What might be Italian about posthumanism?

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> It would be interesting, or at least amusing, to draw up today a map, or more precisely a national and international table of different philosophical situations, not by sticking little flags in, as some philosophical warmongers sometimes do, but by analysing the paths of influence, the implantations, the transplant rejections, the fronts, with all the institutional phenomena (academic or not), and all the political stakes that meet up here.[1]

What might be Italian about posthumanism? At face value, this is either a naïve or openly chauvinistic question. The liberal cosmopolitan left that is itself so much under siege in these present times from both left and right populism, as well as from a spectrum of positions that ranges from decolonialism to climate activism, instinctively rejects the nationalist and essentialist overtones of any attempt that tries to link an intellectual discourse with a national marker. Labels like French theory, American pragmatism, German media theory or Italian thought (to name but a few) are usually discursive constructs applied from "outside" the respective national academic territory in question. Theorists in France, Germany, the USA or, indeed, Italy do not usually recognize the homogenising force of these phrases that are supposed to describe what they do as a collective in such an abstract space as a nation and the impact they are supposed to have thanks to their translatory export products.

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[1] Jacques Derrida, "Onto-Theology of National Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis)", *Oxford Literary Review* 14.1-2 (1992): 3-23 (here: 6-7).

Italian posthumanism is therefore here being used consciously as just such a questionable construction. It would indeed be rather worrisome if there really were a group of intellectuals, theorists, philosophers, thinkers that self-identified as "Italian posthumanists".

Nevertheless, it is also true that people do speak, with some benefit, of German Romanticism, Italian Futurism, French cinema, British cultural studies and so on. What they mean is that the alliance between the adjectives and the nouns they describe adds some important and significant difference. German Romanticism is different from French or Italian engagements with transnational challenges and phenomena in the early 19th Century – the technological, economic, national, ecological, and affective changes that were maybe felt particularly intensely and productively as well as tragically in Goethe's Werther. Quite evidently it is not a mere coincidence that Futurism is associated with Marinetti, and French cinema with François Truffaut even if one should not assume the reverse, namely that it was because Truffaut was French, Marinetti Italian or Goethe German that they could only produce what they did.

It is, ultimately of course, a language and culture "thing", if only these "things" had clear edges. Italian does not belong to Italians alone. Italian culture, in particular, is so diverse regionally and was "nationalised" so late, and rather incompletely so, that it would be foolish to presuppose any consensus or common denominator here. But despite all of this, because of a certain "genius" or "idiomaticity" that expresses itself through a specific language and is the result of a historically and geographically locatable tradition, there is something unique, something untranslatable – and therefore, precisely, something that requires or asks for translation most urgently – in these curious discursive formations these labels attempt to capture. Italian

posthumanism it is, then. Let us see what untranslatable-to-be-translated might hide behind this phrase.

It is true that, at first glance, quite intuitively, there are not many "original" contributions to the international debate about posthumanism, i.e. about whether humans might be turning into something like posthumans, that comes out of Italy or has been written in Italian or specifically with Italy and Italians in mind. There is not much that is distinctive in the engagement with what looks like another Anglo-American theory movement that started in the late 1980s, took off in 1990s and has probably now reached its peak. What is most visible in posthumanism instead is a globalised theory industry that has gone scavenging in various national "European" critical traditions (from "German" Critical Theory to "French" Poststructuralism), added a bit of commentary and redistributed the outcome thanks to its well-established global spread of English, its relatively open translation channels and the venture capitalism of its publication outlets. This has been a very lucrative business model for publishers, and it has also been a good nurturing ground for substantial international idea and people movement within the academy. Posthumanism, like the other waves of "Theory" before it, has been driven by Anglo-American publishers, and academic émigrés creating a space for themselves by introducing, translating, sampling and disseminating European academic traditions (which, of course, have always done their own more or less strategic translation grabs to get to where they are). It is therefore not really a question about copyright, purity or authenticity. It is more about trajectories, transformations, power structures, but also about selection, repression and forgetting. Like every undertaking involving translation or transfer in any sort of direction there are desires and their inevitable disappointments or deferrals to be tracked, strategic politics to be

analysed, side-effects to be studied. Theory has always, in that sense, been "travelling"…[2]

National-Humanism

In fact, there is nothing that much wrong with a national tradition and national difference – there is a good case to be made about an "Italian difference" as far as the history of philosophy and its practice is concerned (see the final section below). What is more of a hindrance especially if one takes posthumanism at its word is a certain institutional set of blinkers, a "national-humanism" of the academy, as Derrida famously described it in one of his seminars at the EHESS still awaiting its full publication (1986-1987: "Théologie-Politique: Nationalité et nationalisme philosophique"). The first session – the "Prolegomena" – appeared in the *Oxford Literary Review*, in 1992, and starts in typically Derridean fashion, namely by highlighting an aporia, an impossible but nevertheless inevitable or *necessary* paradox.[3] In this case it is the "scandal" at the heart of a "philosophical nation" namely "the aporias of the philosophical translation of philosophical idioms" (p. 3). It is at once a "scandal" for something like philosophy, which is a discourse about universal truths, that it should (have to) be practised in many different "idioms" and which are strictly speaking untranslatable, at least in their idiomaticity. It is a scandal, and at the same time, like translation itself, a "chance", since it is the idiomatic differences in which essential and universal philosophical truth

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[2] Cf. Edward Said's "seminal", "Traveling Theory", *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983).
[3] Jacques Derrida, "Onto-Theology of National-Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis)", *Oxford Literary Review* 14.1-2 (1992): 3-23.

manifests itself, and which make philosophising itself worthwhile, even possible, so to speak:

> A scandal: i.e. what makes philosophy trip and fall, what stops it in its tracks if the self-styled philosopher considers that philosophy is essentially universal and cosmopolitan, that national, social, idiomatic difference in general should only befall it as a provisional and non-essential accident that could be overcome. Philosophy ought not to *suffer* difference of idiom: it ought not tolerate it, and ought not to suffer from it. So any affirmation of the idiom or of the irreducibility of the idiom would be an aggression or a profanation with regard to the philosophical as such. A scandal, but also a chance, in so far as the only possibility for a philosophy, for philosophy to speak itself, to be discussed, to get (itself) across, to go from the one to the other, is to pass through idioms, to transport the idiom and transport itself, translate itself via or rather in the body of idioms which are not closures or enclosings of self but allocutions, passages to the other.[4]

Philosophy takes place in and depends on the idiomaticity of an idiom, which transports it to, and thus demands translation into, the language of the other (i.e. the other's idiom). However, what makes something most worthy of such a translation, namely its idiomaticity, or its singularity, and that which asks for translation most urgently, is, strictly speaking, (the) untranslatable as such. There is no transcendental metalanguage, or, even if there was, it would be ruled, precisely, by the opposite of any idiomaticity. The decisive question in this respect is, of course: what is an idiom?

Maybe this question, before returning to the context of national(ism and) philosophy in Derrida's seminar, is best addressed by him on

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[4] Derrida, "Onto-Theology…", pp. 3-4.

another occasion, in another context. It is his autobiographical account of postcolonial European linguistic complexity, in *Monolingualism of the Other*, where Derrida speaks about the (impossible but also inevitable) phantasm of a "*monolanguage*" and about owning or possessing (and being possessed by) language – a language, however, that is never one's "own".[5] This is the conceptual frame that Derrida is invited to expand on in an interview with Évelyne Grossmann.[6] What interests Derrida in poets like Celan and their experience and thematisation of the multiplicity and migration of languages "even within language itself" (p. 99), or one could say, complex linguistic situations like Derrida's himself – as a French-speaking Algerian Jew, expropriated of his own "mother tongue", French, and thus ending up "having only one language" that is not his own – is a notion of idiomaticity that would, precisely, *not* be recuperable by any nationalism: "What I try to think is an idiom (and the idiom, precisely, means the proper, what is proper to) and a signature in the linguistic idiom", Derrida explains, "that at the same time causes one to experience the fact that language can never be appropriated" (p. 99). Linguistic nationalism, meanwhile, is based on the phantasm of "owning a language", even though, paradoxically, what is most proper to a language, its "idiomaticity", can never be appropriated as such: "The idiom is what resists translation, and hence is what seems attached to the singularity of the signifying body of language… but which, because of such singularity, eludes all possession, any claim of belonging to" (p. 102). The crux, for Derrida, and by implication for a phrase like "Italian posthumanism" as well, is – and here lies the

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or, Prosthesis of the Origin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[6] Jacques Derrida, "Language Is Never Owned", in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, pp. 97-107.

political difficulty of such a phrase – "how can one be in favour of the greatest idiomaticity … while resisting nationalist ideology? How can linguistic difference be defended without yielding to patriotism, in any case, to a certain type of patriotism, and to nationalism? That is what is at stake, politically, in our time".[7] Basically, Derrida's deconstruction of national-humanism goes against a certain desire of appropriation, an immunity, or an auto-immunitarian self-identity, fired by phantasies of exclusivity, purity and autonomy, and that wishes to insulate (a) language against the "other", while the other is precisely to whom the idiomaticity of (a) language is addressed. This is another instance of what Derrida calls an "autoimmunitarian" logic at work in (Western metaphysical) philosophy with its principle of strong and "authentic" self-identity.[8] In every immunitarian logic, however, there is also a deep anxiety at work – even though, or maybe because, autoimmunity is based on an ultimately undecidable distinction between self and other. It is not that the fear of linguistic (and cultural, political, national…) decline would be completely unfounded or would be irrational *per se*. However, protectionism might not be the right approach when dealing with the "other" and alterity. Instead, as Derrida says: "one can love what resists translation without yielding to nationalism":[9]

> One must cultivate the idiom *and* translation. One must inhabit without inhabiting. One must cultivate linguistic difference without nationalism. One must cultivate one's own difference *and* the other's difference.[10]

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[7] Derrida, "Language is never owned", p. 102.

[8] On this complex of questions relating to a Derridean notion of autoimmunity see the special issue of *Parallax* 23.1 (2017) on "Autoimmunities", eds. Stefan Herbrechter and Michelle Jamieson.

[9] Derrida, "Language is never owned", p. 102.

[10] Derrida, Language is never owned", p. 104 (my emphasis).

This is the philosophical part of the argument. Derrida, however, also alludes to its sociological dimension – again, already in the context of the "Prolegomena" of the late 1980s, which witnessed the rise of a certain cultural and linguistic domination of "Theory" in the English speaking academy. Obviously, the fact that this "Foreword" to a volume on "Italian posthumanism" is being written in English for an international, maybe (hopefully?) global, English-reading audience is a direct result of this dynamic; and it therefore inevitably partakes in its further consolidation, legitimation and extension. The language of posthumanism, it seems, remains inevitably, almost intuitively, but nevertheless not exclusively, English.

In "Language Is Never Owned" (originally in French in 2001) Derrida writes:

> It's obvious that there is at present a problem with European languages, with the language of Europe, and that a certain Anglo-American is becoming hegemonic, irresistibly … What can be done so that a new kind of inter-nation, such as Europe, can find the means to resist linguistic hegemonies, and in particular the Anglo-American? It is very difficult, all the more so because this Anglo-American does violence not only to other languages but also to a certain English or American genius.[11]

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[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103. This was also one reason, why we played with the idea of a "European posthumanism" a few years ago, mindful of Étienne Balibar's suggestion that English cannot (or at least should not) be the language of Europe (especially for post-Brexit Europe might add): "the language of Europe is not a code but a system of interlaced usages that are in constant transformation: in other words, it's translation" (Étienne Balibar, *Nous, citoyens d'Europe: Les frontiers, l'État, le people* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), p. 318; my translation). Cf. Stefan Herbrechter, Ivan Callus and Manuela Rossini, "Introduction:

In the late 80s, Derrida formulated this issue of linguistic imperialism in the form of (another) paradox in which Derrida and "French" theory were themselves heavily implicated. The issue of "philosophical nationalism" is paradoxical "because never as much as today [in the 1980s, but, arguably, even more so today] has what is called by the confused and problematical word 'communication' between territories, institutions, groups, schools, national idioms been apparently, quantitatively, technically, statistically more manifest, more intense or important … Yet at the same moment … the effects of opacity, national limits or even nationalistic claims have never been as marked as they are today". [12] So, paradoxically, but maybe also predictably, at the very moment of increased philosophical or theoretical communication, exchange, or translation, that, in theory, should expose national differences to influences, grafts, deformations, hybridisations, etc., "national consciousness, search for identity, affirmation or even national demands show up more clearly, or even become exasperated and tense up into nationalism" (p. 6).

Posthumanism as the Deconstruction of National-Humanism?

The affirmation of a nationality or even the claim of nationalism, according to Derrida, "does not happen to philosophy [or "Theory"] by chance or from the outside, it is essentially and thoroughly philosophical, *it is a philosopheme*" (p. 10), because, again maybe paradoxically, the "self-positing or self-identification of the nation always has the form of a philosophy which, although better

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Dis/Locating Posthumanism in European Literary and Critical Traditions", *EJES* 18.2 (2014): 103-120.
[12] Derrida, "Onto-Theology of National-Humanism", p. 5.

represented by such and such a nation, is none the less a certain relation to the universality of the philosophical".[13] This is the essence of what Derrida refers to as "national-humanism". The challenge for our present undertaking – the exploration of an "Italian posthumanism" – would thus be to somehow inhabit this national-humanism of philosophy "deconstructively". Or, in other words, how can the present undertaking – putting forward the idea of an "Italian posthumanism" – escape its paradoxical logic?

Derrida wrote about the translation of theory in the context of national-humanism and philosophy in the 1980s and 1990s from the standpoint of a representative of "French Theory in America" and the nationalist backlash it caused, the autoimmunitarian reaction within the US academy whose fallout can still be felt today in political slogans like "making America great again". Political defence mechanisms like Trumpism or Brexit need to be seen as nationalistic reactions against the spectre of a "Europeanisation" gone too far, or as the desperate attempt at regaining some kind of "sovereignty" and "border control", dearly bought at the expense of a new provincialism and a reconfirmation of an old humanistic form of self-legitimation that is both "particular and potentially universal" (p. 10). "[Philosophical] nationalism", Derrida writes, "never presents itself as a particularism but as a universal philosophical model, a philosophical telos, which is why it is always philosophical in essence, even in its worst and most sinister manifestations, those that are the most imperialistic and most vulgarly violent" (p. 11).

Today, we are witnessing a resurgence of violent nationalism, imperialism and anti-cosmopolitanism all across the globe but also in Europe, together with an insulation of national philosophy against the other (thinking), based on a resurgence of a universalist and

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[13] Derrida, "Onto-Theology…", p. 10.

missionary belief in humanistic principles – curiously, always on both sides of any international conflict. It is perhaps the essence of every nationalism to be philosophical, Derrida writes, "to present itself as universal philosophy, to sublimate or *aufheben*, to sublate its philosophy of life into a philosophy of the life of the spirit. (…) Nationalism … always presents itself as philosophy, or better, as philosophy *itself*, in the name of philosophy, and it claims *a priori* a certain essentialist universalism".[14]

Arguably, "theory" or philosophy – which, in Derrida's time, found in the Anglo-American academy a "market or *Kampfplatz* [battle ground]" open to the "greatest intensity of exchanges, debates, evaluations of the Philosophical International" (p. 18) – with the emergence of its "posthumanist" phase, in the new millennium, is entering a new chapter of relocation or retranslation, both "back" to the old Europe where its forgotten or repressed origins lie and wherever post- or decolonial substrates are willing to engage with its post-imperialistic cosmopolitan potential.

The only way to avoid the repetition or continuation of philosophical national-humanism even while coming to terms with what looks at first like its opposite – *post*humanism, under the conditions of its retranslation and reappropriation – is thus to watch these processes very closely by, as Derrida says in the epigraph quoted at the beginning of this "Foreword", "analysing the paths of influence, the implantations, the transplant rejections, the fronts, with all the institutional phenomena (academic or not), and all the political stakes that meet up here" (p. 7).

In our desire to analyse posthumanism's "Italianness", its Italian idiomaticity, we need to investigate the translation processes, in

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[14] Derrida, "Onto-Theology…", pp. 16-17.

particular the retranslation of posthumanism into various national contexts. Since the dynamic of theory and its translation is characterised by this strange Anglo-American globalised asynchronicity – belated appropriation, strategic assimilation and subsequent retranslation from and into various national European contexts – it is important to see how the retranslated "end product" of Anglo-Americanised posthumanist theory, just like cultural globalisation, on the one hand, leads to a homogenisation and, on the other hand, to a remembering of national difference, i.e. localisation. It is thus necessary to track how posthumanism is being "glocalised" in (German, French, Italian etc.) academic contexts.

To a certain extent, this is of course a two-way process – and the present collection is an example of this. Once the glocalisation process has occurred there is also the critical "genealogical" desire to explain how the globalised translation process of a theoretical paradigm like posthumanism has led to a number of local repressions, which may need to be addressed, or worked through. One might call this phase, a strategic counter-translation where "forgotten" texts are belatedly translated to complexify the idea of a simple (national or globalised) "narrative" of the paradigm. Why else now publish a volume on "Italian posthumanism", when posthumanism is so well-established in the Anglo-American academe that it is experiencing a splintering into or an amalgamation with various sub-discourses like new feminist materialism, objected-oriented-ontology, critical animal studies, ecocriticism, extinction studies and so on?

Antonio Caronia

In the Italian context, there is for example Antonio Caronia's *The Cyborg: A Treatise on the Artificial Man*, translated by Robert Booth in

2015, originally written by Caronia in 1985,[15] and thus more or less coinciding in its genesis with Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto", which is seen as one of the foundational texts of posthumanism.[16] In her preface Tatiana Bazzichelli explains the development of Caronia's text with its various versions and prefaces and how Haraway, and in particular her notion of "situated knowledges", became more and more important for Caronia as the text went through its various editions. One might thus say that Caronia's text is impregnated with a translation and appropriation trajectory of its own.[17]

In Caronia's work, the interest in the cyborg, and in posthumanism *avant la lettre* more generally, is itself connected to a form of strategic translation as part of a reappropriation project of a utopian imaginary that, for Caronia, was missing from an Italian Marxist discourse in the 1970s. Caronia "found" this imaginary at work, both as an editor and translator, in science fiction and more specifically in cyberpunk, esp. Ballard and Dick. Given Caronia's position as political activist in "the Italian grassroots movement since the seventies", as "expert in digital culture, media aesthetics, science fiction, and virtual reality since its

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[15] Antonio Caronia, *The Cyborg: A Treatise on the Artificial Man*, Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2015.

[16] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century [1985]", *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149-182. A similar point regarding the achronicity, maybe the Italian difference (see below), of some early and preparatory work on posthumanism could be made about Roberto Terrosi's work, esp. *La filosofia del postumano* (Genova: Costa & Nolan, 1997), or Roberto Marchesini, whose substantial work in Italian about many aspects that have been central to the posthumanist discussion still awaits translation (more on Marchesini below).

[17] Tatiana Bazzichelli, "Preface to the English Edition", in Caronia, *The Cyborg*, pp. 7-18.

early phase", as academic and researcher both in Italy and the UK, as well as "writer, journalist and professional English-Italian translator" (p. 8), he and his *The Cyborg* in particular, were "crucial to a specific phase in the development of digital culture from the eighties until today, not only in Italy, but internationally", Bazzichelli claims (p. 9). She thus follows the logic of national-humanism here quite closely in insisting both on the specificity and the (potential) universality of the "Italian" situation – and it is difficult, in fact, to imagine how she could avoid this to make a case for Caronia's belated recognition. In this sense, she instrumentalises *The Cyborg* as a "metaphor of the possible, a reflection on the development and an emerging imaginary in Italian society, politics and culture that refers to personal experiences of the author covering almost thirty years, which he shared with a wide network of people, in the city of Milan and beyond" (p. 9).

Where Caronia's and Haraway's perspective seem to converge is in the strategic use of science fiction as a "tool with which to analyse society, culture and politics, and highlight the contradictions and power structures embedded within them" (pp. 9-10), as well as in seeing the figure of the cyborg as an "interface between the past and the future", a "coexistence of the possible and the impossible" (p. 10). However, while Haraway saw the potential of the cyborg in the role it could play for socialist feminism and the subversion of gendered binaries, Caronia's emphasis is on "the passage from modernity to post-Fordist society", on "politicizing science fiction", and on "reading science fiction from the left", making use, in particular, of its techniques of "defamiliarization" (p. 10). The cyborg thus "becomes a subject of political reflection on the development of contemporary society, where technology, and its strict relation with the body, assumes a crucial role", with the result that "we are all cybernetic organisms, in the sense that we all experience hybrid conditions of being, our blood

and flesh intertwining with economic growth and technological development" (pp. 12-13).

This may appear somewhat odd to the contemporary Anglo-American reader but it characterises quite well how a certain kind of posthumanism developed out of the ambiguities of cyberpunk. If we are all (already) cyborgs, this may indeed (have) become a new human "nature", or the new human, or rather posthuman, condition, which itself is again universalisable as an ontology and politics, and which thus calls for and underwrites a new humanism. The whole national-humanist dynamic thus begins again in a techno-Marxist form: cyborg-proletariat of the world, unite! Caronia's aim, on the other hand, as Bazzichelli adds, is more nuanced, namely in "using the cyborg to question authority and to mix different layers, immaterial and material, in the critical and political understanding of our being active subjects in post-industrial society" (p. 15) – a focus that Caronia in the second part of *The Cyborg*, added in 2001 under the heading "The Post-Fordist Cyborg", and in a "Post-Script" he appended to the third edition in 2008, thus "linking it to the Italian and the international debates on the so-called 'posthuman'", as Caronia writes in his own belated "Preface".[18]

He, in fact, follows the standard account of posthumanism's emergence when he says that "the man/machine hybrid, has gone from being a purely fantastic figure to being an everyday experience in little more than thirty years" (p. 23), i.e. the post WWII period up to the 1980s, while "since the eighties, technology, as Bruce Sterling rightly puts it, has begun to get under our skin" (p. 24), which is "why the figure of the cyborg could lead to the posthuman" (p. 24). The question that the posthuman poses – or began posing with its figurative emergence from the late 1980s – is: "Does the posthuman

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[18] Caronia, *The Cyborg*, p. 26.

era also mean a post-biological era?" (p. 24). In order to calm down any techno-euphoric or techno-dystopian frenzy, Caronia then makes the standard move of introducing what might be called the "originary technicity" of human nature: "*Homo sapiens* has always been *Homo technologicus*" (p. 26).

So far so good, one might say. Caronia pretty much fits, despite any Italianicity or Italian idiomaticity, into the accepted international (Anglo-American) narrative of (critical) posthumanism. What he might bring along by way of difference so to speak – a difference that warrants that the theory translation machine get into action – is his grafting of a mainly culturalist approach towards the figure of the posthuman onto a more socio-political post-marxist substrate, when he writes:

> Whether we like it or not, we all work twenty-four hours a day for the global economy that takes full advantage of the possibilities offered by technology to keep us in an unstable, precarious, underpaid and subordinate position. This is the contemporary form of slavery. This new intellectual and cognitive proletariat – the hacker class, as termed by McKenzie Wark – has every interest in overturning the logic of this process, in using the relationship with machines to set it free, and not to confirm its inferiority.[19]

Caronia's political aim in going along with a certain posthumanism or a certain 'posthumanisation' is to resist the nostalgic temptation of a classical Marxist Luddism he rejects when he refers to the "theoretical backwardness and practical impotence of the Left and Center Left political parties and trade unions in Europe vis-à-vis the gigantic reconstruction of global capitalism and the breaking up and weakening

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[19] Caronia, *The Cyborg*, pp. 27-28.

of the working classes" (p. 28), as a result of the transformational processes triggered by digitalisation.

To clarify what Caronia is doing here – in 2008, looking back at the transfiguration of the cyborg into the posthuman, over a thirty year period – is translating himself, namely his earlier self into a posthumanist context that, in the meantime has rushed along with the cognitive transformation of capitalism dominated by Anglo-American impulses be they economic and/or cultural, technological and/or social and rolled out belatedly, so to speak – through retranslation – into national and local environments. All this happens in a very belated English translation, published in 2015, with a rather obscure open access publisher based in Germany, to achieve what exactly? Presumably, to at least belatedly and also posthumously (Caronia died in 2013) talk truth to power.

Caronia clearly addresses a "national" audience, by pointing to something that bothers him about the maybe typical Italian Marxist or leftist reaction to the imposed technological and economic change by a nostalgic or protectionist "humanism". Hence his admonition:

> It won't be the nostalgia for a fading "humanism" that will exorcize the advance of a posthuman condition that instead begs to be lived, analysed and understood all the way in order to be criticized, not in its inescapable aspects, but for the tragic and frightening consequences caused by the conduct of those with both economic and political power.[20]

Maybe Caronia's importance therefore lies here, namely in his attempt to find an adequate translation of embracing the posthuman threat and challenge under "post-Fordist" conditions. Since technology is "under our skin" anyway, resistance, at least in any confrontational

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[20] Caronia, *The Cyborg*, p. 29.

sense, is futile. The task is to "live" the resitance – a call we find again in the search for an "affirmative politics" in what could be identified as another Italian contribution to a later phase of posthumanist theorisation, its properly "biopolitical" phase with a shift from a critical commentary of cognitive to biopolitical or even thanatopolitical global capitalism, in Agamben, Esposito and others – themselves building on translations of Foucault's biopolitics and biopower, who got it from… and the translatory merry-go-round continues.[21]

In Caronia's terms this is a passage "from electromechanics to genetics" – the title of chapter 8 of *The Cyborg*: "The possibility of interpenetration [one might say, cyborgisation or posthumanisation], of a very real symbiosis, however conflictive and dramatic, between man and machine, occurs only with the existence of technologies far more ductile and flexible than their electromechanical counterparts, namely those that are computerized and digital".[22] It is this digitalisation of the "bodily interface" that "allowed capital to take a huge leap forward in the process of socialization of work and of molecular penetration in the productive processes of valorization incomparably more complex with respect of classic capitalism, and narrowing the gap between work and spare time, creating the conditions for an ever increasing globalization pushed as much by the economy as by the new processes of self-valorization" (p. 126), i.e. under the condition of a "post-Fordist" imaginary. This is only one step from a "chemical" interface allying or alloying the organic and inorganic, to a "genetic interface" (p. 129) combining the power of computation with biological (genetic) "information", which leads to a generalised form of the biopolitical that Foucault could not have foreseen in its biotechnological detail and extent.

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[21] See the section on "Italian difference" below.
[22] Caronia, *The Cyborg*, p. 126.

This is where, belatedly, Caronia "discovers" the Haraway of the "Cyborg Manifesto" in the first place, and her usefulness in suggesting "that the only way to avoid being swallowed by the post-Fordist wolf is to throw yourself at it, to fully embrace the artificial perspective and to play the card of hybridity and impurity that it offers us" (p. 132). The encounter with Haraway, however, occurs through the intermediary of Rosi Braidotti's introduction to the Italian edition of the "Manifesto" (p. 135), which makes the criss-crossing of translations and their desires or agendas even more intriguing.

Caronia completes or rather complements his earlier genealogy of the cyborg figure and its politics with a final chapter added to the final edition entitled "Cyborg Ecstasy", which both looks back and forward in a typically speculative, science-fictional manner disguised in a "science-factual" style that has come to be the main terrain for, not so much posthumanism, but transhumanism.[23] "To Leave Oneself" – a section of chapter 8 – deals with the "process to artificialize the body that … is innate to the process of human evolution", and which "in the last decades" has "registered such an acceleration that one is led to suspect that there has been a real surge of quality, a passage (some might say) from human to *posthuman*".[24] Caronia's "Post-Script" thus plays into the arch-ideological move of science-factual transhumanism, namely a futurism based on the mechanism of extrapolation: look how fast technology is changing, if it carries on changing like this, it is inevitable that … x will happen. It thus avoids to see that the process is not entirely self-evident or self-driven, not to mention that it is far from inevitable either, of course. What, one might ask, happened to Caronia's earlier, if not scepticism, then at least belief in critical deflection? The cyborg, it seems, has gone over to the

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[23] On the notion of "science faction" see my *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). pp. 107-134.
[24] Caronia, *The Cyborg*, p. 149.

"dark side" of the posthuman making it more and more problematic to believe in ways of staying in control of body-transformation under a bio-techno-capitalist regime. The "Post-Script", added in 2008, appears to be dealing calmly and descriptively with what is no longer the post- but the transhuman, strictly speaking, with Esfandiary, More, Moravec, Kurzweil, Bostrom, Vinge – the usual suspects – and evokes a situation in which "we are faced with radically reductionist thought with regard to human beings, and radical optimism concerning the potential of technology" (p. 166). The most critical stance Caronia can still muster with regard to transhumanism is to point out that "naturally, not everyone looks with the same regard upon the prospect of a growing integration between man and machine, nor the enthusiasm for such a catastrophic and shattering 'technological singularity'" (p. 166).

This is strangely removed from the more combative and enthusiastic embrace of the science-fictional cyberpunk-inspired cyborg, championed by both Caronia and Haraway in the hope of some socialist resistance and renewal. Haraway – without reneging her cyborg phase completely – moved on to the "companion species" and the question of the animal or animality in the face of the post-biological (transhuman) threat. Caronia it seems, remains on the fence, or at least does not renew his hope that "embracing the wolf" and "playing the card of human-machine hybridity" might be the best or the only way of deflecting the trajectory of global bio-techno-capitalism of steering the human (and probably every other) "species" towards a silicon-based form of "existence".

"The debate on posthumanism has also started in Italy", Caronia writes and goes on to name a few conferences and academic events from 2005 onwards. Similar events took place in other European national contexts at the time, in the wake of the Habermas-Fukuyama debate

about "our posthuman future"[25] and the ever-increasing prominence and media presence of transhumanist claims of technological feasibility of bodily and moral enhancement and the emergence of AI. From a critical posthumanist point of view, however, the early debate about posthumanism and its political implications never really took off. In fact, it urgently needs to be revived, returned to, retranslated. This is what this volume – and the series in which it appears – is there to do, namely to show that other figurations of the posthuman are possible and have existed, across the ages. Another understanding of posthumanism, even one "without" technology [26] and more "European", in the best and non-exclusive sense of that word, is thinkable and necessary.

Italian Difference

To return to the initial question: what might be Italian about posthumanism if not a certain "difference" and idiomaticity, of course. One could return to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of geophilosophy for a start which functions "to the extent that thinking takes place on the plane of immanence that can be populated by figures as much as by concepts … [even though] this plane of immanence is not exactly philosophical, but pre-philosophical".[27]

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[25] Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 1999) and Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

[26] Cf. Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter, "Critical Posthumanism, or the *inventio* of a posthumanism without technology", *Subject Matters* 3.2/4.1 (2007): 15-30.

[27] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 93.

Italian difference would thus be both philosophical and pre-philosophical, one might say, in relation to the posthuman and its discourse, posthumanism. There is both a philosophical tradition and a prephilosophical plane of immanence involved here, a "geography", a "spirit of place", a linguistic and/or cultural "genius (loci)", an idiomaticity, as Derrida would have it, on the condition that it was, despite its uniqueness, neither exclusive nor universalisable.

This is also, in a way, Roberto Esposito's approach in his *Living Thought* (2012). [28] Esposito, who is of course a very good candidate as a representative of an "Italian posthumanism" (more on that below),[29] revives in his first chapter called "The Italian Difference" what one might almost call a subgenre of an Italian philosophical discourse on

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[28] Cf. the section on "Italian Geophilosophy", in Esposito's *Living Thought: The Origins and Actuality of Italian Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. 12-21. For a condensed version see Esposito, "The Return of Italian Philosophy", Diacritics 39.3 (2009): 55.61. He has since developed his argument further in *A Philosophy for Europe: From the Outside* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018) where he argues for a critical and productive re-reading of "German philosophy, French Theory and Italian Thought" with a view to reviving the European "project".

[29] This is not the place to discuss Esposito's major interventions into the field of biopolitics and the articulation of a new (posthumanist) *humanitas* in works like *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), *Immunitas: The Protection of Life and Negation of Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), or *Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015). For a short introduction to Esposito's take on biopolitics see his "Politics and Human Nature", *Angelaki* 16.3 (2011): 77-84.

the problematics of Italian self-identity.[30] Esposito opens by saying: "After a long period of retreat (or at least of stalling), the times appear to be favourable again for Italian philosophy".[31] He extricates himself from the nationalist trap that his formulation appears to make by

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[30] See also Corrado Claverini's review of Esposito, "The Italian 'Difference': Philosophy Between Old and New Tendencies in Contemporary Italy", *Phenomenology and Mind* 12 (2017): 256-262. Here is a short and incomplete list of examples that refer to "the Italian Difference" and Italy's specificity in terms of its philosophical tradition. There is Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder's "Preface", to their edited collection, *Contemporary Italian Philosophy* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), pp. ix-xv. Lorenzo Chiesa and Alberto Toscano's *The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics* (Melbourne: re-press, 2009) clearly names in its subtitle the two main areas and contributions of Italian thought to posthumanism – nihilism and biopolitics. Norma Bouchard reminds us of the "Mediterranean geophilosophy" of Italian thought in "Italy's Geophilosophies of the Mediterranean", *Annali d'Italianianistica* 29 (2011): 343-362, while Alessandro Carrera, in "The Many Challenges of Italian Theory", in the same issue of *Annali d'Italianistica* 29 (2011): 1-31, tracks a number of "interesting" misreadings regarding central figures of Italian thought outside Italy (esp. Agamben). Federico Luisetti, in "The Italian Anomaly: Populism and the Unpolitical in the New Old World", also in *Annali d'Italianistica* 29 (2011): 229-236, speaks of "Italy's vain attempt to become a 'normal country'" (229). The special issue edited by Federica Buongiorno and Antonio Lucci on "La differenze italiana – Filosofi(e) nell'Italia di oggi", *Lo Sguardo* 15 (2014). Finally, Silvia Benso, once again, in her "Introduction" to her edited *Viva Voce: Conversations with Italian Philosophers* (New York: SUNY Press, 2017), pp. 1-13, explains that "Italian philosophy as a cultural event based on language precedes the formation of all possibilities of an Italian nationalism based on geographical borders. Being Italian is a cultural event ahead of all belonging to a territory, a soil, a nation (or even a blood lineage)."

[31] Roberto Esposito, *Living Thought*, p. 14.

admitting to the politics of translation and hybridity of contemporary theory in a globalised context by saying:

> Italian philosophy is now entering into an analytical and critical relationship with the dominant features of our time, to a greater degree than other traditions of thought. Of course, as often happens in the circuit of ideas, what appears to distinguish a given conceptual horizon as independent also arises out of a process of contamination and elaboration of currents previously set in motion elsewhere, but which only in this new tonal register take on the thematic stability and conceptual force necessary to expand beyond their national confines onto a much wider scene.[32]

In other words, Esposito seems to be saying, Italian philosophy is back, after it had some catching up to do, did so by strategic translation, but has now found new forms of concretisation (thematic stability, conceptual force) and an "idiom" (or "tone", as Esposito writes (cf. p. 1)) ready for export or a counter-attack. After a short literature review he homes in on the two big issues which made Italian theory into "a sort of privileged laboratory that other cultures … further behind in their development of political theory, can tap into for innovative paradigms" (p. 3). Esposito here refers specifically to Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt's collection *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (1996) in which Hardt in his "Introduction: Laboratory Italy", sets out "a contemporary Italian mode of thinking revolutionary politics" in which "the difference of Italian thought" has to be grasped "with some understanding of the difference marked by the history of Italian social and political movements"[33] – leftist movements of which Antonio

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[32] Esposito, *Living Thought*, pp. 1-2.
[33] Michael Hardt, "Introduction: Laboratory Italy", in Paolo Virno and Hardt, eds., *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 1.

Caronia, as discussed above, was also part even though he is not mentioned by Virno and Hardt. The irony is that Italian philosophy's belatedness is now its force, as Esposito explains: "precisely because Italy has lagged behind in completing its process of modernization due to the cultural blockade erected by fascism, Italian thought is now better equipped than others to deal with the dynamics of the globalized world and of the immaterial production that characterizes the postmodern era".[34] It is obvious that Esposito, following Virno and Hardt here, is not ready to entirely leave behind the national-humanist framework of competition identified by Derrida above.

The main issues on which the Italian difference is founded then make their appearance (with reference to Chiesa and Toscano): nihilism and biopolitics. [35] Even though these, again, might have originated elsewhere – "nihilism in Germany and biopolitics in France – the fact remains that the work of Italian thinkers on these subjects is precisely what allowed, or caused, their growing diffusion".[36] In other words, Italy perfected German nihilism and French biopolitical thought, added a bit of its political know-how and experience and now starts the rolling out of biopolitical theory and becomes a major player in the global theory business.

The question is of course: "Why? Why, after twenty years of latency, during which it [biopolitical thought] remained largely inactive, did this

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[34] Esposito, *Living Thought*, p. 3.

[35] Cf. also Lorenzo Chiesa et al., "Introduction: Italian Biopolitical Theory and Beyond: Genealogy, Psychoanalysis and Biology", *Paragraph* 39.1 (2016): 1-9; Dario Gentili et al., eds., *Italian Critical Thought: Genealogies and Categories* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018); and Guilel Treiber an d Tim Christiaens, "Introduction: Italian Theory and the Problem of Potentiality", *Italian Studies* 76.2 (2021): 121-127.

[36] Esposito, *Living Thought*, p. 3.

paradigm have to go through a number of Italian interpretations (albeit diverging or even at odds with each other) to find such transnational resonance?" (p. 4). The "particular capacity" of Italian thought, Esposito reckons, might be "to situate itself at the point of tension between highly determined historical-political events and philosophical categories of great conceptual depth" (p. 4). In other words, the Italian difference, today, might be "an unprecedented double vision: a split gaze focused on the most pressing current events [*attualità*] and at the same time on the dispositifs that come with a long or even ancient history" (p. 4). And this is the crux – and does indeed come very close to a justification for investing into the phrase "Italian posthumanism":

> by projecting the archaic onto the heart of the present [*l'attuale*, but one might also say "*il postumano*"], or by exposing the present to the archaic, these categories diagonally connect knowledge and power, nature and history, technology and life. From this point of view, the Italian difference appears less as the recurring typology of a given tradition than a sort of semantic commutator that cuts across the entire panorama of contemporary thought, altering it in the process. (p. 4)

In other words, the most valuable difference of Italian thought lies in its "genealogical attitude" which demonstrates the "*actuality of the originary*" (p. 23). There is thus a strong affinity here with what we have been calling "critical posthumanism".[37]

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[37] Our – cf. criticalposthumanism.net – use of the label goes back at least twenty years and is reflected in the recent publication of *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Posthumanism* (Cham: Springer, 2022).

One specificity, one idiomaticity, of Italian thought,[38] might thus be its thinking about "life", its "living (of) thought". As Esposito summarises:

> Unlike what has happened elsewhere, in Italian thought life has never been understood as an undifferentiated or independent mode of a biological or metaphysical type. The reason there has never been a specific "philosophy of life" in Italy, analogous to the nineteenth-century ones commonly referred to by this name, is because the entirety of Italian thought is traversed and determined by it. And also, because life has always been thought about both in relation to and in confrontation with the categories of history and politics. This means that life is not an alternative to subjectivity, but rather, constitutive of subjectivity.[39]

In other words, Esposito claims an originary take on biopolitical thought for Italy which in the time of a generalised biopolitics under technocapitalist, or maybe posthuman, conditions should be the go-to formation when it comes to the question: "how to conceive of a subject free from the ancient, yet continually reproduced, dispositive that separates it from its own bodily substance, and at the same time renew the subject's constitutive link with the community" (p. 31). As a tendency one might thus venture the hypothesis that Italian thought could be seen as an important corrective to dominant Anglo-American dominated discourses on posthumanism that tend to focus on the future or cyborgised individual, in that it foregrounds questions about the politics of (posthuman) community, of posthuman livings-together. A number of commentators and thinkers of contemporary

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[38] I am here not engaging with the discussion about whether "Italian Theory" or "Italian Thought" is the better term to designate recent developments concerning the critical reflection on contemporary biopolitics but have gone along with Esposito's preferred term.

[39] Esposito, *Living Thought*, p. 31.

biopolitical thought seem to point into this direction, from Maurizio Lazzarato to Paolo Virno and Davide Tarizzo, via Antonio Negri and Giorgio Agamben to name maybe just the most prominent ones. This also seems to be Timothy Campbell's view in his introduction to a special issue of *diacritics* on the common and community in contemporary Italian thought.[40]

Both Esposito and Giorgio Agamben maybe stand out in their contributions to the international theoretical debate on contemporary biopolitics, which has also become a central aspect of the more general discourse that constitutes posthumanism. Agamben in particular, however, is also a crucial thinker as far as the question of the "animal" is concerned, even though, as his commentators remark, he may have left the key issue of the animal question "undeveloped"

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[40] Cf. Timothy Campbell, "Introduction", *diacritics* 39.3 (2009): 3-5. Campbell is of course himself an important contributor to the search for an "affirmative biopolitics" following Agamben in his *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). For a discussion see my "Afterword: The Other Side of Life", in *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 207-213. See also Laura Bazzicualupo's excellent "The Ambivalences of Biopolitics", *diacritics* 36.2 (2006): 109-16; and Lorenzo Chiesa's editor's introduction to the special issue of *Angelaki* on "Biopolitics in Early Twenty-First-Century Italian Theory" (with important contributions, amongst others, by Virno and Andrea Fumagalli) where Chiesa, like Esposito, claims: "Without necessarily going as far as arguing that the link between life and politics has always been the privileged target of Italian philosophy – from Macchiavelli to Croce, Bruno to Gentile, Vico to Pasolini – we can cautiously suggest that, perhaps more than any other speculative European tradition, Italian thought has time and again been able to connect theory with praxis, as well as be truly open to other disciplines, in ways that have given rise to unforeseeable short-circuits" ("Editorial Introduction", *Angelaki* 16.3 (2011): 2).

in his work. For Carlo Salzani, for example, *The Open*[41] and the question of the animal "play a very specific role [in Agamben's work]: that of understanding and describing, on the one hand, the mechanisms through which human life is 'humanized' (i.e., how the human animal *becomes* Man) and, on the other, how the human can be and has been de-humanized, 'animalized', and reduced to 'bare life'".[42]

In any case, it would be difficult to understand the return to the question of the animal – in its Heideggerian form, against which Deleuze, Derrida, as well as Agamben and many others critically react – without Agamben's reminder of the distinction between "*bios*" and

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[41] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[42] Carlo Salzani, *Agamben and the Animal* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2022), p. xi. See also Matthew Calarco, whom Salzani cites and who explains that Agamben never pursued the space for enquiries he helped to create with the new conceptuality he proposed in *The Open* and in his work on biopolitics. "In his work Agamben provides important conceptual tools (e.g., bare life, the anthropological machine, the division *zoē/bios*, the emphasis on sovereignty and the state of exception, etc.) that calls into question the anthropocentric context within which he himself remains captive" (Salzani, pp. xiv-xv). See also Matthew Calarco's *Beyond the Anthropological Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) and his earlier influential co-edited collection *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life*, eds. Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) containing Calarco's "Jamming the Anthropological Machine" (pp. 163-179), taken up by Kelly Oliver in *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to be Human* (New York: Columbia University Press), esp. chapter 10 ("Stopping the Anthropological Machine"), pp. 229-244.

"*zoē*" (or "bare life").[43] For a posthumanist politics this leads to two major inflections (which, of course, are not clearly distinguishable and remain closely related): one might be called biopolitical "proper", and would still involve a strong element of anthropocentrism, namely a politics that focuses on the future of the human under siege by posthumanising forces that are mainly (bio)technological in their current digitalised from. The other politics, one might call zoē-politics, which concerns the entire spectrum of life in all its forms, and which, by virtue of being postanthropocentric in outlook, would also be "posthuman(ist)".[44]

To return to our question of Italian difference and the idea that it might sanction the insistence on an Italian posthumanism: the specific emergence and importance of a bio-zoē-politics in the Italian context and the return to the question of the human and nonhuman animal – or the insistence of the question of animality – has led to a number of contributions that make reference to the "Italian animal" or "Italian animality". Carlo Salzani and Felice Cimatti take up the theme of Italian difference and Esposito's living thought and combine it with a perceived delay in Italy to focus on questions of animal welfare, advocacy and rights. They then go on to turn this "belatedness" into a form of topicality and contemporary relevance. The "biological turn", so Salzani and Cimatti, brings to the fore "the materiality of biological

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[43] See Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) and *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[44] Cf. Braidotti "The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoē", in Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke, eds., *Bits of Life. Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience and Technology* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2008), pp. 179-196.

and animal life that precedes and exceeds language, and that has characterized Italian thought from the very beginning":[45]

> Thinking begins with, arises from, and is in a constant and essential relation with animality. Italian contemporary philosophy, more than other traditions, has fleshed out, in different and often discordant fashions, this underlying need of philosophy to come to terms with its outside in the form of animality itself...[46]

Arguably, more than other traditions, Italian thought might thus constitute an "animal philosophy", a zoē-politics or a zoopoetics in which "the problem of animality pertains to the deconstruction of the metaphysical dualism of the Western philosophical tradition".[47]

Roberto Marchesini, who together maybe with Leonardo Caffo, is the most prominent contemporary "animal philosopher" and was also instrumental in introducing posthumanism and the posthuman in Italy more generally – any "Italian posthumanism" would, in fact, be unthinkable without Marchesini (and Caffo) [48] – articulates the

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[45] Felice Cimatti and Carlo Salzani, "Introduction: The Italian Animal – A Heterodox Tradition", in *Animality in Contemporarey Italian Philosophy*, eds. Cimatti and Salzani (Cham: Palgrave, 2010), p. 6.
[46] Cinatto & Salzani, p. 7.
[47] Cimatti & Salzani, p. 9. See also Salzani's "From Post-Human to Post-Animal: Posthumanism and the 'Animal Turn'", *Lo Sguardo* 24 (2017): 97-109. Salzani's article appeared in the important special issue on "Limiti e confine del Postumano" of *Lo Squardo*, edited by Salzani, Giovanni Leghissa and Carlo Molinar Min.
[48] Cf. Marchesini's early monumental study *Post-human: Verso nuovi modelli di esistenza* (Torino: Bollati Bolinghieri, 2002), *Il Tramono dell'uomo: La prospettiva post-umanista* (Bari: Dedalo, 2009) and his recently translated work, *Over the Human: Post-humanism and the Concept of Animal Epiphany* (Cham: Springer, 2017). An important

specificity of "Italian animality" in his "Foreword" to Deborah Amberson and Elena Past's collection *Thinking Italian Animals* in terms of precisely such a "posthuman poetics", or a "posthumanist aesthetic that arises in Italy" and which "stems from a philosophical and [zoomimetic] poetic approach that is significantly different from the paradigm in other countries". "In Italy", Marchesini claims, "what is central to the discussion is not so much the posthuman perspective of the hybrid man or man strengthened by technology but rather the critique of the humanistic interpretation of the human condition: the autonomy and autopoiesis of becoming human that characterized humanism".[49]

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discussion between Marchesini and Caffo can be found in Caffo and Marchesini, *Così Parlò il Postumano*, ed. Eleonora Adorni (Anzio: Novalogos, 2014).

[49] Roberto Marchesini, "Foreword: Mimesis – The Heterospecific as Ontopoietic Epiphany", in Deborah Amberson and Elena Past, eds., *Thinking Italian Animals: Human and Posthuman in Modern Italian Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. xxxii. This focus on a critique of humanism and its version of the "human condition" and thus an emphasis on animality and the zoe-continuum as opposed to the centrality of technicity and the figure of the cyborg also characterizes what we have called "critical posthumanism" and, in fact, a "posthumanism 'without' technology". Cf. Callus and Herbrechter, "Critical Posthumanism" (2007), op. cit. See also my *Before Humanity: Posthumanism and Ancestrality* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), which takes up this theme with its focus on (paleo)anthropological narratives of hominisation. For a good and brief introduction to Marchesini's work see Jeffrey Bussolini, "Recent French, Belgian and Italian work in the cognitive science of animals: Dominique Lestel, Vinciane Despret, Roberto Marchesini and Giorgio Celli", *Social Science Information* 52.2 (2013): 187-209, esp. 198-204, and the special issue on Marchesini in *Angelaki* 21.1 (2016) edited by Bussolini, Matthew Chrulew and Brett Buchanan. For Leonardo Caffo's position see his

One final aspect, following on from the idea of Italian difference as far as the philosophy and politics of life and animality is concerned, and which is of increasing relevance for the international discourse of posthumanism, is the question of the environment. In the times of the so-called Anthropocene, surely, nationalism no longer matters, one might object. Climate change does not stop at any human-made boundaries, nor at any nonhuman ones for that matter. Nevertheless, let me name at least one recent title that links this problematic to Italian thought. It is mostly Serenella Iovino's merit (together with Serpil Oppermann) to have stressed the *narrative* dimension in posthuman thinking, as she explains:

> If there is a basic premise of posthuman thinking, in fact, it is that the idea of the human is not Platonic in itself, but is always already *plotted*: interlaced with the nonhuman in a warp and woof of intricate, joint performances of "*storied matter*". The posthuman is, to put it otherwise, the ontological narrative of the human in its infinite paths of entangled becomings with its others.[50]

There might therefore also be a case for an important and specifically Italian contribution to a "posthumanist lineage of ecocritical studies",[51] which could be endorsed by a reference to another volume that looks at the Italian contribution to the "environmental

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Only for Them: A Manifesto for Animality through Philosophy and Politics (Milano: Mimesis International, 2014).

[50] Serenella Iovino, "Posthumanism in Literature and Ecocriticism: Introduction", *Relations* 4.1 (2016): 12. Iovino's article is part of an entire issue edited by her, Roberto Marchesini and Eleonora Adorni, entitled "Past the Human: Narrative Ontologies and Ontological Stories" (cf. the "Editorial" by Iovino, Marchesini and Adorni, *Relations* 4.1 (2016): 7-9).

[51] Iovino, "Posthumanism in Literature and Ecocriticism", 12, n.1.

humanities".[52] The editors of *Italy and the Environmental Humanities* provide a powerful justification for their insistence on the Italian impact on the "novel, postdualistic humanities [that] merge with a culture that has contributed to a radical critique and rethinking of the contemporary social and political world", which might also serve as a kind of summary of what this Foreword has been attempting to show more generally:

> Italy, in fact, is also to be found in the work of intellectuals as Antonio Negri, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Maurizio Ferraris, and the so-called Italian Theory; it is present in a strong tradition of feminist scholarship which includes seminal figures like Adriana Cavarero, Luisa Muraro, and the nomadic Braidotti herself; it is the reassessment of modernity from the southern, Mediterranean perspectives of Franco Cassano and Franco La Cecla; more recently, it is the reconsideration of the nonhuman – this "ontological South" – in the posthumanist philosophies of Roberto Marchesini and Francesca Ferrando.[53]

Marchesini himself also summarises this very neatly in his intervention to that volume:

> The posthumanism that was taking shape in our research could not be seen as antihumanism but rather as a new form of nonanthropocentric humanism. The posthumanistic climate thus developed in Italy between the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century and differed from the posthumanism of other countries for its criticism of traditional ontological anthropocentrism. There is a common thread between this

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[52] Serenella Iovino, Enrico Cesaretti and Elena Past, eds., *Italy and the Environmental Humanities: Landscapes, Natures, Ecologies* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018).

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

approach and the works of Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti. These facts are the background against which I wrote *Post-human* in 2002.[54]

In conclusion, then, it can be said that there is a reasonably good case for arguing that a certain Italian difference and thinking, or indeed "Italy", is "the nest of posthumanist culture".[55] This is an insight that was already at work in Massimo Lollini's ground-breaking special issue of *Annali d'Italianistica* 26 (2008) on "Humanisms, Posthumanisms, and Neohumanisms", which starts from the maybe all too obvious assumption that if Italy is in many ways the birthplace of humanism, it is likely that at least to some extent it can also be seen as one of the "nests" of its critique and, possibly even its surpassing. In summary, one might therefore venture the idea that there is indeed an Italian posthumanism, a (post-)dantesque idea of *trasumanar*, of human becoming-other, whose metaphysical implications however need to be rejoined with its zoē-onto-political aspects. *Trasumanar* thus in a sense gives rise to both, one might say, transhumanity and transhumance. Between these two shifts – towards a new human or "pastures" new, in the sense of a (re)new(ed) connection with "our" environment – Italian posthumanism might help us choose the more sensible path.

References:

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[54] Roberto Marchesini, "*Dialogo ergo sum*: My Pathway into Posthumanities", *Italy and the Environmental Humanities*, p. 63.

[55] This is Enrica Maria Ferrara's phrase in her "Introduction: How Italians Became Posthuman", in her edited volume *Posthumanism in Italian Literature and Film* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 14.

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