



ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES
IN PRACTICE

Becoming-with Donkeyness

A Research-Creation

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Abstract As an environmental humanist, I grab a camera to mediate the world around me. The short film *LAND/SCAPE* (2020), cocreated by two donkeys (Dondolo and Giorgiana), fellow PhD candidate Giulia Lepori, and me, was filmed on the Mediterranean island of Sicily in the Valley of Sagana. As part of our doctoral projects, we were involved in managing the land in that valley and in undertaking caring performances among this lively meshwork. Simona Trecarichi and Danilo Colomela, the two permaculture designers behind this project, have been redesigning their landscape over the past fifteen years. In walking through the paths paved by the donkeys Dondolo and Giorgiana, I was slowly understanding other-than-human relations in the biome. I was becoming-with donkeys in their becoming-with land. Through my experimental aesthetic intervention in mediating the donkeys' becoming-with land, I strapped the camera to Dondolo. In this article, I combine ethnographic multispecies vignettes from my fieldwork with my artist's statement about my practice. I reflect upon cinema's unique affinity with the Anthropocene—that double bind between the media and nature—and how the biogeomorphic qualities found in the film diffract the world back to us, enabling the viewers to feel the cinematic land affect. This is not the filmmaker's gaze nor his story. It is a film world's landsoundscape filled with more-than-human bodies; as such, this story belongs to the land and the earth others. Please watch the film *LAND/SCAPE* first, and only then engage with the written word.

Keywords becomings, research-creation, aesthetics, multispecies, affect

It is this collaborative effort that I have tried to capture in my codirected film *LAND/SCAPE* (see figs. 1–3 for a glimpse of this film world).¹ In this essay, I reflect upon the process of thinking-with and becoming-with donkeys and donkeyness through cinematic media.

1. The film *LAND/SCAPE* is available to watch at <https://tarratarra.com/LAND-SCAPE>.

jaw movement
shadow
munching

My guide about staying in troubled times with troubled places and how to respond to these is Donna Haraway. Staying with the trouble is about thinking-with, living-with, and becoming-with multispecies and elemental communities in a world troubled by human-made madness. Staying with the trouble can also be read as staying with troubled places, navigating through cross-species and cross-elemental relations and relationships.² Grounded in the land's lively meshwork and cross-species relationships, responsibility is about response-ability; that is, the ability to respond *well* to more-than-human others. Haraway notes what questioning arises in the practices of becoming worldly-with that are shaped by response-ability: "This and here are who and where we are? What is to be done? How can respect and response flourish in *this* here and *this* we, even as *this we* is the fruit of the entanglement?"³

Over fifteen years, Simona Trecarichi and Danilo Colomela, two permaculture designers in the Valley of Sagana on the island of Sicily, have been learning to correspond well by reading and interpreting the bioregional text of the weather-world in their attempt to fit well with and within the more-than-human biome in which they live.⁴ Living in a fire-prone area, they try to keep the grass low, to overcome the predominance of *disa* (*Ampelodesmos*) on the hilly and rocky terrain and to restore the depleted organic matter in the soil: this was the bioregion's text to be read and considered during their permaculture design.⁵ Through permaculture design and performances, they attempt at weaving nurturing relationship with the lively land, to bioregionally stay with the trouble while cultivating situated response-abilities. They were cultivating what Thom van Dooren defines as the "arts of attentiveness," that is, a mode of paying attention to more-than-human others while crafting a meaningful response for reinhabiting the world well.⁶

As Simona and Danilo explained to me, one way of responding well in tackling the bioregional risk of fire was introducing herbivore animals to the valley: two donkeys (*Equus africanus asinus*). The needs of humans together with the needs of the donkeys,

2. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

3. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 368.

4. Permaculture, in the words of Falk, is a conceptual framework and decision-making design process "that is aimed at the development of human systems fitting into more-than-human ('natural') systems in synergistic ways such that the health of both is increased" (*Resilient Farm*, 282). We are not just dwellers in the land. We inhabit a weather-world affecting this lively world that in turn affects us; see Ingold, *Being Alive*. Land/scape can be considered a task/scape, an ensemble of performances that constitute dwelling; see Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*. Human dwellers perform specific tasks, become-with that land/scape, corresponding-with the lively world through their views and expectations of how this land is imagined to be. For an idea of reading the worldly text through a material ecocritical framework, see Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy*. I use the verb *to correspond* guided by Ingold's recent work; see Ingold, *Correspondences*.

5. *Ampelodesmos* is a large perennial genus within the grass family in the Mediterranean region. In this text I refer to this plant as *disa*; that is how I came to know this grass in the bioregion of the Valley of Sagana.

6. Van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster, "Multispecies Studies."

Dondolo and Giorgiana, were combined. The donkeys adapted quickly to their new home by grazing over-extended vegetated areas that were dominated by *disa*, while they left their precious excrements on the rocky terrain for the soil communities. This formed a collaborative effort in the more-than-human making of this land/scape.

hooves

hair coat

valley

An attempt to stay with such bioregional trouble well, to correspond well, means to read the worldly text along the lines of power relations. Reshaping the land through multispecies performances hinges on relations of power and our human views of how this land should look. Being dwellers in the land means we cannot escape modification and management, where managing and caring for is always and already grounded in relations of power and the inextricability of mortal relatedness.⁷ In the Valley of Sagana, Dondolo and Giorgiana were put to work for us, and this honest reflection troubles the human-animal relations and becomings. What would the world look like if the more-than-human labors and laborers were valued for what they actually do for us? Is such a livable and ethical future possible or even desirable? To rebuild this world, we need to expand the current definition of labor, something Jennifer Hamilton helps with by posing ethically and politically disturbing questions: “Labour . . . is everywhere inside, outside, above and underground. What of the labours of the plants and animals that are turned into food for human consumption? . . . What of the labours of the once-living, whose fossilised remains are mined for our energy? Indeed, in what kind of political economy could the sun be valued as a labourer?”⁸ Dondolo and Giorgiana keep the grass low for us. In turn, this puts us into relations of obligations, response-abilities, and becomings both with them and with other more-than-human bodies of that land/scape. Alyssa Battistoni proposes seeing such more-than-human laborers as comrades, as this offers glimpses of possible multispecies solidarity.⁹ Expanding feminist critiques of reproductive labor under the current capitalist regime toward more-than-human labors and laborers demands questioning animal welfare, rights, and equitable compensation for their work. This appreciation of more-than-human laborers and their labors grounds us to think-with them and to live-with them as comrades in a possible future, imagining forms of resistance and solidarity with the nonhuman realms against the coupled forces of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene.

Defining Dondolo and Giorgiana as comrades is about not just a slight shift in terminology but rather a novel positioning toward more-than-human realms, about repositioning and reconsidering our implications and obligations in these lively relationalities through response-abilities. How would such an interspecies relation possibly be reframed

7. Haraway, *When Species Meet*.

8. Hamilton, “Labour.”

9. Battistoni, “Bringing in the Work of Nature.”



Figure 1. Still from *LAND/SCAPE*, codirected by Michał Krawczyk and Giulia Lepori, 2020, 00:17.

on the ground? In comradeship, both sides (human and not) are at stake and at risk; if we are not able to respond well, then the burden of work can be overwhelming (for both sides). I read this speculative idea of fellowship-with Dondolo and Giugiana as if they were there to live-with us, rather than simply for us, where our worlds constantly meet/collide, where care is grounded in curiosity and becomings, humbly accepting that we cannot fully leave the inherent and uneven power relations. We cannot simply untangle the processes of domestication, although questioning these processes is vital for crafting better response-abilities for an imagined possible future.

To be clear, multispecies comradeship does not signal cozy worlds grounded through only benevolent becomings: frictions, misunderstandings, and collisions arise in such a lively relationship. There is a burden of labor on them, hence the name “beasts of burden.” But there is a burden on human inhabitants in terms of labor in that valley as well, and a burden of response-abilities and obligations toward donkeys and the lively meshwork of the land. In positioning ourselves toward such interspecies relation and relationship as more-than-human fellows in reshaping the valley draws us closer toward interspecies “possibilities of a correspondence, even a shared alliance” grounded among situated needs, in between meeting/colliding worlds, in attempt to understand what matters to them and how this combines with our world-making projects, in this messy shared world in common.¹⁰

We are not able to fully leave the ground of unevenness in such relations, yet in living-with them, in attempting at crafting better situated response-abilities, there are

10. Crawford, “Plant/Human Borderland Jamming,” 208.

glimpses for corresponding well, while creating glimpses of possibilities for Dondolo and Giorgiana in pursuing their own projects when grazing through the valley. They were helping in reshaping that lively meshwork, yet they were doing it at their own more-than-human pace with their preferences on what species to eat, where to rest, how to shape this land. In turn, they were muddling our visions of how we imagine that land to be, inevitably tangled with the inextricability of interspecies relations that are unequal, uneasy, and messy: getting injured and demanding care, escaping whenever they decided to do so, nibbling on those pears that we were looking forward to eating.

In my post-fieldwork reflection, I discussed with Simona and Danilo the idea of thinking about responsibility as response-ability and I asked them some questions about how their story of becomings was tangled with uneasiness. Simona acknowledged that “responsibility is a vital part of the relationship. We took them in, and we are the ones responsible for their health and for their general wellbeing” (pers. comm., May 2022). In regard to their ability to respond, they replied how this is tangled and grounded in becomings-with the lively meshwork of the land. Simona recounted there was an initial misreading of the land. In hot summers, due to the weather-world’s conditions, “the land, the grazing areas are being ‘mummified,’ the land did not respond to the rapidity of the donkeys’ needs and grazing,” which is why for some parts of the year Dondolo and Giorgiana had to be fed and kept in a stall (pers. comm., May 2022).

The northern olive grove was not suitable for Dondolo: another layer of the impossibility of fully reading the land that in turn demanded novel response-abilities. Dondolo fell more than once from the stone terrace earthworks, once falling directly into the creek. Simona recounted, “When Dondolo fell, he got injured with a rectal prolapse, where part of the large intestine slipped outside the anus. Danilo had to improvise and helped to push it back. This is not something easily done in a moment, something that one can or wants to do” (pers. comm., May 2022). The grazing areas had to be redesigned, and this involved excluding this part of the valley and putting Dondolo and Giorgiana into a stall at times. Combined labors and shared alliances, although sympoietic, are both cozy and messy.

Considering the uneasiness and difficulties, I asked Simona and Danilo what future scenarios they envision in terms of responsibility and response-ability. They will strive to introduce vegetal species such as tress to cover donkeys’ grazing needs. In addition, they are thinking about a synergic collaboration with their neighbors, where for short periods Dondolo and Giorgiana could graze. They hope that the donkeys can age peacefully: “We hope to have conditions to look after them till the end of their days. We hope to be able to assist them; this goes beyond your ethics and willingness—you have to consider their weight of roughly 300 kg when they won’t be able to move” (pers. comm., May 2022). However ethico-politically we envision our responses toward the liveliness of the world, our on-the-ground responses may be limited. When the time comes, they imagine that Dondolo and Giorgiana will be able to die serenely, “perhaps in a part of the valley far away from the house so that their bodies can re-enter the cycle of the matter” (pers. comm., May 2022).

Ethical responses, as Karen Barad writes, are “therefore not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part.”¹¹ They are also about being accountable for the inevitable disclosures, recognizing the flows of care that come with inescapable relations of power, humbly accepting the misreadings and being able to respond to them. This very sense of ethico-political commitment with the world offers glimpses of a more radical geocentric sense of awareness of our implications, muddling the sense of response-ability based around the human individual self.¹²

For such recognition to happen in the Valley of Sagana, there was a burden of work to be done: to learn to read the land’s signs and wounds, to acknowledge the distributed agencies among the lively meshwork of the land, to craft better situated response-abilities. Above all, there was a need to recognize that it is not all about us, or all up to us. Ultimately, responding well is cozy-messy, “vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures.”¹³ Indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer sums up such relational ethico-political engagement with the world as “land as a bundle of responsibilities.”¹⁴ To this, I add land as a bundle of response-abilities, land as cultivating on-the-ground bioregional response-abilities; that is the ability to respond well and to let the other-than-human respond as well among the lively relationalities.¹⁵

Over the months I spent in the valley, I was woven into a relationship. Through a lively story of unfolding becomings, I was becoming knowledgeable, learning to respond well, and learning to let nonhuman others respond. With the donkeys, I was situating myself within a relation that could grasp their individualities, reaching toward them as Dondolo and Giorgiana, not simply as fixed representatives of *Equus africanus asinus*, imposed by Linnean classification. I was being able to respond to their singularities as subjects. In becoming knowledgeable, I realized how Dondolo was more curious, always being the first to greet me in our cross-species encounters through the valley, whereas I came to see Giorgiana, a bit older than Dondolo, as more independent and more reserved in such meetings. They liked to stick together. We think that their sporadic get-aways from the fenced grazing zones were planned and executed by Giorgiana.

We often treated the donkeys to organic kitchen leftovers that we knew they liked. Simona kept curing Dondolo’s scratched knee with locally harvested herbs. Once

11. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 393.

12. We have to be cautious here because to recognize the entanglement does not automatically imply leaving the ground of human exceptionalism. Alongside any sort of entanglement is a reality of exclusion. Bearing this in mind, we need to pay close attention to the foreclosures and inherent exclusions in the entangled relations and in our becomings, considering their ethico-political potential. See Giraud, *What Comes after Entanglement?*

13. Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 7.

14. Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 28.

15. For a detailed account of other bioregional response-abilities in that valley, see Krawczyk, “Staying with the Bioregional Trouble in Two Permaculture Sites.”

the carob pods (*Ceratonia siliqua*) were ripe, Danilo advised us to share just a bit with the donkeys, as too many were unhealthy for them. In late summer, one hundred organic straw bales arrived as fodder for the winter months from local agriculture co-op Cooperativa Agricola Valdibella. When the donkeys were not in their stall and not easily spotted through the valley, I wondered where they were. To sum up and to trouble a bit more this bioregional story of becomings, obligations, and response-abilities, if not for the more-than-human labors of the donkeys, as Simona told me once, their grazing activities would need to be replaced with machines hungry for fossil fuels. No smooth worlds, only bioregional troubles to correspond well.

descend

fly

disa

In my attempt to cinematically mediate Dondolo's and Giorgiana's becoming-with land, I was also engaged with the land's fluid meshwork and particularities of this bio-region. It was primarily a corporeal immersion into the land and with the land. I followed the donkeys, and sometimes I was followed. Over the passing seasons, I admired the change in vegetation, attuning my walking body to the rocky and steep conditions. Sweating and being scratched by the spiky *disa*; looking at the donkeys' poo scattered across the terrain; feeling relieved by a wind that entered the gully while resting with Dondolo and Giorgiana in one of their favorite spots; caressing their hair coats and being caressed in turn; recognizing their smell and being smelled—these were response-abilities grounded in haptic becomings and encounters.

My footsteps followed the paved paths made by their hooves. As transmaterial and transcorporeal achievement, walking is always and already to walk-with more-than-human realms of the weather-world.¹⁶ I was a wayfarer, cultivating bioregional know-how on the ground. I was able to respond to the land's fluid meshwork, to the variable conditions of the weather-world, slippery rocks, thorny vegetal beings, discovering what species are present and why, what species disappear and why. I was mapping the terrain corporeally, adjusting to more-than-human rhythms, processes, and events. I was becoming knowledgeable, sensuously and kinesthetically.

Unmakers of this land at the expense of other bodies/species in this biome, Dondolo and Giorgiana were opening paths to other becomings and specific encounters, inescapably disclosing us from others. Walking-with and along such fluid land's meshwork, grounded in becomings and response-abilities, I was losing grip of the lonely figure of the *Anthropos*. Would it be too speculative to write that I was going feral? In putting Dondolo and Giorgiana to work for us, we were domesticating them. In turn, an

16. Ingold, "Footprints through the Weather-World." On walking-along more-than-human worlds as methodology, see Springgay and Truman, *Walking Methodologies*.

attempt to correspond well with such trouble grounded us in response-abilities, in novel obligations of situated care: were we being domesticated in turn?

Feral, ferality, wild-wilder-rewilding, domestication, and domesticated are potent political concepts to think-with. Their use tells us something about the dominant order of creating/inhabiting the world. These are processes of becomings, with malleable boundaries through the cross-species intermingling of world-making projects that can be planned or not, greeted or not, that remain incomplete, open to other becomings.¹⁷ These becomings are better grasped as ontologies of mutual transformations that are sparking, laying ground, and articulating novel becomings for this continuously unfolding, “messy mystical multiplicity of a world in common, a world of shared and multitudinal ecologies.”¹⁸ Demanding to be honest about who domesticates whom, how, and at what cost is relevant in this epoch of continuous colonial-capitalist forms of exploitation driven by human exceptionalism.

Together, in moving through the land and being moved by that land, each of us was becoming-with the land’s lively meshwork. But what are these becomings? Kate Wright, within a multispecies perspective, thinks of becoming-with “as an ecology . . . an epistemological framework that undermines solipsistic thinking, because we learn about our position in a complex system not through abstract knowledge, but through the affective capacities of our own bodies and the bodies of the more-than-human world.”¹⁹ In my corporeal attunement with the biome’s worlding, walking through the paths paved by Dondolo and Giorgiana on the steep terrain, I became knowledgeable, patiently understanding other-than-human relations in the biome where I lived temporarily, following the donkeys who grazed on the *disa*, whose feathery stigmas could better capture airborne pollen brought by the wind entering the valley. By noticing Dondolo’s and Giorgiana’s ongoing returning of the digested plants back to the soil; by seeing where they went and what they ate, where they rested; and in being greeted by them in their favorite spots, I was becoming-with donkeys in their becoming-with land.

The land was unfolding continuously to herself and becoming-with other-than-human bodies of that particular biome. As Wright continues, “Becoming-with is a form of worlding which opens up the frames of what registers to us and so what matters to us (in part by recognising what matters to others).”²⁰ Such relational multispecies co-becoming, as Thom van Dooren points out, “makes evident a lively world in which being is always becoming, becoming is always becoming-with.”²¹ Walking-with and walking-along, touching and being touched, shaping and being shaped by the land, I was affectively feeling the land. Jobb Arnold, in his speculative concept of “land affect,” describes this feeling as “nontechnologically mediated experiences of affective energy that cause people to *feel with the land*,” an affective force “mobilized and brought

17. Armstrong et al., *Becoming-Feral*.

18. Adsit-Morris, “Wild-Feral-Domestic,” xv.

19. Wright, “Becoming-With,” 277.

20. Wright, “Becoming-With,” 279.

21. Van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster, “Multispecies Studies,” 2.

to bear upon embodied subjectivities.”²² In thinking about more-than-human bodies, we should move beyond human exceptionalism toward a recognition of a multispecies land affect, because acknowledging “earth others as fellow agents and narrative subjects is crucial for all ethical, collaborative, communicative and mutualistic projects, as well as for place sensitivity.”²³ Val Plumwood writes that such recognition grounds the basis for a shared world of kindred beings.

sighs
fly
gully

As an environmental humanist working with moving images, I have an unsettling feeling about my practice. First, I acknowledge that the very medium used in such mediation relies on the extraction of earthly resources. The second obstacle was the pervasive awareness of producing a technologically mediated land affect. The cinematic experience is embedded in the Earth’s ecological webs, from the processes of production to circulation and consumption, relying on our planet’s material resources engaged in all the phases, showing the cinema’s direct transformative role with its impact on ecosystems.²⁴

Thus, cinema has a unique affinity with the Anthropocene, given its origins in the materials and technologies produced by the Industrial Revolution. Over its course, it became a product and a producer of industrial modernity, intricately woven with both the industrial culture and the energy economy that it sustains and is sustained by. Such affinity runs even deeper, as cinematic production involves artificial world-making, radically altered weather-worlds, and multiple ecocataclysms, allowing the viewers to perceive anthropogenic environments.²⁵ As Jussi Parikka puts it, “nature affords and bears the weight of media culture, from metals and minerals to its waste load.”²⁶ Bearing this in mind, for Parikka, we must consider the very geology of media: all the minerals and metals extracted-used-disposed by the media industry. What we extract from the Earth in terms of the resources for our various mediatic forms mediates and shapes our perception, emotions, and imagination of how we perceive the Earth. Parikka defines this double bind between the Earth and the media as *medianatures*, tangles of “co-constituting spheres, where the ties are intensively connected in material nonhuman realities as much as in relations of power, economy, and work.”²⁷

Through the idea of media geology, I acknowledge the multiple actors, agencies, and labors at play, right to the Earth’s surface and its bigger-than-human underworld. This

22. Arnold, “Feeling the Fires,” 97.

23. Val Plumwood quoted in Rose, “Val Plumwood’s Philosophical Animism,” 97.

24. Bozak, *Cinematic Footprint*.

25. Fay, *Inhospitable World*.

26. Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, viii.

27. Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, 14. Parikka echoes here Haraway’s concept of *naturecultures*—the linguistic and conceptual impossibility of the nature-culture division. See Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*.

is not to forget about those who, through hazardous workforces of factories, transform Earth's resources and who live off our electronic scraps, making their toxic livelihoods in the landfills of e-waste.²⁸ Disturbing feeling: finite media on a finite planet. *Naturecultures*. Donkeys among *disa*. Medianatures. The sixth mass extinction. Species dying. Grief. Species living. Hope.



Figure 2. Still from *LAND/SCAPE*, codirected by Michał Krawczyk and Giulia Lepori, 2020, 01:03.

For Sean Cubitt, the question of how to live with earth others is not a question of “either people or ecologies; nor it is necessarily a project of sacrifice.”²⁹ The question requires not just a political answer but an aesthetic one: “a question, that is, concerning both perception (the root meaning of aesthesis) and art, the techniques of mediation and communication in which we construe our relations with one another and the world.”³⁰ Cinema relies on earthly resources, but it also has the capacity to move the viewers. In redeeming the world back to us through its ability of diffraction, cinema does not necessarily work as a means of mastering the world; instead, it can offer the viewers a fresh sensory experience of the fragments of the world.³¹ In strapping the camera to the

28. Armiero, in reading the stratigraphies of power and toxicity, discovers a Wastocene, the Age of Waste, pointing toward the contaminating violence of capitalism and its accumulation in the human and more-than-human bodies. See Armiero, *Wastocene*.

29. Cubitt, *Finite Media*, 15.

30. Cubitt, *Finite Media*, 15.

31. Mulvogue, “Catastrophe Aesthetics.” Mulvogue draws on Karen Barad’s difference between diffraction and reflection.

donkey, I wished to propose an experimental aesthetic strategy that challenges the current media spectatorship format, a shared more-than-human story through the cinematic land affect of the film world's *landsoundscape*.

feathery stigmas
sunlight
wind

The act of strapping the camera to Dondolo causes questions of human-animal relations and of power/care to arise. Although strapping the camera to Dondolo's body may seem like another appropriative act—again, putting him to work—I did not want to turn the donkeys' subjectivities into mere objects for mere consumption. How can such an appropriative act as strapping the camera be grounded in response-abilities? Becomings and response-abilities do not offer, nor are they necessarily grounded in, smooth worlds. To draw on Haraway again, the “on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies” can be a messy one, where caring for one species might mean violence and death for others.³² This means to accept that donkeys are makers and unmakers of this lively meshwork of the valley, and with this comes the acceptance of the tangled and inextricable mortal relatedness at the expense of other beings in this meshwork. This means to accept humbly that they are laboring for us, to achieve our vision of how we imagine that land/scape to be.

By creating this relationship between the camera and a more-than-human body, another relation of power was muddled: we lost some control over the desired footage. At the beginning of the donkeys' descent into the gully, the camera moves with Dondolo's body, adapting to the steep terrain. The strapped camera co-becomes with the moving body, sliding from where we put it in the first place. In reviewing the footage, my awkward personal feeling was how land's meshwork intruded into my aesthetics. This event has shaken the imposition of where we exactly strapped the camera, the politics of our domestication, and how we desired this footage/world to be. Dondolo's moving body followed Giorgiana, adapting to the terrain and becoming-with that terrain's morphology and other more-than-human bodies. The body-camera went wild. It went feral.

The realization was slow and humble, but finally, it arrived. The vision of how I wanted the footage to be, gently including how I want the world to be, is not fully rendered; the footage did not live up to my desires and visions. Once this experiment in aesthetics and human-animal becomings/relations reached its culminating point, when we decided to follow their paths on this rocky land/scape, and were greeted down the gully, we curiously reviewed the footage. Simona and Danilo commented that this part of land/scape is one of the donkeys' favorite spots, and when grazing, they can often be found here. We recognized them as place makers and unmakers.

32. Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto*, 7.

crunching
gully
rustle

In this shared, messy world, whose aesthetic intervention is the film? To whom does this shared story belong? I prefer to think more relationally about such aesthetic estrangement, describing the film world as audiovisual meshwork, meshing the artists—us, donkeys, the land—with the viewer, the materiality of the valley with the aesthetic process, media with nature, human subjects with more-than-human places, and places with performances. This was our experimental aesthetic intervention in creating a cinematic land affect, while offering a film world of becoming-with donkeyness in their becoming-with land.³³ This is not an anthropomorphic representation of the animal otherness nor a realistic evocation. The film world becomes a cinematic encounter between land's fluid meshwork, a confrontation between the valley's morphology, geological formations, more-than-human inhabitants, realized in this cross-species ecology.

The opening scene drags the viewers into its film world: the camera attached to Dondolo's neck follows his bodily motion; *disa* dominates this rocky land/scape; Dondolo's jaw movement and chewing sounds accompany us into the soundscape of this film world. Interrupted by a fly moving around, Dondolo encounters Giorgiana, and together they descend to the gully.³⁴ In this film world, becoming-with land's meshwork begins with becoming-with donkeyness.³⁵ The film world's body provides the pace, sights, and sounds for this wider more-than-human world and its perceptual ecology: these are all geomorphic and biomorphic qualities of the film world. Adrien Ivakhiv defines cinema as a machine capable of producing and disclosing worlds.³⁶ This machine is geomorphic in its production of the territorialized material world and biomorphic in its production of an apparent animate world of lifelike forms. Viewers are caught into such film worlds where film affects us, takes us on journeys that go well beyond the time-space of the film world, "seeping into conversation and dreams, tinting the world and making it vibrate in particular ways, injecting thought-images, sensations, motivations, heightened

33. On cinematic portrayal of animals and questions regarding their use and representation, see Bousé, *Wildlife Films*; and Burt, *Animals in Film*. There are a number of moving image artists who purposefully move from anthropomorphic imagery to less representational forms of aesthetic intervention with the animal other (ness). For examples, see Baker, *Postmodern Animal*. On aesthetic strategies toward more-than-human worlds grounded in becomings and response-abilities, see moving images by Krawczyk, "Apis Mellifera" and "Goat"; and Krawczyk and Lepori, "How Does a Bark Feel Like?"

34. Krawczyk and Lepori, *LAND/SCAPE*, 00:12–00:56.

35. On-the-ground and lively becomings were grounded in response-abilities; one of these meant reaching toward donkeys' worlds and understanding them as Dondolo and Giorgiana, less than fixed representatives of their species. The perspective offered in the film world is aligned with becoming-with donkeyness, leading viewers into a world of donkey-ness and other more-than-human bodies of that meshwork, with no fixed and essential notion of donkey at the center. The film world leads viewers to become-with donkeyness, leading to becoming-with land.

36. Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image*.

attunements to one thing or another, into the larger social and ecological fields within which film's signs, meanings, and affects resound."³⁷ *LAND/SCAPE* offers a world that is not just the film world of the screen.³⁸ The geomorphic and biomorphic qualities of the film world provide an opening toward a broader world in which we can rediscover ourselves and construct new meanings. As Ivakhiv continues, the moving images with and through their affect shift "the ways viewers perceive themselves (as individuals and groups) and the world (including the landscapes, places, nations, civilizations, and ecologies that make it up), the earth that subtends them, and the relationships connecting all of these."³⁹



Figure 3. Still from *LAND/SCAPE*, codirected by Michał Krawczyk and Giulia Lepori, 2020, 06:05.

A small camera attached to Dondolo's neck gave the opportunity of a particularly wide angle that could grasp in focus both his body parts and the unfolding events of his becoming-with land. Viewers are caught into the film world's biogeomorphic cinematic land affect. Yet cinema does not reflect the world; it diffracts it back to us, and in doing so, it reveals it to us differently.⁴⁰ *LAND/SCAPE* weaves the real world with the film

37. Ivakhiv, *Ecologies of the Moving Image*, 13.

38. As Giulia explains: "We chose the name *LAND/SCAPE* inspired by the word's etymology (Ingold 2011), which suggests land's shaping agency. Rather than a fixed, defined entity—landscape as scenery—we wanted to evoke the constant formation processes of land being shaped as it shapes. The continuity within processes of relationality. That is why the audiovisual ends with the question 'how do I shape you?' Not so much to find an answer, but to invite more questioning" (pers. comm., May 2022). For an early discussion, see Lepori and Krawczyk, "Land/Scape." For a more evolved discussion, see Lepori, "Land is Shaped as Land Shapes."

39. Ivakhiv, "Anthrobiogeomorphic Machine," 135.

40. Mulvogue, "Catastrophe Aesthetics."

world, fact and fiction, nature and culture, human with the more-than-human, geology with media, the viewer with the film world. It is a diffracted story of the land's more-than-human bodies, a story that shows the known world back to us in an odd way, the world somehow known to the viewers but remarkably diverse and different. A camera swinging from a more-than-human body co-becomes-with donkey and becomes-with land and its collective of more-than-human bodies. The film world's landsoundscape becomes body itself.

What does it mean that film is a body? Jennifer Barker points out that the body of film is not like the human body. It is a lived-body, though it does not resemble the human one, a *filmbody* capable “of the perception of expression and expression of perception: the film certainly perceives, experiences, is immersed in, and has a vantage point on the world, and without a doubt the film signifies, or otherwise there would be nothing at all or us to see, hear, feel, or interpret.”⁴¹ As viewers, we are woven into the meshwork of the filmbody, into a relationship of expression and perception. We are not fully in it, but neither we are completely outside of it. Woven with the meshwork of the film world, “we can see the seeing as well as the seen, hear the hearing as well as the heard, and feel the movement as well as see the moved.”⁴²

There is an intimate and tactile woven relationship between these two distinct bodies. In such a sensual relationship, tactility is a mode of perception/expression committing the mindful body to a dynamic and mutual relationship with the film world. Tactility of the filmbody embraces a myriad of carnal patters. The opening scene, where one hears Dondolo munching on *disa* and sees his swinging body and shadow, establishes a reciprocity between the filmbody and the viewer's body. With the departing body of the donkey, viewers are pulled-with this motion. As Dondolo starts moving slowly, the soundscape of the film world fills with Dondolo's hoofs stepping on the terrain reverberating through the landsoundscape of the film world, reaching to the viewer's world and body. The stigmas of *disa* caress the camera while the wind gently flutters the microphone, reverberating from the film world to our mindful body/world. Fly enters the land/scape, buzzing through the film world and the viewer's world. As Dondolo and Giorgiana adapt to the rocky formations, so the viewer's body adapts to this muscular movement. Wind sweeps through the valley and the film world, as more-than-human bodies and their shadows appear. Clomping reverberates through the film world. Our bodies tremble. They are not simple presences filling the film world. Hair coat, flies, ear twitches, hooves, weather-world's formations, sighs, clomping, the intensities, textures, and compositions of the film world's landsoundscape, they constitute the very stuff of filmbody, amplifying relations necessary for becoming-with. These biogeomorphic presences of the film world enact a cinematic tactility between the viewers' body

41. Barker, *Tactile Eye*, 9.

42. Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 10.

and the filmbody, and they do so haptically, kinesthetically, muscularly, and viscerally. Viewers become-with donkeyness and other more-than-human bodies. What weaves such carnal relationship are the flows of affects and intensities between the bodies.

rocks
clomping
sand

So whose story is it? It is a film world's body, its landsoundscape filled with more-than-human bodies, and as such, this story belongs to the land and the earth others. As environmental humanists point to us, in the Anthropocene we need stories that are also more-than-human, stories of and for "detailed practices of attentiveness to the complex ways that we, all of us, become in consequential relationship with others."⁴³

As a filmmaker, I wish to make and tell stories that are not merely human. It matters what stories make film worlds; what film worlds make stories.⁴⁴ As a filmmaker, it matters not just what/whose stories I engage with but also which aesthetic interventions I adopt to diffract such stories. It matters what aesthetic interventions make film worlds. To return to Sean Cubitt, the political question of building an alliance between humans and bigger-than-us world: the question of how to live well within this world may be an aesthetic one. With this in mind, I wish to make and tell stories bigger-than-us, stories that might (hopefully) shake and undermine the prevailing story of the Anthropocene's biosocial destruction and to ground us in more affective and intimate relations with the land's lively meshwork. The aesthetic response-ability driving this film was to create a sensory film world experience, in which to be embraced by a specific filmbody and its geobiomorphic qualities and from which to leave enriched with a fresh attentiveness to the earth others and their/our more-than-human worlds. It matters what stories make film worlds; what film worlds make stories. So, dear viewer, how have you been moved? Have you gone feral?

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43. Van Dooren, Kirksey, and Münster, "Multispecies Studies," 3.

44. This is a nod to Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 12.

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