated by equating the blink and the operation of the cinematographic shutter. The shutter produces the illusion of movement by alternating between the passage of light and its interruption. As such, movement, which cinema purports to capture, is in fact an effect of the arrangement of a photographic series.

In similarly problematising movement, the blink opens up the possibility of thinking the relationship between self and other differently. In other words, we propose to understand the blink as opening a gap between the human self and animal other, which precipitates questions about movement, the lives of non-human animals, and contemporary bio-political existence.

empirical configurations

As observed above, *TransHumance* provokes questions about the relationship between self

Fig. 2. Still from Théâtre du Centaure's website; reproduced by kind permission of Théâtre du Centaure, 2017.

and other, but this provocation also stems from the documentation of transhumance, from the performance's drawing attention to diverse bodies and the conceptual implications of their relative movements. We begin the exploration of this complex by examining how transhumance, as documented in *TransHumance*, can be approached from two different vantage points, one focusing on the conjunction of bodies and movement, and the other on the agency of movement itself.

transhumance as economic activity

In the cinematic version of *TransHumance*, the imagery associating Marseille and diverse sites across the western Mediterranean is a reminder that the seasonal movement of sheep, cows, and horses was once a highly lucrative activity. On this understanding, how humans extract value from other animals is problematic.

The most familiar mode of extracting value from non-human animals is to enclose them and intensify the enclosure's productivity. It is also possible, however, to extract value by organising movement so as to optimise the exploitation of land held in common. Perhaps most famously, the Kingdom of Castile, the principal actor in the commercial networks in which Marseille once participated, sought to improve the quantity and quality of wool produced within its confines by regulating the movement of herds between common land designated as either winter or summer pasture (Phillips and Phillips). If this mode of extracting value from animal bodies and the commons is largely forgotten, it is because, in the United Kingdom, home to the agricultural revolution, attention shifted increasingly from the management of movement between pastures to the livestock itself, in its corporeal existence (Franklin).[10] If transhumance seems today to be disappearing from large swathes of the world, it is not only because the common land, on which the possibility of movement rests, is also disappearing, but also because this practice entails difficult negotiations between animals of different species to produce economically remunerative movement.[11]

Admittedly, this perspective on the creation of value contributes to the literature on animal productivity, which has focused primarily on

fixed sites to examine how bodies are regimented so as to maximise the value of their component parts (Twine), thus overlooking productivity outside such sites. While Despret and Meuret have little to say about transhumance's economic function, their examination of learning to be a transhumant shepherd is instructive in this regard (*Composer avec le Moutons*). It conveys how the relationship between human and non-human animals moving across common land is as much a matter of disciplinary power as any enclosing arrangement, here intent on producing docile human and non-human animal bodies, well-drilled in seasonal movement (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*). Consequently, one might want to treat circumspectly any understanding of transhumance and other, related modes of animal husbandry as providing a context in which to explore more "peaceful and intelligent mode[s] of relation with animals" (Porcher, "Animal Work" 304).[12] The more important point is, however, that this account of transhumance points to the possibility that, for all the prominence of movement, this pastoral practice does not in fact provide any greater purchase on the relationship between human and non-human animals. If movement is as important as we have proposed, we may then need to think about the phenomenon differently.

what moves?

The cinematic rendition of *TransHumance* is not just replete with images of human and non-human animal bodies in movement but also juxtaposes movement between places that are both spatially and temporally distant. To gain some greater purchase on such movement and its importance to the relationship between human and non-human animals we may need to ask, as Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos does, what exactly is moving.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos challenges the received, anthropocentric understanding of transhumance by considering transhumant shepherds and their flocks as part of an assemblage that comes to life as they participate in the

movement of the Earth. When we take up such radical decentring of both human and non-human animals, and start to ask what exactly is moving, we begin to see things that passed unnoticed in the previous account of transhumance. As the herd and shepherd move in accordance with the rhythm of the seasonal cycle and regeneration of pastures, the movement of this assemblage draws attention to the many structures that seek to channel such movement and generate profit. These structures range from the geo-political delimitations of the nation-state and the regulatory apparatus governing infrastructure such as the roads along which the transhumant flock travels, to the maintenance of clear-cut divisions between the human and non-human animal.[13] In other words, once we centre the analysis upon the agency of movement itself we start to see more fully the effects of the many formerly invisible actors enabling transhumance.

At the same time, however, the language of "assemblages," which enables the focus on movement itself, would seem to diminish the hold of difference and its political purchase (see Legg). The account of difference on which this language is predicated is blind to the non-human animal, as Haraway rightly says about Deleuze, but we would add that this language enjoys the advantage of being equally blind to the human animal and its privileges. In other words, this symmetry calls into question the relationship of care sustaining political objections to the subordination of the non-human animal. The ambivalence, if not scepticism, about Deleuzian accounts of the relationship between human and non-human animals is then unsurprising.[14]

In sum, the first perspective on transhumance shows how its distinctive conjunction of movement and relations between the human and non-human animals is driven by the logic of economic exploitation, but it does not foster any transformation of our understanding of these relations. The second perspective focuses on movement itself, exposing the multitude of otherwise invisible agents sustaining transhumance, but it also deflects attention from the historically sedimented, differential relations

motivating the critique of contemporary configurations of the relationship between human and non-human animals. Consequently, to see how attention to movement might transform our understanding of the relationship, we need to think about the phenomenon in less empirical terms. *TransHumance*, as a work of art, helps us to shift the discussion in just this direction.

theoretical configurations

The intermittent presence of the horse's blinking eye throughout Théâtre du Centaure's performance is a visual reminder that *TransHumance* mobilises transhumance to foster the imagination of alternative configurations of the relationship between human and non-human animals. In this section, we analyse *TransHumance*'s attention to movement and the transgression of boundaries between human and non-human animals by taking note of the way in which the action of blinking can be associated with subjectivity and then turning to the debate between Marchesini and Cimatti over Marchesini's attribution of subjectivity to non-human animals. While Marchesini's argument has gained increasing international attention and approval, such approval does not always attend to its conceptual implications, which Cimatti discusses at length in his postscript to one of Marchesini's more extended expositions of the argument for the attribution of subjectivity to non-human animals. After detailing the terms of the debate between Cimatti and Marchesini and the conceptual impasse to which it draws attention, namely that the attribution of subjectivity to non-human animals threatens to undo the very notion of subjectivity, we turn to another possible understanding of the blink. Drawing on Nancy's reflections on touch (*Noli me Tangere*) we discuss how this understanding fosters an alternative conception of movement that is potentially more useful to the overcoming of the impasse confronting Cimatti and Marchesini.

discovering the other subject …

According to Alt's account of Heidegger's reflections on the relationship between blinking

and Being (*Dasein*), the blink interrupts the unfolding of Being, exposing the limitations of present forms of being and opening onto possibilities of being otherwise. Importantly, Alt notes how the blink is precipitated in proximity with other beings (*Mitsein*). While Heidegger would disavow any extension of his thinking about the blink to the encounter with non-human animals, circumscribing their blinks as a physiological rather than an expressive response, *TransHumance* seems to invite a different understanding. If one were to follow Marchesini's thought, which we discuss below, this blink should be understood as registering the presence of another subject, and the task should be to bridge the differences that stand in the way of such recognition. On this understanding, it becomes possible to envision another conception of movement, as the movement of becoming otherwise.

Marchesini's central thesis is that the distinction between human and non-human animals is a fiction, which he sets out to contest by combining ethological observation and philosophical reflection (*Etologia*). Thus, Marchesini, the ethologist, observes how the behaviour of non-human animals is not easily reduced to either instinctive or conditioned responses, and that it is better understood instead as the exercise of choice and creativity. The equation of such exercise and the presence of a subject leads him to question why subjectivity should be limited to the human animal alone. Marchesini, the philosopher, begins the enterprise of extending the entitlement to subjectivity to non-human animals by exposing the pivotal, humanist distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* to a systematic critique. He explains that the distinction has come to be employed ever more insistently in the aftermath of the Darwinian erasure of any qualitative difference between human and non-human animals. The claim is that although human and non-human animals may share many capacities (*dotazioni*), the life of non-human animals coincides totally with these capacities, whereas that of the human animal does not. The human animal employs these capacities in an instrumental fashion, so exemplifying the distinctive action

of *res cogitans*. Marchesini admits that consciousness is invoked to sustain this distinction, but he also claims that these distinctively human capacities could be regarded equally well as tools in themselves. As a result, the differentiation is superfluous. The differentiation is also groundless because the majority of human actions are not conscious but unconscious. Having thus cleared the ground, Marchesini then moves to reconsider behaviour without any regard to the differentiation between human and non-human species. The observed similarities between the uses to which human and non-human animals put their capacities are to be understood as a product of common descent, tempered by the contingencies of developmental and experiential circumstance. Marchesini is no socio-biologist, however, inasmuch as he turns first to Spinoza's understanding of affect and movement to deflate the distinction between communication and language, and also to disconnect desire from any sense of its being a drive impelled by something lacking. He then evokes Heidegger's understanding of meaningful existence as the creation of worlds, to characterise existence as the continuous establishment of relations with novel agents, and as an active, creative presence, rather than any passive exercise of a fixed set of capacities. On this understanding, if subjectivity consists in the exercises of sovereignty over one's capacities and creative engagement with the alterity of the world, human and non-human animals share such subjectivity in equal measure. In other words, Marchesini would appear to combine Heidegger and Spinoza to argue that human and non-human animals are monads, devoid of interiority and intent upon an endlessly creative process of overcoming the present and becoming otherwise.[15]

If Marchesini then grants non-human animals that which was previously denied them and constituted their difference, Cimatti observes that this extension of subjectivity would seem to come at the cost of evacuating the very notion of subjectivity of all meaning. In fact, in a postscript to Marchesini's exposition of his argument, Cimatti (*Postfazione*) proposes that

Marchesini's conception of subjectivity should be understood as advancing a form of panpsychism such that even Heidegger's famed stone might be regarded as a subject.

In an earlier work, which he summarises in the postscript, Cimatti draws out the implications of this difficulty, implications which call for some reconsideration of the extent to which Marchesini's becoming otherwise involves any process of transformation at all.

… finding ourselves

Contrary to Marchesini, Cimatti argues that subjectivity should be understood as consciousness of one's existence and as an alienated being. In other words, according to Cimatti, to be a subject is to be conscious of one's being irremediably split off from both oneself and the world. From this perspective, all reflection on the relationship between the human and the non-human animal is about the human and what it might mean to be human. Thus, if we were to follow Cimatti, movement towards the other subject, as provoked by the blinking expression which so captivates Théâtre du Centaure, is not so much a process of becoming otherwise as it is a matter of discovering the complexity of our all-too-human subjectivity.

As noted above, Marchesini regards the differentiation between human and non-human animals as a historical artefact and emphasises the possibility of its overcoming, by recognising how unwarranted is the differentiation. Cimatti, mobilising an altogether different understanding of historicity, namely the historicity of Being, proceeds to question the possibility of transformation of existence that Marchesini seeks to advance. He argues more specifically that the subject's adoption of its differentiating and individuating proper name cannot but separate it from the world on which it is, at the same time, dependent for every aspect of its existence. On Cimatti's understanding, the animal is the imagined figure of the other in whom the human subject invests all hope of securing full possession of itself, however elusive this must be. From this perspective, the longing for the communion of all animals,

human and non-human, which Marchesini could be said to articulate, should be understood as the expression of this subject's alienation from itself and from the world in which it is immersed inescapably. Yet, as Cimatti also observes, as long as one holds on to any notion of subjectivity, such an embrace of all things is bound to be self-defeating. Such an embrace is possible only by exiting the symbolic order in which one participates from the moment of assuming one's proper name. In other words, one can only become immanent by ceasing to be. At the same time, however, the desire for such annihilation emerges from the very symbolic order one wishes to exit. Anxiety about one's nature and fate, as well as hatred of the animal, is rooted in this fraught relationship to the world.[16] The alternative to this situation, Cimatti proposes, is to embrace the understanding of subjectivity as precarious and forever alienated, and to begin instead to explore the limits of the symbolic order, seeking the chinks through which the world reveals itself, perhaps in the work of poetry, the very work on which Cimatti ends his postscript to Marchesini.

In sum, if we were to follow Cimatti's thought, the movement of recognition inaugurated by the blink would not involve a process of becoming otherwise because on such an understanding that which is found on the other side would be the self-same subject. As such, the movement that the blink prompts would imply the work of traversal and reconciliation with one's own alienation. While such quietism seems an inadequate response to the violence of the relationship between human and non-human animals, it is also possible to understand poetry as productive and transformative.[17] This productive understanding of poetry may explain how Marchesini and Cimatti are able to engage in a constructive discussion, despite the latter's provocative proposition that "there are no animals [… and …] the only animals we know are those we have invented for ourselves" (Cimatti, *Filosofia dell'Animalità* vii). This productive understanding of poetry also is the blink's work. In other words, for us the blink is a poetic gesture that points to something beyond itself,

and the remaining task is to understand to what it points and how it does so.

minding the gap

The eventual turn of the dialogue between Marchesini and Cimatti to poetry enables us to see how *TransHumance* might be understood as articulating three different modes of co-existence between human and non-human animals.

In the cinematic rendition of *TransHumance*, the final frames intercut images of horses running freely through the streets and images of laughing schoolkids running through the very same streets. In so doing, these images exemplify the first mode of co-existence, in which human and non-human animals appear to be freed from the violence of differentiation. If this also exemplifies Marchesini's imagined new relationship between human and non-human animals, the notion of freedom which the movement is meant to convey also rests on a fundamentally bio-political set of assumptions. As Cimatti might answer, such freedom is the actualisation of a presumed common mode of existence and, as such, it cannot but evacuate the notion of freedom of its transcendent meaning. The centaur exemplifies the second mode of co-existence. Like the transhumant shepherd, the centaur is imagined as leading the movement of the flock, but she is also visibly dependent on the different bodies assembled to deliver coordinated movement, without which the movement would be artless and graceless, as well as economically un-remunerative. Understanding the orderly relationship between the diverse parts of this assemblage is fraught with difficulty, however, insofar as treating them as equal contributors to the assemblage's operations drifts towards a bio-political reading, but any insistence on difference drifts back towards the sovereignty of anthropocentrism (see also Thompson). The dialogue between Marchesini and Cimatti is best understood as a struggle with these two constructions of co-existence, which are caught between the violence of differentiation and the equally violent effects of erasing difference. It seems to us that Nancy provides the resources

to think constructively about this space in between, and also enables us to understand the blink not just as Théâtre du Centaure's signature but also as the signature of a third mode of being together (see Agamben, *Signature*).

Nancy regards the sensual act of touch as opening a gap in the fabric of the world and argues that existence must be understood in relation to this opening, not as an interruption but as a positive and constitutive event. We suggest that the blink opens up a similar gap. This, as we explain below, leads us to propose the movement of oscillation across the gap as a third mode of co-existence evoked in *TransHumance.*

Firstly, unlike Cimatti and Marchesini, who are attached to some understanding of subjectivity and its primacy, Nancy seeks to decentre and spatialise existence. Nancy (*Being Singular Plural*) does so by arguing that existence not only takes the form of irreducible plurality, such that the unfolding of Being (*Dasein*) must be understood as the unfolding of Being-with (*Mitdasein*), and in a manner that is not to be confused with being-with (*Mitsein*). Primacy rests with the relation that Being-with entails, rather than any shared substance, so moving away from the philosophy of substance in which Cimatti and Marchesini ground their understanding of the relationship between human and non-human animals. The fuller implications of this understanding are visualised best by means of the Christological imagery that Nancy has sometimes employed to articulate his thinking (*Noli me Tangere*). Following this imagery, one is called to distinguish between the notion of touch at stake in Thomas's relationship to Christ's body, whereby the real is guaranteed by the possibility of touch, and the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalen, whereby the real is produced by detachment and the denial of touch in the famed "noli me tangere" scene. The opening up of a gap in the fabric of the world, in other words, is both the condition of possibility and the denial of touch, as well as productive of all that flows from touch. Similarly, the blink opens up a gap between what comes to be the horse and the onlooker gazing at one

another, setting in motion the series of questions about the relationship between human and non-human animals which *Trans-Humance* poses. On this understanding of the blink, the relationship between human and non-human animals is as problematic as Marchesini and Cimatti observe, but the problem they address emerges only at the moment when we come to be named and differentiated from the others, imagining ourselves here, as gazing subjects, in a relationship to them over there, the objects of our gaze. The greater the distance imagined, the greater the violence of the relationship, but the violence is inescapable and the corresponding allure of immanence great.

Secondly, Nancy's reflections on the relationship between words and images (*The Ground of the Image*) offer a way of thinking about this understanding of Being-with as a relationship between immanence and transcendence. Nancy considers the relationship between text and image, asking how they come alive, that is, how they amount to more than inscriptions, conveying something in excess of what they are in themselves. While asking how images can be said to speak and texts illustrate, Nancy refers to the action of oscillation which both separates text and image, but also sustains their mutually constitutive relationship. The blink, we suggest, operates in these same terms. It inaugurates movement across the gap, an oscillation between the recognition of another subject and the rejection of all differentiation. The movement cannot but be in the form of oscillation because neither mode of existence is tenable. As Nancy might say, existence is the experience of the fragmentation consequent upon our being both singular and multiple (see also James). As a result, where all the previous explorations of the declensions of movement and the relationship between human and non-human animals privileged either movement or the relationship over the other, something like Nancy's oscillation offers an understanding of existence that retains the Deleuzian emphasis on movement and process, while also holding onto difference as the interruption of continuity (Dejanovic).

Crucially, the relationality that is consequently involved in all forms of existence is a potent ethical bond because the vulnerability of any one body becomes a vulnerability which each and every other individuated body involved cannot but share. It is an exposure for which all are responsible because each and every body involved is not in a relation with the others, but is the relation. As Watkin puts it, this body must be understood as an "irreducibly open […] singularity that cannot sequester itself from the web of singular plurality without which it is not" (61).

In sum, the blink allows us to glimpse an alternative mode of Being, the spatial unfolding of an existence in the midst of a multitude of others, which is never reducible nor coincides with one body or another, be it human or non-human. Arguably, the carving out of this form of being is what is distinctive about some recent endeavours to regenerate highland communities by reconfiguring relations between their human and non-human inhabitants. These relations certainly remain instrumental, but they are also understood to require an opening up to difference and heteronomy to achieve their promise of regeneration (see Palladino, "What's in a Name?").

conclusion

In this paper we have engaged with Buller's intuition that movement might be crucial to reaching a new understanding of the relationship between human and non-human animals by drawing on *TransHumance*, a recent commemoration of transhumance, to examine the implications of his provocation. In so doing, we have explored how attention to movement as an observable phenomenon may destabilise distinctions between human and non-human animals, so facilitating the overcoming of anthropocentrism, and also how the shift away from historically sedimented categories seems to come at the cost of political and ethical engagement in the lives of non-human animals. Yet greater attention to the theoretical specification of these categories seems equally often at risk of discovering that the analysis of

the relationship between them is dealing not with difference but with sameness, with human identity with itself. As a result, the attention to movement never overcomes the problematic nature of distinctions between human and non-human animals, but simply displaces the problem onto the productivity of poetic representation.

What we think is at issue in this impasse is the fraught relationship between substance and process, which is sometimes betrayed by the ambivalence that critics as different as Haraway and Agamben share in regard to Deleuzian understanding of the non-human animal. In other words, when Agamben proposes that Deleuzian thought is uniquely capable of thinking about animal existence "in an absolutely non-anthropomorphic way" (*The Open* 39–40), or Haraway suggests more caustically that there is little to learn about "actual wolves" (*Species* 29) from Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of wolves and becoming-animal, what is at issue is a fundamental division within metaphysics. This is the division between attention to that which is given, the substance of the world, and attention to the processes out of which substance emerges, or the coming into being of that which will have been given. This division is why we discuss how Nancy's understanding of Being-with offers a promising approach to the conjunction of movement and the relationship between human and non-human animals. Nancy's understanding of Being-with, whereby the understanding of Being and becoming is detached from any singular form and the two are transformed into expressions of the multitude, sharpens our understanding of the relationship between human and non-human animals by focusing attention on the relationship itself, on the very hyphen keeping in tension the categories "human" and "animal," and in a way that never settles on any one of the terms related but keeps the relationship in movement. In sum, as Fig. 1 reminds us, *TransHumance* and transhumance draw attention to different ways of thinking about the collective. *TransHumance*'s commemoration of transhumance contrasts, on the one hand, abstract syntheses of

human and non-human animals on the move, and, on the other, historically sedimented relations between disparate forms of life, always already shaped by power. In so doing, it offers an alternative vision of contemporary bio-political existence, but it is only glimpsed in the blink of the eye, just before existence is captured and fixed by the discursive apparatus that distils and separates the transhumant herd into the human and the non-human animal.[18]

disclosure statement

notes

1 See also Asdal et al.; Braverman.

2 In a recent paper, Hodgetts and Lorimer draw together the fields of animal and mobility studies to explore how animals' lives are configured and governed. They argue that attention to registers of mobility offers a richer understanding of contemporary relations between human and non-human animals. While Hodgetts and Lorimer's approach to such relations is valuable, we are more interested in extending Buller's understanding of animal existence as something so elusive as to be caught only fleetingly, like "a slash of light, then gone." We argue that we must go back to movement itself, as an ontological category, because such elusiveness has as much to do with the nature of thought about existence and the relationship between self and others as it has to do with the evanescence of our encounters with the myriad of mostly invisible animals all around us. In so doing, we focus on just one among many registers of mobility, namely transhumance, but our narrower scope also enables us to

colombino & palladino

consider what might be broadly described as the tension between attention to form, such as the registers towards which Hodgetts and Lorimer direct their readers, and attention to processes of formation such as those explored by critics more attuned to Deleuze and Deleuzian thought. This tension has been a source of seemingly intractable arguments about power and politics, including Haraway's dismissal of Deleuzian perspectives on animal existence. We propose an alternative perspective, hoping that it might go some way towards the resolution of this tension.

3 Wadiwel proposes that the concepts employed in posing questions about the capacities of non-human animals limit our understanding of these creatures. Focusing particularly on resistance and the possibility that fish might be capable of such resistance, Wadiwel contrasts juridical denials and the implicit attributions of resistance that sustain activities such as sports fishing, concluding that the consequent indeterminacy should lead to a reconsideration of fishing practices.

4 In recent years, Marchesini's arguments for the attribution of subjectivity to non-human animals have enjoyed growing international attention (see Buchanan et al.; Amberson and Past). Such attention overlooks, however, the importance of the contemporaneous debate between Marchesini (*Etologia*) and Cimatti ("Postfazione") over the conceptual problems involved in such attribution.

5 Current debates in human–animal studies emphasise the need to develop methodologies that are able to grasp, at least partially, real animals' lives and experiences, as opposed to engaging with abstract, representational forms (see Hamilton and Taylor). This paper, however, does not propose an analysis of real animals by way of their representation in *TransHumance*, but seeks to examine instead what distinct conceptions of movement do when employed to understand relations between human and non-human animals.

6 While our ambition is to contribute to current post-humanist critiques of the relationship between human and non-human animals, we are cognisant that the very language we use, beginning with the distinction between human and non-human animals, is prey to the operations of the anthropological machine we would wish to overturn, so that we can only hope to interfere with the machine's effects.

7 See also Goh; Veijola.

8 Over the past few years, a number of documentaries about transhumance have received public attention, none more successfully than *Sweetgrass* (see also *The Last Shepherd*; *Winter Nomads*). Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos' critical examination of transhumance, discussed in this paper, is based on another such documentary (*Fame d'Erba*). For a review of literature on transhumance and its history, see Palladino ("Transhumance Revisited"). Recently, such cultural resonance has resulted in a formal bid to UNESCO to grant transhumance the official status of "intangible cultural heritage of humanity" (Milanesi). Such institutional investment is the object of an ongoing study (see Colombino and Powers).

9 Multi-species ethnography has proven an important site to the critique of categorical differentiation of the human from non-human animal (see Kirksey et al.; Hamilton and Taylor). Such critiques have tended to privilege the visibility of contemporary techno-scientific sites, at the cost of more historically settled and embedded understanding of the relationship between human and non-human animals. The complexities of transhumance and its cultural representations suggest that the phenomenon may offer an especially valuable site for the further development of multi-species ethnography (see also Despret and Meuret, *Composer avec les Moutons*).

10 See also Woods.

11 Arguably, the transformation of the livestock's genetic constitution renders interspecific negotiation unnecessary. Where sheep are concerned, for example, upland ewes are now bred to maximise the number of lambs they are capable of bearing and mothering over the yearly reproductive cycle. The most productive of the ewes thus bred are then selected for mating with rams that are bred for the quality of their carcass and whose female progeny is thought to inherit the breeding and mothering characteristics of the maternal line. Finally, the ewes thus produced are crossed with a third, lowland breed such that the resulting terminal lambs are capable of extracting the most from the richest lowland pasture. Within this complex system of production, no longer is there any need for seasonal movement, at least not on a scale comparable to that required previously.

12 See also Porcher, *Ethics*; Despret and Meuret, "Cosmoecological Sheep."

13 While the colourful carts captured in the cinematic rendition of *TransHumance* convey the communal life shepherds and animals share in their seasonal movement between pastures, such sharing also is more ambiguous than *TransHumance*'s rendition will allow. As Fontana and others observe, transhumance amounts to an economically unrewarding life and to the extent that one should consider whether the sheep have sometimes been valued more than the shepherds themselves. Fontana notes, for example, how the shame involved in recollecting the life lived is a major difficulty in its reconstruction. As one shepherd whom he interviewed put it to him: "I've also had to sleep in the open with the flock, and I'm not ashamed, no; there are many people who find it shameful to say 'I have looked after sheep'. I do not bend my head in shame" (Fontana 14; our translation; see also Aime et al.). Consequently, one needs to consider the extent to which contemporary, proliferating accounts of transhumance may be prey to nostalgia.

14 See Oliver; Shukin; see also Beaulieu; Palladino ("What's in a Name?").

15 Although Marchesini rarely cites either Bergson or Deleuze, the proximity between Marchesini and Deleuze, the chief contemporary exponent of Bergsonian conceptions of becoming, would then seem great. Yet, while articulating the terms of such proximity, Vignola also draws attention to a naturalistic understanding of human and non-human animals that would seem to distance Marchesini from Deleuze. Marchesini's understanding is perhaps closer to Haraway's distinctive combination of post-humanism with realism about animal bodies than it is to Deleuze's uncompromisingly post-humanist understanding of organic bodies and their production (see Deleuze and Guattari).

16 As Cimatti also observes, the confrontation with the animal and anxiety about human mortality are linked inextricably. The animal's careless gaze is a reminder of the same named subject's inescapable, eventual dissolution, in death. Marchesini, on the other hand, rarely discusses death and mortality, and the observation that "life is always central, even when we think we are-towards-death, since death is not a cessation nor a denial of life, but an act of life" (*Over the Human* 59) conveys the latter's vitalism. Such vitalism reaffirms

the above-mentioned ambiguity of Marchesini's relationship to Deleuze and Bergsonism (see note 15).

17 Cimatti's analysis might be regarded as a Lacanian response to Derrida's reflections on the relationship between the human and non-human animal, which can be read as a critique of Lacan and Lacanian understanding of language (see also Oliver). The resulting notion that this alienated life is the only life we can live would appear to approximate Haraway's notion of "staying with the trouble" (*Staying with the Trouble*).

18 The argument advanced here may contribute to the clarification of what Agamben has called the *mysterium disiunctionis* (*The Open* 13) at the origin of the anthropological machine.

bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal.* Trans. Kevin Attel. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004. Print.

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Signature of All Things: On Method.* Trans. Luca D'Isanto and Kevin Attel. New York: Zone, 2009. Print.

Aime, Marco, et al. *Sapersi muovere: pastori transumanti di Roaschia.* Rome: Meltemi, 2001. Print.

Alt, Suvi. "Darkness in a Blink of an Eye: Action and the Onto-poetics of a Beyond." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 21.2 (2016): 17–31. Print.

Amberson, Deborah, and Elena Past. "Introduction: Thinking Italian Animals." *Thinking Italian Animals: Human and Posthuman in Modern Italian Literature and Film.* Ed. Deborah Amberson and Elena Past. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 1–17. Print.

Asdal, Kristin, et al. "The 'More than Human' Condition: Sentient Creatures and Versions of Biopolitics." *Humans, Animals and Biopolitics: The More-than-Human Condition.* Ed. Kristin Asdal, Tone Druglitrø, and Steve Hinchliffe. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 1–29. Print.

Beaulieu, Alain. "The Status of Animality in Deleuze's Thought." *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 9.1/2 (2011): 69–88. Print.

Bingham, Nick. "Bees, Butterflies, and Bacteria: Biotechnology and the Politics of Nonhuman Friendship." *Environment and Planning A* 38.3 (2006): 483–98. Print.

Braverman, Irus. "Introduction: Lively Legalities." *Animals, Biopolitics, Law: Lively Legalities.* Ed. Irus Braverman. London and New York: Routledge, 2016. 3–16. Print.

Buchanan, Brett, et al. "General Introduction: Philosophical Ethology." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 19.3 (2014): 1–3. Print.

Buchanan, Ian. "What is Heterology?" *New Blackfriars* 77.909 (1996): 483–93. Print.

Buller, Henry. "One Slash of Light, then Gone: Animals as Movement." *Études Rurales* 189 (2012): 139–54. Print.

Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida.* New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.

Cimatti, Felice. *Filosofia dell'Animalità.* Rome: Laterza, 2013. Print.

Cimatti, Felice. "Postfazione: per un elogio dell'animismo." *Etologia Filosofica. Alla ricerca della soggettività animale.* By Roberto Marchesini. Milan: Mimesis, 2016. 101–21. Print.

Colombino, Annalisa, and Jeffrey John Powers. "Transhumance: A Forgotten Alternative Food Network." *Localizing Foodways.* Ed. Roberta Cevasco and Robert Hearn. Oxford: Berghahn, forthcoming. Print.

Dejanovic, Sanja. "Through the Fold: A Jointure of Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Luc Nancy." *Philosophy Today* 60.2 (2016): 325–45. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. Print.

Despret, Vinciane, and Michel Meuret. *Composer avec les moutons: lorsque des brebis apprennent à leurs bergers à leur apprendre.* Avignon: Cardère, 2016. Print.

Despret, Vinciane, and Michel Meuret. "Cosmoecological Sheep and the Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet." *Environmental Humanities* 8.1 (2016): 24–36. Print.

Fame d'Erba. Pastori transumanti del Triveneto. Dir. and prod. Valentina de Marchi, 2010. Documentary.

Fontana, Ignasi Ros. *La transhumància Andorrana al llarg del Segle XX*. Barcelona: Alta Fulla, 2004. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990. Print.

Franklin, Sarah. *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007. Print.

Goh, Irving. "Blindness and Animality, or Learning How to Live Finally in Clarice Lispector's *The Passion* according to GH." *Differences* 23.2 (2012): 113–35. Print.

Hamilton, Lindsay, and Nik Taylor. *Ethnography after Humanism. Power, Politics and Method in Multi-species Research*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Print.

Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2016. Print.

Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Print.

Hodgetts, Timothy, and Jamie Lorimer. "Animals' Mobilities." *Progress in Human Geography* (Dec. 2018). Web. 18 Mar. 2019. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0309132518817829>.

James, Ian. *The Fragmentary Demand: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2006. Print.

Kirksey, Eben, et al. "Introduction: Tactics of Multispecies Ethnography." *The Multispecies Salon*. Ed. Eben Kirksey. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2015. 1–24. Print.

Legg, Stephen. "Assemblage/Apparatus: Using Deleuze and Foucault." *Area* 43.2 (2011): 128–33. Print.

MacMahon, Laura, and Michael Lawrence. "Introduction: Animal Lives and the Moving Image." *Animal Lives and the Moving Image*. Ed. Laura MacMahon and Michael Lawrence. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. 1–19. Print.

Marchesini, Roberto. *Etologia filosofica: alla ricerca della soggettività animale*. Milan: Mimesis, 2016. Print.

Marchesini, Roberto. *Over the Human: Post-humanism and the Concept of Animal Epiphany*. Trans. Sarah De Sanctis. Cham: Springer, 2017. Print.

Milanesi, Fabrizio. "L'Italia candida la transumanza a patrimonio culturale dell'umanità Unesco." *Touring Club Italiano*. 29 Mar. 2018. Web. 5 Mar. 2019. <www.touringclub.it/notizie-di-viaggio/litalia-candida-la-transumanza-a-patrimonio-culturale-dellumanita-unesco>.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*. Trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000. Print.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Ground of the Image*. Trans. Jeff Fort. New York: Fordham UP, 2005. Print.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Noli me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body*. Trans. Sarah Clift, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas. New York: Fordham UP, 2008. Print.

Oliver, Kelly. *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.

Palladino, Paolo. "Transhumance Revisited: On Mobility and Process between Ehnography and History." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 31.2 (2018): 119–33. Print.

Palladino, Paolo. "What's in a Name? On Affect, Value and the Bio-economy." *BioSocieties* (Nov. 2018). Web. 18 Mar. 2019. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057%2Fs41292-018-0140-1>.

Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, Andreas. "The Triveneto Transhumance: Law, Land, Movement." *Politica & Società* 3 (2012): 447–68. Print.

Phillips, Carla Rahn, and William D. Phillips. *Spain's Golden Fleece: Wool Production and the Wool Trade from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. Print.

Porcher, Jocelyne. "Animal Work." *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Ed. Linda Kalof. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015. Web. 20 Oct. 2019. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199927142.013.8.

Porcher, Joceyline. *The Ethics of Animal Labor: A Collaborative Utopia*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Print.

Shukin, Nicole. *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. Print.

Sweetgrass. Dir. Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor. Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab., 2009. Documentary.

The Last Shepherd. Dir. Marco Bonfanti. Zagora/Regione Lombardia, 2012. Documentary.

Théâtre du Centaure. *Les Animaglyphes: Œuvres de land art inédites et vivantes*. 2013. *Théâtre du Centaure*. Web. 16 Aug. 2018. <www.theatreducentaure.com/content/download/585/3041/file/20130129_Animaglyphes.pdf>.

Théâtre du Centaure. *Dossier pedagogique*. 2013. *Théâtre du Centaure*. Web. 16 Aug. 2018. <www.theatreducentaure.com/content/download/724/3489/file/PDEM_TransHumance_Def_2.pdf>.

Théâtre du Centaure. *Manifeste*. N.d. *Théâtre du Centaure*. Web. 16 Aug. 2018. <www.theatreducentaure.com/content/download/571/2999/file/Manifeste_TransHumanCE_20130321_site_internet.pdf>.

Théâtre du Centaure. *TransHumance*. < *Vimeo*. Web. 16 Aug. 2018. <https://vimeo.com/64235619>.

Thompson, Kirrilly. "Theorising Rider–Horse Relations: An Ethnographic Illustration of the Centaur Metaphor in the Spanish Bullfight." *Theorizing Animals: Re-thinking Humanimal Relations*. Ed. Nik Taylor and Tania Signal. Leiden: Brill, 2011. 221–53. Print.

Twine, Richard. *Animals as Biotechnology: Ethics, Sustainability and Critical Animal Studies*. London: Earthscan, 2010. Print.

Veijola, Soile. "Towards Silent Communities." *Disruptive Tourism and its Untidy Guests*. Ed. Alexander Grit et al. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 68–95. Print.

Vignola, Paolo. "Divenire-animale: la teoria degli affetti di Gilles Deleuze tra etica e etologia." *Emotività animali: ricerche e discipline a confronto*. Ed. Matteo Andreozzi et al. Milan: LED, 2013. 117–24. Print.

Wadiwel, Dinesh Joseph. "Do Fish Resist?" *Cultural Studies Review* 22.1 (2016): 196–242. Print.

Watkin, Christopher. "A Different Alterity: Jean-Luc Nancy's 'Singular Plural.'" *Paragraph* 30.2 (2007): 50–64. Print.

Winter Nomads. Dir. Manuel von Sturler. Louise Productions, 2013. Documentary.

Woods, Rebecca J.H. *The Herds Shot Round the World: Native Breeds and the British Empire, 1800–1900*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2017. Print.

Annalisa Colombino
Department of Geography and Regional Science
University of Graz
Heinrichstraße 36
8010 Graz
Austria
E-mail: annalisa.colombino@uni-graz.at

Paolo Palladino
Department of History and Theory of International Relations
University of Groningen
Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat 26
9712 EK Groningen
The Netherlands
E-mail: p.s.a.palladino@rug.nl