

## Migration & the Anthropocene

This output comprises 4 artworks that respond to contexts of mass migration and the Anthropocene and one journal article:

1. *Criollo* (7-min site-specific film; series of 15 photographs; artist's book)
2. *The Athens-Kassel Ride* (large-scale public event)
3. *The Transit of Hermes* (event, 3-hr film, 20 photographs, a bronze sculpture)
4. *The Parasite* (artist's book)
5. ) 'Notes on Works for *documenta 14* Athens & Kassel, 2017,' *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Vol 18, No. 1, 2019, pp.1-18

Prof. Ross Birrell



Ross Birrell, *Criollo* (2017) HDV Dur: 7min Still (detail)



# Project Details

A series of projects commissioned by *documenta 14* (2017) which took as their starting point *Tschiffely's Ride* (1933), an account of an equestrian journey from Buenos Aires to Washington and New York (1925-28) conducted by A.F. Tschiffely on two Argentine criollo horses, Mancha and Gato. Field research and production locations: Argentina; USA; 7 countries across Europe. *Criollo/The Athens-Kassel Ride* were funded by a Creative Scotland Open Fund Award of £99,000 with additional funding from *documenta 14* (approx. EUR 72,000) and exhibition sponsors (VW) and GSA Research and Development Fund (£3,000). Projects also received in-kind support from Long Riders and sponsorship from a number of equestrian organisations.

## **Criollo**

(Single channel video, HDV, 2.35:1, Dur: 7min); 15 photographs; artist's book.

Funded by: *documenta 14*; Creative Scotland; GSA. Supported by: Estancia El Cardal, who donated the criollo horse, Ahi Veremos Resero (\$3000).

Executive Producer: Peter van der Gugten, who donated his time as equestrian adviser/horse handler/groom to the production of *Criollo* film.

Director of Photography: John Engstrom (New York)

Camera: Guillermo Ueno (Buenos Aires)

## **The Athens-Kassel Ride**

Site-specific public event; documentation; website; archive.

Funded by *documenta 14*; Creative Scotland and GSA. Patron: VfD 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Equestrian Organisation in Germany.

Long Riders: van der Gugten, David Wewetzer (VfD), Zsolt Szabo, Tina Boche, donated several months of their time and horses to the project. Equipment sponsorship: Brockmann (Horse Trailer); Volkswagen (2 x Tauregs); stabling was provided by local equestrian organisations in Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany.

## **The Transit of Hermes**

Site-specific public project/events; 20 photographs, bronze sculpture, 3-hr film (HDV 2hr55min split screen projection).

Funded by: *documenta 14*; Creative Scotland; GSA. Supported by: Greek vet and breeder, Konstantinos Kourmpellis, who donated stabling and veterinary expertise to Hermes for 1 year. Long Rider Zsolt Szabo travelled from Hungary to Greece and donated a month of his time to train Hermes for the long ride.

## **The Parasite**

Artist book in English, Greek and German, published by Studio 14, *documenta 14* (2018)

Funded by: Creative Scotland. Supported by: Studio 14; and CCA

Birrell collaborated with Daphni Antoniou, curatorial assistant *documenta 14*, on Greek and German variations of the text for *The Parasite*.

Birrell worked on book design with Marit Munzberg, who also designed publication of *Criollo* and previous artist's book, *An Envoy Reader* (LemonMelon, 2014)



Arrival of Athens-Kassel Ride, Friedrichsplatz, Kassel, 9 July 2017

In background  
Marta Minujín, Parthenon of Books (1983/2017),  
Friedrichsplatz, Kassel, *documenta 14*, 2017

# Research Question

How might the figure of the journeying horse, conceived as companion-species, challenge the biopolitics of the border in an epoch of mass migration and the Anthropocene?

For Giorgio Agamben, *bios* is 'political life,' *zoe* is 'bare life' or animal existence, and there are two *threshold* moments of biopolitics: the animal and the refugee: 'the refugee causes the secret presupposition of the political domain – bare life – to appear for an instant within that domain' (Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 131).

It is for this reason that the question of biopolitics of the border and of posthumanism – understood as a decentring of the human as sovereign and autonomous – when addressed to the contemporary economic, political and ecological crises of mass migration and the Anthropocene, must engage with the question of co-existence with animals.

# Research Output

The output emerges from four interrelated projects, commissioned by the international art quinquennial, *documenta 14* (2017), which took place in Athens and Kassel. The resulting artworks were subsequently exhibited in a number of galleries and museums in Europe and America (see Dissemination section p. X).

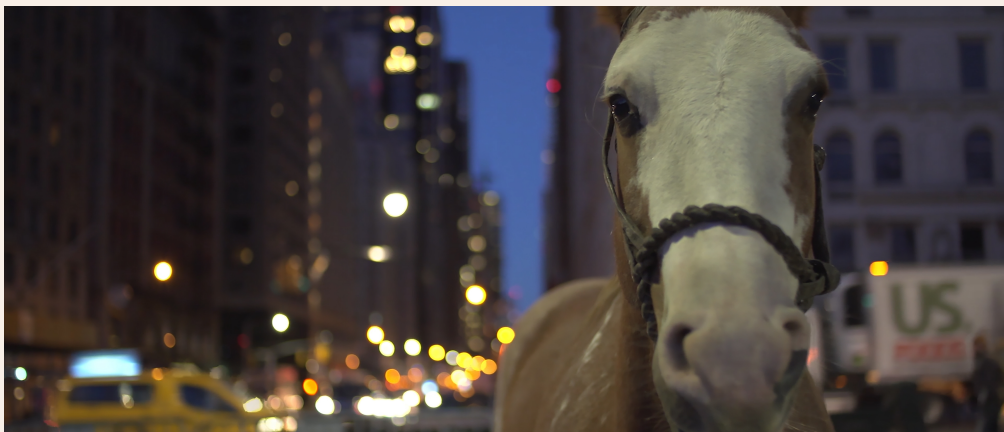
***Criollo* (2017, HDV, 2.35:1, Dur. 7min)**, Argentine Criollo horse, Ahi Veremos Rosero, filmed 6<sup>th</sup> Ave/Central Park, New York.

Set of 3 photographs before 3 identical equestrian statues to the Latin American revolutionary leader, Jose de San Martin in Buenos Aires, Washington DC, New York.

Series of 9 photographs documenting the journey via air and road from BA, DC to NYC.

Publication of transportation and importation documents.

Please watch '[Birrell\\_7528\\_Migration\\_Anthropocene\\_Film\\_1\\_Criollo.mp4](#)' on the USB stick now.



*Criollo* (2017), installation shot from *The Transit of Hermes*, CCA, Glasgow 2018; Launch of the Athens-Kassel Ride, Athens, 9 Apr 2017, *The Transit of Hermes: Serbian-Croatian border*, 2017; *The Parasite*, publication (2018)



# Research Output

**The Athens-Kassel Ride (2017)** Site-specific public event; photographic/video/object-based documentation; website. A 3000km equestrian ride between Athens and Kassel, the two cities of *documenta 14*, developed in collaboration with 4 long riders and their horses and performed as a mobile, human-equine ensemble over 100 days. The ride crossed 7 European countries (EU and Non-EU): Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria and Germany.

The launch of the Athens-Kassel Ride took place on Dionysiou Areopagitou at the foot of the Acropolis, the ride forming a visual echo of the riders of the Panathaneic festival famously depicted on the frieze of the Akropolis.

## Long Riders

Peter van der Gugten, David Wewetzer, Zsolt Szabo, Tina Boche

## Horses

Artvin, Paco, Issy Kul, Sancho, Hermes

## Camera Crew

Samuel Devereux, Mark Wallis



Map of route of

The Athens-Kassel Ride,

Zeit Magazine, 10 Jun 2017

# Research Output



Launch of *The Athens-Kassel Ride*, Athens, 9 Apr 2017

*The Athens-Kassel Ride*, Greece-Macedonia, May 2017

Arrival of *The Athens-Kassel Ride*, Kassel, 9 Jul 2017



# Research Output

***The Transit of Hermes (2017)*** is a project which emerged from the Athens-Kassel Ride consisting of: a public project; 20 photographs; a bronze sculpture; and a moving-image installation (3hr split screen projection, 2018). Named after the Greek messenger god and god of border crossings, Hermes is a Greek Arravani horse who travelled with the riders and horses of the Athens-Kassel Ride. *The Transit of Hermes* is also the title given to the exhibition of these inter-related equestrian projects commissioned by d14.

Please watch '[Birrell\\_7528\\_Migration\\_Anthropocene\\_Film\\_2\\_Transit.mp4](#)' on the USB stick now:

Ross Birrell, *The Transit of Hermes* (2017)

(HDV: 16:9, Single Channel, Split Screen: Dur. 2h55min)



*The Transit of Hermes*, Arravani Festival, village of Prastos, Peloponnese, 1 Apr 2017  
*The Transit of Hermes*: Serbian-Croatian border, 2017  
 Installation shot of *The Transit of Hermes* (dur. 3hrs) and  
 Hoof of Hermes (Bronze, 9x4x4 inch), *The Transit of Hermes*, CCA, Glasgow 2018

# Research Output

***The Parasite* (2018)** is a publication of concrete poetic textual fragments in English, Greek and German derived from English, Greek and German editions of Arthur Conan Doyle's short story 'The Parasite' (1894). *The Parasite* was not approached as an exhibition catalogue but as a further development of the research. Translations by Daphne Antoniou. Design by Marit Munzberg. Published by *documenta 14*, A Studio 14 Imprint. 60 pages.



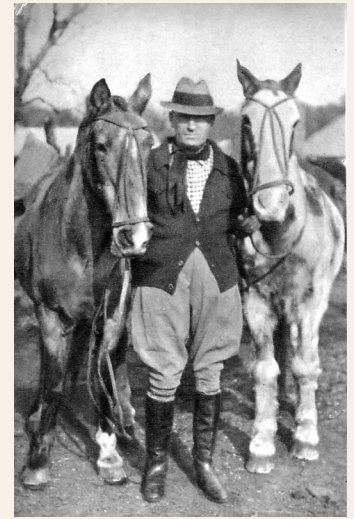
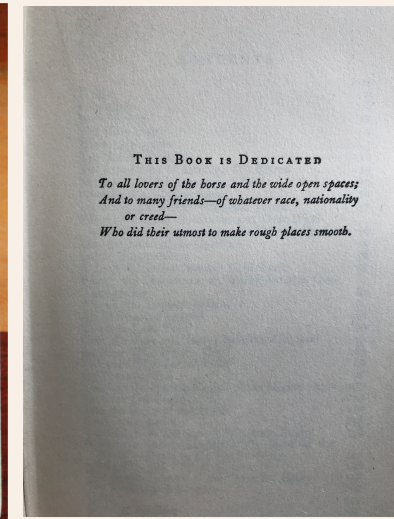
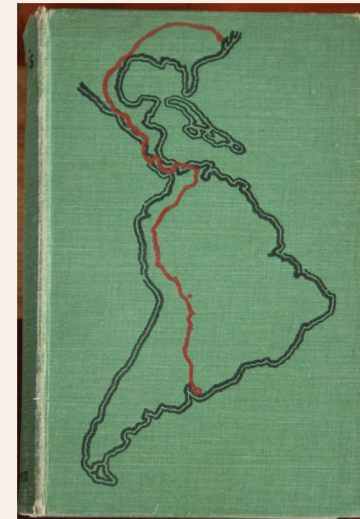
*The Parasite*, artist's book  
(2018)

# Context

## A Note on *Tschiffely's Ride* (1933)

*Tschiffely's Ride* is an account of a 10,000mile equestrian long-ride from Buenos Aires to New York (1925-28) by A. F. Tschiffely on two Argentine criollo horses, Mancha and Gato. First published in 1933, the book is dedicated to all 'lovers of the horse' and 'wide open spaces' and to friends of 'whatever race nationality or creed,' a perspective which positions Tschiffely's epic journey in opposition to the contemporary emergence of Hitler's Nationalist bio-politics of race hatred.

It is for this reason that *Tschiffely's Ride* was the initial catalyst for projects that address the urgent contemporary questions of: human-animal relations and representations in the context of the Anthropocene; the bio-politics of mass migration; and the border on geographical, political and cultural levels, in the face of growing political, national and racial tensions in Europe and North America.



A. F. Tschiffely, *Tschiffely's Ride* (1933) & Dedication page



# Context

## The Horse as Political Animal

*In Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship* (2017), Ulrich Raulff claims that the horse is not only a 'living metaphor' but 'the metaphorical animal par excellence' and 'the absolute political metaphor' (228-9):

Moreover, as a symbolic animal, the horse is the companion animal which most acts as a political metaphor:

It is thanks mainly to its velocity as a vector of animal power that the horse came to be a key political ally and fellow traveler of Homo sapiens ... The horse has tended to be both a functional creature and a living metaphor in the same breath. It has spread terror and also given terror a face. It has given man the capacity to seize power and to secure it, at the same time lending mankind an appropriate image of sovereignty. There has never been a need for the symbol of hegemony to switch saddles: the horse is by nature, as it were, the absolute political metaphor.' (Raulff, 228)

However, the twentieth century oversaw the decline and eclipse of the horse as the companion-species of human economic, political, cultural and military expansion and domination. Once 'the central vector of historical land power' (Raulff, 346) the horse, has all but disappeared from our daily lived reality, taking on an increasingly 'imaginary and chimeric form' (Raulff, 11).



Ulrich Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship*, (2017)

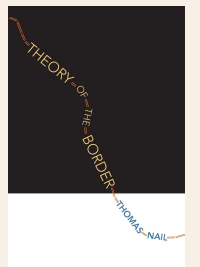
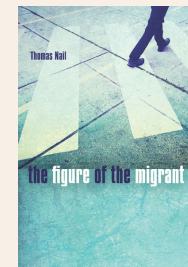
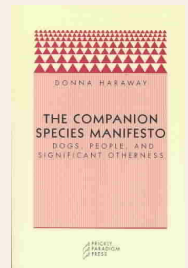
# Context

## *Human-Animal Relations and Representations*

A key context is posthumanist theories of human and non-human animal relations and related art practices in the epoch of the Anthropocene. In this field, I explored key concepts of art and becoming-animal in the work of Deleuze & Guattari; the animal and the open (Rilke, Heidegger, Agamben, Eco); posthumanist theories of companion species/trans-species solidarity (Haraway, Braidotti, Wolfe); theory of Hermes, parasites, entanglement (Hyde, Serres, Barad); theories of looking at animals/animal-gaze (Berger, Derrida); object-oriented ontology, biosphere, monocultures and biodiversity (Harman, Serres, Shiva); dialectic of domestic, pet/pest (Snaebjornsdottir/Wilson); the animal as state apparatus (Tania Bruguera).

## *The Bio-Politics of Migration and the Border*

In tandem with conducting research into human and non-human animal relations and representations, I also examined theories of the bio-politics of migration and the border, and the related status of refugees, as these came increasingly to the foreground of contemporary political debates in the EU and North America. In this context, I explored theories of biopolitics (Foucault, Agamben, Esposito); creolization/globality/diaspora, postcolonial theory/ migrant identity (Hall, Glissant, Flusser, Mbembe, Papastergiadis) and definitions of the border (Balibar, Nail). Importantly, Agamben claims that the animal and the refugee represented the threshold of biopolitics.





# Context

For social theorists such as Nick Vaughan-Williams, EU border crossings are spaces of dehumanisation and the animalisation of subjects: 'animalisation is a powerful and recurring discourse – understood as an assemblage of linguistic and material phenomena – that structures many 'irregular' migrants' testimonies of their embodied encounter with diverse aspects of EUropean border security' and points to 'the prominence of animal metaphors and imagery in representations of 'irregular' migration at border sites globally.' ('We are not animals!' Humanitarian border security and zoopolitical spaces in EUrope'. *Political Geography*, Volume 45. (2015), pp. 1-10; pp. 3-4. This practice of dehumanisation and the rhetoric of animalisation of migrants and refugees and debates on the biopolitics of the border (Daria Davitti , Özgün E Topak) forms the background of this practice-based research into the biopower of the horse in the crossing of borders, and the posthuman co-existence with the animal. 'Today, through our ideologically loaded narratives of their lives, animals "hail" us to account for the regimes in which we and they must live.' Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), p. 17.

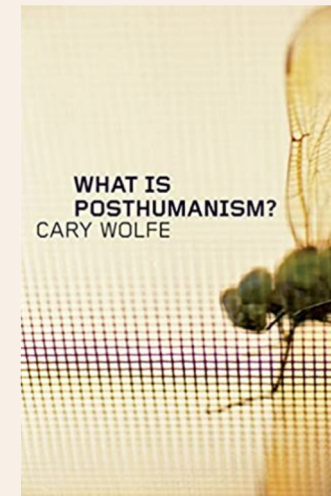
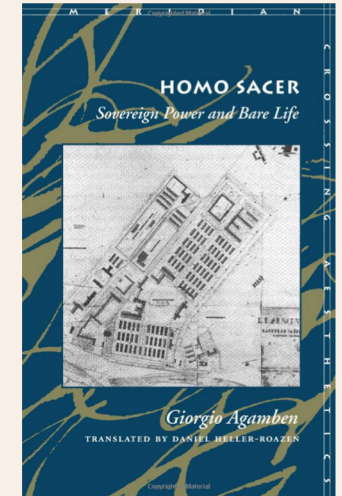
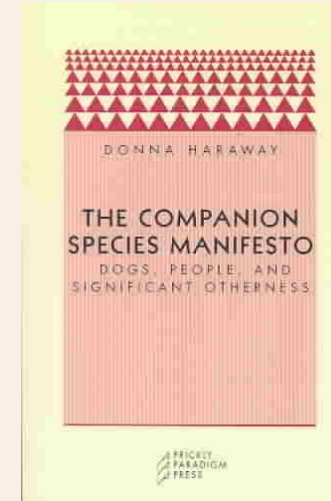
For Agamben bios is 'political life,' zoe is 'bare life' or animal existence, and there are two threshold moments of biopolitics: the animal and the refugee: 'the refugee causes the secret presupposition of the political domain – bare life – to appear for an instant within that domain' Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 131.

As distinct to the technological paradigm of the cyborg, associated with transhumanism, for thinkers of the posthuman animal, such as Carey Wolfe, 'posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points towards the necessity of new theoretical paradigms' Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 2009), p. xv.

'Animal politics is a pragmatics of mutual inclusion. [...]

Animal politics is a politics of becoming, even — especially — of the human.'

Brian Massumi, *What Animals Teach us about Politics* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 49-50.



# Context

## Aesthetic contexts: animals and aesthetic regimes

This research sits within the field of contemporary art that engages with the political power of the horse as metaphor as well as deploying the method of ‘delegated performances’ (in the work of Sierra, Collins, Bruguera as critiqued by Bishop). As we shall see, in contrast to the hierarchical process of delegation (characterised by the realisation of a composition devised in advance by the artist-researcher to others paid to perform physical tasks), the development and production of *The Athens-Kassel Ride* was approached via processes of collaboration and ‘polyphonic orchestration.’ In relation to the figure of the horse, there are 3 key works which triangulate the artistic field (or aesthetic regimes in Rancière’s formulation):

- Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled (Cavalli)*, 1967, 12 horses, Galleria L’attico, Rome, (1969), in the use of real horses to critique a history of representation
- Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin’s Whisper#5*, Tate (2008) delegated performance using mounted police; the animal (and, by extension, the museum) as apparatus of state oppression
- Hans Haacke, *Gift Horse*, Fourth Plinth, Trafalgar Square (2015) bronze statue of a horse skeleton (based upon an engraving by Stubbs, 1766), a bow embedded with LED lights displaying shares from the stock exchange, a work implicating (public) art in a history of colonialism, conquest and contemporary global markets.

Each of these works locate the horse in the aesthetic regimes of representation, state power and global capitalism. They thereby triangulate a field of practice-research which my projects seek to formally engage and critically develop. My research builds on the work of these others by addressing the latent biopower of, the captivation of the animal gaze, the issue of human/non-human co-existence, and animal as messenger.



Haacke, *Gift Horse* (2015)



Kounellis, *Untitled (Cavalli)*, 1967



Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper#5* (2008)

# Context

## Aesthetic context: Migration and the Moving-Image

Ursula Biemann, *The Maghreb Connection: Movements of Life Across North Africa* (2006)

The Maghreb Connection tracks the current gates, routes and modes of trans-Saharan migration and looks at the elaborate systems of information and social organization that have grown up around it. In this research the art projects examine the movement of people not as isolated phenomenon but in relation to the flow of resources, information, images and capital in the Mediterranean region.

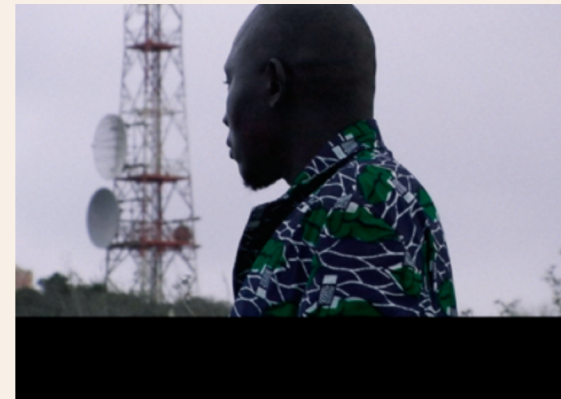
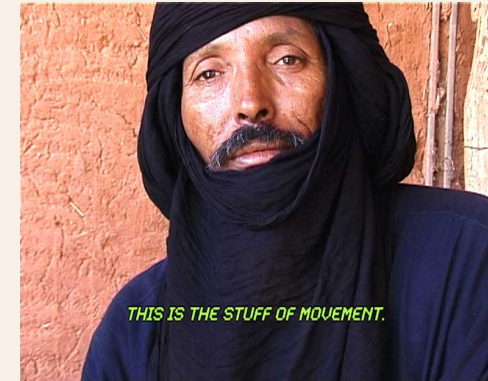
Raphaël Cuomo and Maria Iorio, *Sudeuropa* (2005-07)

*Sudeuropa* examines the ways in which European and Italian immigration policies materialize on location by reconfiguring space, time and the daily life of the Italian island Lampedusa.

Superflex, *Kwassa Kwassa* (2015)

A film by SUPERFLEX portraying a boatbuilder on the island of Anjouan in the Comoro Islands. The boats are used for fishing but also to transport migrants to the neighbouring island of Mayotte, a French overseas territory and a outermost region of the EU. The island of Mayotte is just 70 kilometers away from Anjouan. The film intends to use the construction of the boat as a carrier of migrants on a dangerous ocean in a complex political setup as well as their symbolic meaning as a carrier of dreams of reaching a better life on the other shore.

In contrast to these projects (developed by artists who, like myself, were not themselves migrants or refugees), I did not seek to directly document, represent or 'enframe' the experience or testimony of migrants and refugees on their behalf. Rather, the equestrian based projects which involved crossing the borders of South and North America, of the EU and Non-EU across mainland Europe, sought to draw lines (diagonally) of solidarity at the critical intersection of biopolitics and zoopolitics, mass migration and the anthropocene.



Ursula Biemann, *The Maghreb Connection: Movements of Life Across North Africa* (2006)

Raphaël Cuomo and Maria Iorio, *Sudeuropa* (2005-07)

Superflex, *Kwassa Kwassa* (2015)

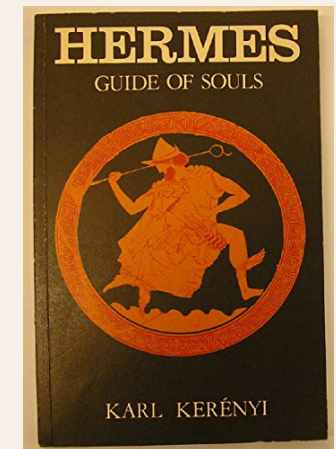
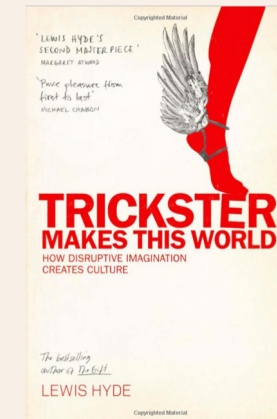
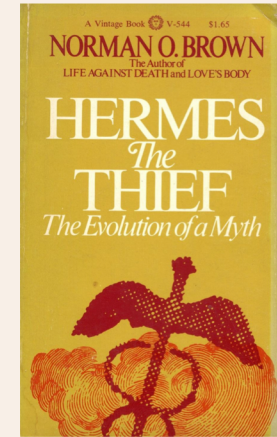
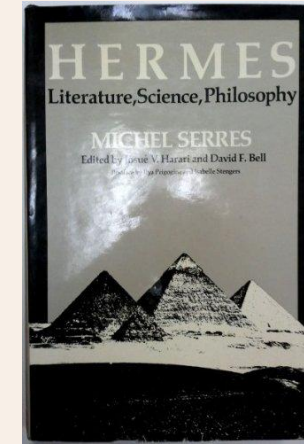


# Context

## The Myth of Hermes

The mythical Hermes was an emissary and messenger of the Gods and a central figure in the thought of Michel Serres, whose writings (alongside those of Rilke, Heidegger, Derrida, Donna Haraway, Lewis Hyde and others) influenced the development of the projects for *documenta 14*. Serres considers Hermes as 'the god of the crossroads' (Serres, 1982, 14). Norman O. Brown's account of the myth casts Hermes as an agent of political emancipation; painting the antagonism between Hermes and Apollo as an allegory of class conflict in Athens in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC. For Lewis Hyde, building in part upon Norman O. Brown's account, Hermes is an ambiguous, 'polytropic' character – a 'mercurial' figure, as per his Roman namesake - forever occupying a 'double field of action' (Hyde 2008, 207), eternally in transit between the worlds of gods and humans, the living and the dead. For Kerenyi, Hermes belongs only to the journey:

The journey is at home while underway, at home on the road itself, the road being understood not as a connection between two definite points on the earth's surface, but as a particular world. It is the ancient world of the path... Hermes is constantly underway: he is enodios ("by the road") and hodos ("belonging to a journey"), and one encounters him on every path. He is constantly in motion... His role as leader and guide is often cited and celebrated, and, at least since the time of the Odyssey, he is also called angelos ("messenger"), the messenger of the Gods.' (Kerenyi 1986, 14-15)



# Methods

## Phase 1: Literature Review

Reading of critical theories on the politics of human-animal relations and representations (Agamben, Berger, Derrida, Haraway, Massumi, Mbembe, Serres); theories of creolité/creolization (Hall, Glissant); poetics of the animal and the open (Rilke, Heidegger, Agamben, Eco); posthumanist theories of the animal (Haraway, Braidotti, Wolfe); theories of migration and the border (Balibar, Miller, Nail, Papastergiadis); theory of Hermes, parasites, entanglement (Hyde, Serres, Barad); theories of biopolitics (Foucault, Agamben, Esposito); theories of migration and the border (Balibar, Flusser, Miller, Papastergiadis, Nail); theories of looking at animals/animal-gaze (Berger, Derrida); contemporary history of the horse (Raulff); flat ontology/object-oriented ontology (Harman); practice of 'delegated performance' (Bishop); methods of 'polyphony,' 'orchestration' and 'dialogic art' (Bakhtin, Habermas, Kester).

The objectives of 'Phase : Literature Review' was to scope key perspectives which might articulate the intersection between human-animal relations and the figure of the migrant in the context of posthumanism and the Anthropocene.

The method of approaching key texts was 'artopetal' - drawing upon Simon Critchley's distinction between 'philosofugal' uses of theory ('where theory spins out from itself to try and cover the artwork') and an 'artopetal' approach in which 'theoretical reflections are pulled back to the artwork's centre of gravity'. (See Simon Critchley, 'The Infinite Demand of Art', *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas Contexts and Methods*, Vol 3. No 2. Summer 2010.)





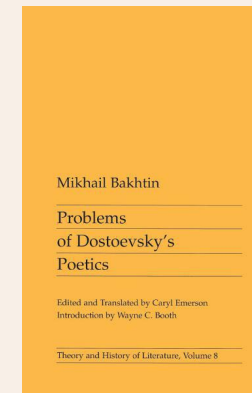
# Methods

## Phase 2: Orchestration and Co-Existence

*The Athens-Kassel Ride* was performed by four experienced Long Riders. To this extent, the project applied the method of ‘delegated performance,’ employed by artists such as Santiago Sierra (Bishop). However, in contrast to the hierarchical and managerial process of delegation (characterised by the realisation of a composition devised in advance by the artist-researcher to others paid to perform physical tasks), the development and production of *The Athens-Kassel Ride* was approached via collaboration and ‘polyphonic orchestration.’ Although the original concept of a long ride between Athens and Kassel was initiated by Birrell, the feasibility, practical requirements, precise route, daily distance, supporting vehicles and legal requirements were developed in dialogue with Long Riders who possessed the requisite equestrian experience and expertise. Furthermore, during the process it became necessary to obtain a local Greek horse (Arravani) which would accompany the riders and carry light pack. Birrell named this horse Hermes, which gave rise to *The Transit of Hermes*, drawing upon the associations of the Greek god Hermes as god of border crossings and messenger of the gods. Thus, the ‘composition’ (including the approach to documentation and filming) cannot be said to be ‘delegated’ as it does not pre-exist interactions with individual collaborators. Rather, it emerges ‘through and as part of ... entangled intra-relating’ (Barad), through a process of dialogue and listening. It is in this sense that the project was ‘orchestrated.’ The method of orchestration embraces ethical principles of polyphony, listening and the ‘dialogic’ as elaborated by the literary theory of Bakhtin (and later by Eco and Kester).

Importantly, the word which Bakhtin uses for ‘event’ in Russian is *Sobytie* also translates as ‘co-existing, co-being, shared existence or being *with* another’. Orchestration, therefore, respects a ‘*plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights.*’ (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 6).

As a method of developing projects which included live animals and collaboration with equestrians, ‘orchestration’ as understood in the context of Bakhtin, provides an appropriate ethical model. This notion of ‘co-existence’, marks a shift from a method focused upon ‘antagonism’ and ‘dissensus’ in previous projects, such as *Guantanamo* (2010) and *Duet* (2012), which responded to the concept of ‘the political’ as articulated by Schmitt, Mouffe and Rancière. Instead, the method of orchestration was marked by collaboration and co-existence.



*The Athens-Kassel Ride, launch event Athens*

# Methods

## Phase 3: Site-Specific Moving Image

*Criollo* was filmed on location in 6 Avenue/Avenue of Americas in New York. It was shot in 2.35:1 Aspect Ratio (cinemascope) in order to emphasize the scale of the urban context. To foregrounding the theme of 'apparition'/'captivation' (Agamben) footage was in slow-motion with distorted sound of animal breath and hooves; the cinematic scale was further explored in the editing using a time-image (studying the standing horse) and a movement-image (following the walking horse) drawing upon Deleuze's theory in *Cinema I & II*. The three hour looped, slow motion, silent film, *The Transit of Hermes*, presented the 3 month journey of the Greek arrivani horse in split-screen with action mirrored and begins and ends in no identifiable location, in order to emphasize the *movement* of the animal (and the animal as movement) rather than offering a document a the animal's journey from one location to another.



*Criollo, installation CCA*



*The Transit of Hermes installation CCA*

# Contribution to the field

## Contextual site-specific art

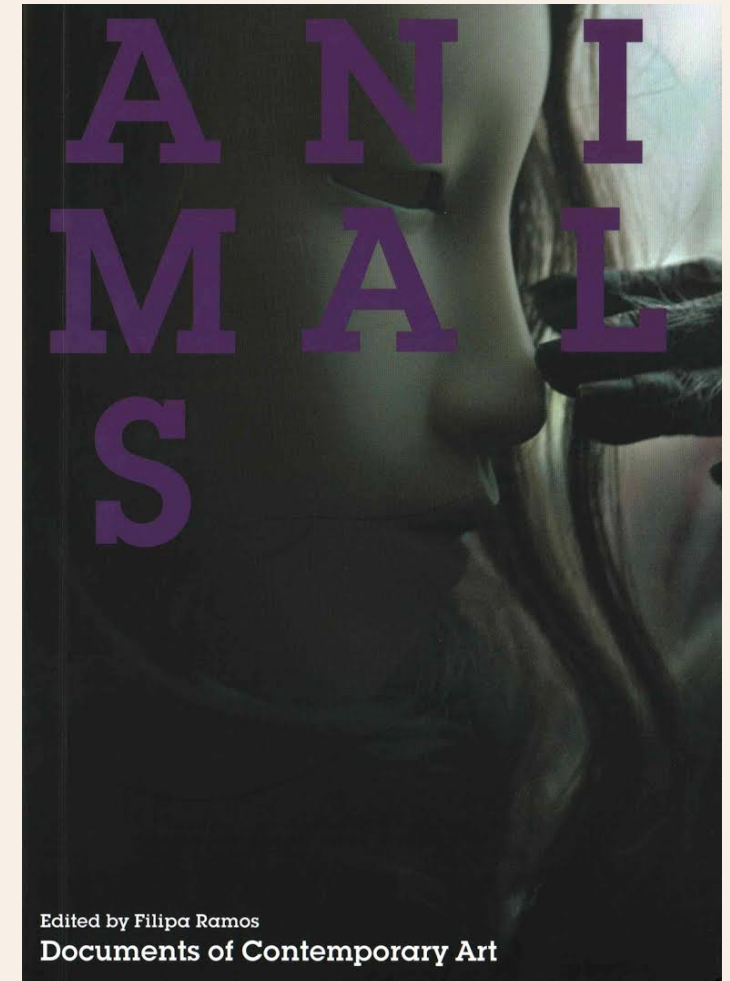
At 3000km, *The Athens-Kassel Ride* was the first time such a trail ride had been undertaken between the two cities and was one of the longest collective equestrian trail rides ever undertaken across mainland Europe through EU and Non-EU countries. As such, and at 100 days duration, it was also among the largest scale site-specific art projects ever undertaken in Europe.

*Criollo*, *The Athens-Kassel Ride* and *The Transit of Hermes* were commissioned projects for *documenta 14*, 2017. *documenta* is recognised as one of the world's most important exhibitions of contemporary art. The works were collected in *The Transit of Hermes* a solo exhibition for CCA, Glasgow presented as part of Glasgow International (GI) 2018. *The Parasite* was launched as part of this exhibition. As part of GI, GSA presented 'Bilocations: Ross Birrell & Adam Szymczyk, a conversation,' and CCA recorded the podcast 'Animal Presences, Ross Birrell in conversation with the curator Filipa Ramos,' editor of *Animals*, in the Whitechapel series Documents of Contemporary Art (2016) (the podcast has received 188 plays)

'[I]nterest in the animal and the revival of Haraway's 'post-human' ... seems to be motivated by the imbrication of political, economic and ecological crises of recent years and the awareness that these have failed to effect tangible political change ... As the privileged site where the distinction between the social and the political is contended, the animal ... has taken over the territory where battles over gender, race, sexuality and human rights are fought... perhaps the animal has become the new face of humanity.' Ana Teixeira Pinto, 'The Post-Human Animal', *frieze d/e*, no. 19 (Berlin, May 2015), in Filipa Ramos (ed), *Animals* (London: Whitechapel, 2016), p. 109.

In response to contemporary contexts of mass migration and the Anthropocene, *Criollo*, *The Athens-Kassel Ride* and *The Transit of Hermes* foreground the following key elements:

- the biopower of the living animal
- the co-existence of 'companion species' in a shared biosphere
- solidarity between the principle of free movement of people and animals in the crossing of borders
- orchestration and co-existence as method



# Dissemination

The *Transit of Hermes* text featured on d14 website (notes + works) <https://www.documenta14.de/en/notes-and-works/12798/the-transit-of-hermes>

The *Athens-Kassel Ride* public project launched 9 Apr on the opening weekend of *documenta 14* with a public event at Parthenon in Athens, arrived in Kassel 9 July, public reception with regional Cultural minister and CEO of *documenta*.

*Criollo*, Neue Neue Galerie (Neue Hauptpost), d14, Kassel, 10 June - 17 Sep 2017

Presentations for d14 'Parliament of Bodies' public programme events, Athens and Kassel

Long Riders conducted media interviews and hosted own website <http://www.theathenskasselride.eu/>

*Criollo*, solo exhibition, Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam (2018)

*The Transit of Hermes*, solo exhibition, Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), as part of Glasgow International festival (2018)

CCA Podcast with Filipa Ramos (ed.), *Animals* (Whitechapel, 2016); Public talk with Adam Szymczyk, Artistic Director *documenta14*, Reid Auditorium, GSA / GI festival

*The Transit of Hermes*, solo exhibition, Inverness Museum & Art Gallery, 21 Jul – 21 Sept 2018

Screenings of *Criollo*: 'Name of an Animal', Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius (1 Aug 2018); Masked-Faced Media, Rubicon Cinema, Ohio (22 Feb 2020)

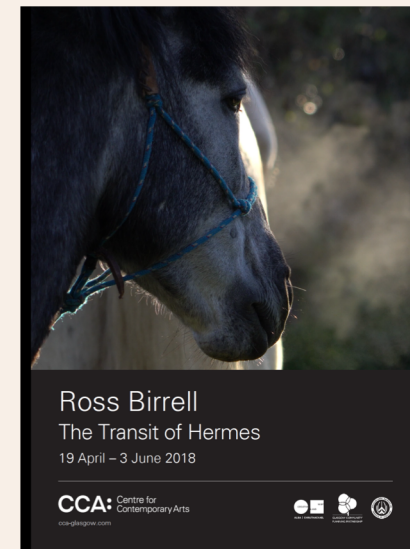
Conference Keynote: 'Posse, Parasite, Polyphony: Morphologies of the Multitude', 'No Commons Without Commoning, ERG, école de recherche graphique, École Supérieure des Arts (ESA), Brussels. 30 Jan - 1 Feb 2018 (31 Jan 2018)

Peer-reviewed journal article: 'Notes on works for *documenta 14*, Athens & Kassel, 2017', *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Vol 18, No. 1, 2019

Group exhibition of work by GSA School of Fine Art staff: Luxon Academy, Shenyang, 23 Oct–7 Nov 2020; Tsinghua University, Beijing, 15–30 Nov 2020; Guangzhou Academy, Guangzhou, 29 Dec 2020–28 Jan 2021; Sichuan Institute, Chongqing, 1–14 Mar 2021.



*Apparition (Hermes)*, still from video documentation, 2016



CCA Poster, *The Transit of Hermes*  
2018



Cover of *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*,  
Vol 18, no. 1, 2019



# Evidence

The projects were referenced in general coverage of *documenta 14* in several newspapers and magazines, including *New York Times*, *Monopol*, *Art Dast Kunstmagazin* Apr and June editions, *Art Spezial documenta 14*, *Weltkunst*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

## Feature articles

*Zeit Magazin*, 10 June 2017 Feature article and cover spread; circulation of **2 million**, with estimated readership of **4 million**

'The Transit of Hermes at *documenta*' *CNN*, 26 Apr 2017: <https://edition.cnn.com/style/gallery/transit-of-hermes/index.html>

*Hessenschau* Regional TV News coverage of the arrival of the *Athens-Kassel Ride* in Kassel on 10 July 2017. Report includes footage of the launch event in Athens, including extract of speech by Adam Szymczk, Artistic Director of *documenta 14*, interviews with the artist, Tina Boche, Long Rider, and Maria-Magdalena Siepe-Gunkel, local Equestrian. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBhXXpXmRVw>

## Reviews of Glasgow International

Calum Sutherland, 'GI Reviews and Responses', *Map Magazine*, May 2018: <https://mapmagazine.co.uk/gi-reviews-responses-3-6>

Laura Cumming, Glasgow International 2018 review *The Observer*, 22 Apr 2018

Cummings writes: "The result is captivating... Every frame inspires a new thought, a new question about this mysterious and unpredictable creature which has carried us through history. Birrell's film is graceful, philosophical, mesmerising."

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/apr/22/glasgow-international-2018-review>

## Published Interviews

'Hippological Transhumance: Ross Birrell in Conversation with Christoph Platz', *Mousse Magazine* #58, Apr-May 2017: 184-208

Lisa Moravec, interview with Ross Birrell, *Studio International*, 20.9.2017

<https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/ross-birrell-interview-the-athens-kassel-ride-transit-of-hermes-criollo>

Documentary for Volkswagen facebook page as Sponsors of *documenta 14*

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1458296204290433>

Long Riders were also interviewed by specialist Equestrian media, including an hr1 radio interview with Long Riders Tina Boche and David Wewetzer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhcPFLPo1Ck>. David Wewetzer was also interviewed at Equitana, 2017 the largest equestrian trade fair in Europe. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dC6oKztAZg>



Cover of *Zeit Magazin*, 10 June 2017



*Hessenschau* Regional TV News coverage of arrival of the Athens-Kassel Ride in Kassel  
10 July 2017



# Evidence

## Evidence continued (media previews and reviews)

[https://issuu.com/scottishartnews/docs/san\\_29](https://issuu.com/scottishartnews/docs/san_29)

<https://www.circuit.org.nz/blog/learning-from-athens>

[https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/documenta-echo-ross-birrell-auf-der-fluchtroute-von-athen.3259.de.html?dram:article\\_id=387212](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/documenta-echo-ross-birrell-auf-der-fluchtroute-von-athen.3259.de.html?dram:article_id=387212)

<https://www.britishcouncil.de/en/events/documenta14>

<https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/art-review-glasgow-international-torsten-lauschmann-ross-birrell-james-pfaff-ciara-phillips-duggie-fields-corin-sworn-more-1429910>

<https://artsceneathens.com/2017/04/11/the-documenta-diaries-part-4-a-horses-tale/>

<https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/life/14th-documenta-what-you-need-to-know>

<http://oumopo.com/documenta-14-art-of-the-impossible/>

<https://www.monopol-magazin.de/documenta-reiter-auf-dem-weg-nach-kassel->

<http://coffeetablenotes.blogspot.com/2018/05/ross-birrell-transit-of-hermes.html>



Cover of Zeit Magazin, 10 June 2017



Hessenschau's Regional TV News coverage of arrival of the Athens-Kassel Ride in Kassel  
10 July 2017

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

## The Horses

(Criollo)

Ahi Veremos Rosero

(The Athens-Kassel Ride)

Artvin

Issy Kul

Paco

Calfino Sancho

(The Transit of Hermes)

Hermes

## The Humans

(Long Riders)

Peter van der Gugten

David Wewetzer

Zsolt Szabo

Tina Boche

(Film crew)

Mark Wallis

Samuel Devereux

Guillermo Ueno

Cine 188, Buenos Aires

Scheimpflug, NYC

(Veterinarian)

Konstantinos Kourmpellis, Prastos

(Estancia)

Oscar Solanet, El Cardal

## The Parasites

(Curators)

Adam Szymczyk (Artistic Director, documenta 14)

Deiter Roelstratte (Curator, documenta 14)

Salvatore Lacagnina (Studio 14, documenta 14)

Francis McKee/Ainsley Roddick (CCA)

Kirsten Body (IMAG)

(Translator)

Daphni Antoniou

(Designer)

Marit Munzberg

(Funders)

Creative Scotland

The Glasgow School of Art

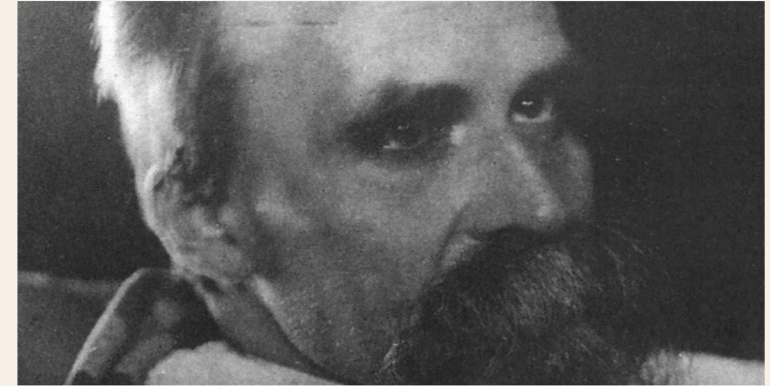
## **Appendix: A Cultural Anatomy of the Horse**

**The following slides offer a selected cultural anatomy of the horse  
to map the salient associations of the horse which informed the  
contexts of the research**



## Friedrich Nietzsche and the Turin Horse, 3 January 1889

On 3 January 1889, the German philosopher witnessed a horse being flogged by the driver of a cab in the Piazza Carlo Alberto in Turin. In a scene which seems to reenact a similar display of emotional empathy in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and which became the pretext of Bela Tarr's film, *The Turin Horse* (2011), in tears, the philosopher flung his arms around the horse's neck before collapsing. Accounts of Nietzsche's life read this act as a herald of the thinker's descent into a mute interiority and madness (See, for example, Hayman 1981, 334-335). The shadow of Nietzsche's act of interspecies solidarity was a catalyst for the image which served to sustain the development of this film over the three years of its making. For a discussion of this event see the editorial of *Art & Research* 4 (1) by Birrell and Broglio (2011). See also the *documenta 14* daybook in which participating artists were invited to identify a date in history with an accompanying image which was important to them. I selected 3 January 1889 and an image of Nietzsche from a decade later, taken by Hans Olde, which captures the philosopher in the grip of stroke-induced paralysis. The short entry concludes: 'Visible in his final silence is a defiant animal resonance, wild staring eyes fixated in self-dissolving, intoxicating rapture.' Latimer and Szymczyk (2017), np [Entry for 20 August].



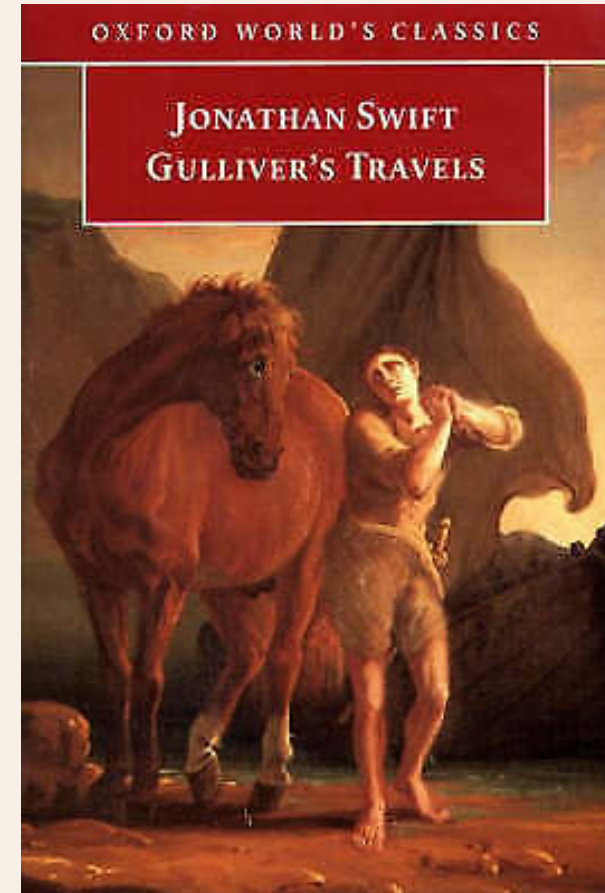
Hans Olde, *The ill Nietzsche* (1899)

Bela Tarr, *The Turin Horse* (2011)

## The Houyhnhnm, Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

The horse is also an iconic figure of dignity, truth and wisdom in Western literature, as is well known, in the final book of Swift's satire *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver encounters the Houyhnhnm, a race of intelligent horses, in a land where humans (Yahoos) are regarded as mere brutes:

'[T]he many virtues of those excellent quadrupeds, placed in opposite view to human corruptions, had so far opened my eyes and enlarged my understanding, that I began to view the actions and passions of man in a very different light, and to think the honour of my own kind not worth managing; which, besides, it was impossible for me to do, before a person of so acute a judgment as my master, who daily convinced me of a thousand faults in myself, whereof I had not the least perception before, and which, with us, would never be numbered even among human infirmities. I had likewise learned, from his example, an utter detestation of all falsehood or disguise; and truth appeared so amiable to me, that I determined upon sacrificing every thing to it. [...] I had not yet been a year in this country before I contracted such a love and veneration for the inhabitants, that I entered on a firm resolution never to return to humankind, but to pass the rest of my life among these admirable Houyhnhnms, in the contemplation and practice of every virtue, where I could have no example or incitement to vice.' (Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 262)



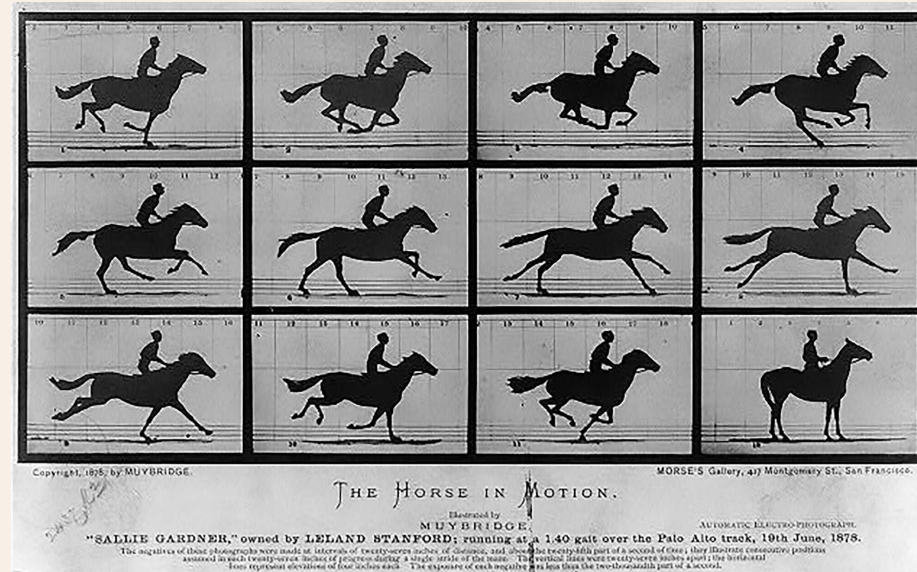
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

## The Horse and Film

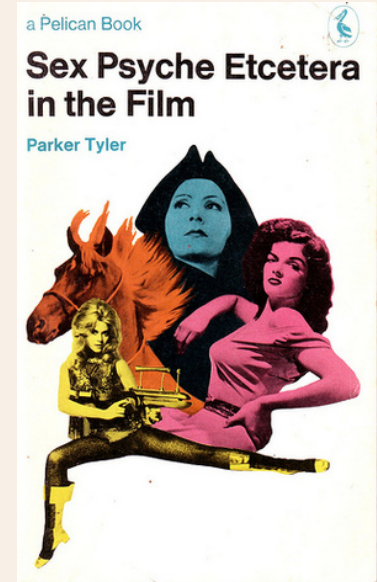
The horse is recognised as an iconic image in the history of moving-image and cinema from Eadweard Muybridge's, chronophotographic work, *The Horse in Motion*, 1878, to the ubiquitous image of the cowboy and horse as a symbol of freedom and violent domination over nature/woman/indigenous people. Reviewing the 'horse as power-symbol' in cinema, film critic Parker Tyler considered the horse as a 'totem animal' of male power: 'the riderless or untamed horse becomes a symbol for man himself' (31). Moreover, Tyler sees an accord between movement as the essence of cinema and movement as the essence of the animal:

'... it is natural that film, recorder of movement, should be the art pre-eminently glorifying animals.'

Parker Tyler, 'The Horse: Totem Animal of Male Power: An Essay in the Straight-camp style' in *Sex, Psyche, Etcetera in the Film* (Pelican, 1969), p. 29.



Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, 1878





## The Horse as Political Animal

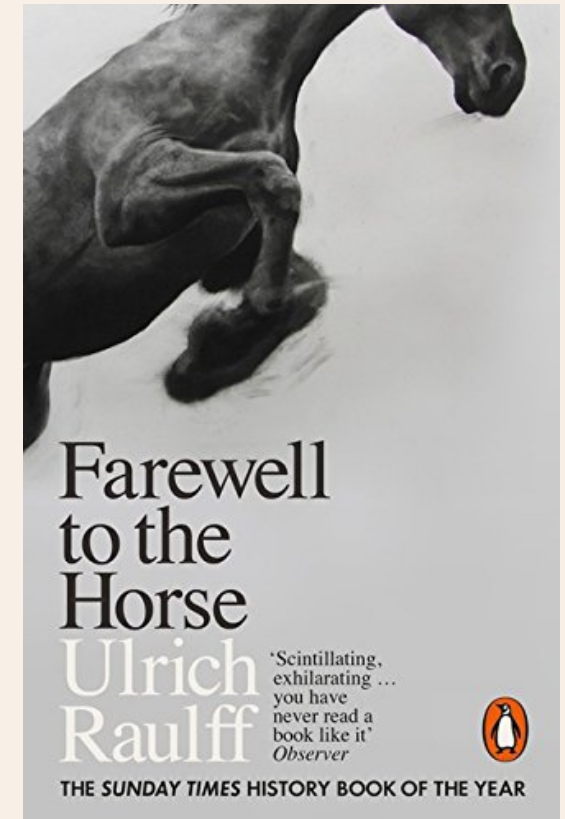
In *Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship* (2017), Ulrich Raulff claims that the horse is not only a 'living metaphor' but 'the metaphorical animal par excellence' and 'the absolute political metaphor' (228-9):

'... the metaphorical power of the horse in the symbolic realm... the horse could not only carry humans and other loads , but also abstract signs and symbols... we cannot go wrong if we describe the horse as the metaphorical animal par excellence' (229)  
Moreover, as a symbolic animal, the horse is the companion animal which most acts as a political metaphor:

'It is thanks mainly to its velocity as a vector of animal power that the horse came to be a key political ally and fellow traveller of Homo sapiens... The horse has tended to be both a functional creature and a living metaphor in the same breath. It has spread terror and also given terror a face. It has given man the capacity to seize power and to secure it, at the same time lending mankind an appropriate image of sovereignty. There has never been a need for the symbol of hegemony to switch saddles: the horse is by nature, as it were, the absolute political metaphor.' (Raulff 2017, 228)

'... the metaphorical power of the horse in the symbolic realm... the horse could not only carry humans and other loads , but also abstract signs and symbols... we cannot go wrong if we describe the horse as the metaphorical animal par excellence, though we must stress that the metaphorical animal, the figurative animal and the signifying animal always remain an inalienable part of the tangible, material reality (229-30. My italics)

However, the twentieth century oversaw the decline and eclipse of the horse as the companion-species of human economic, political, cultural and military expansion and domination. Once 'the central vector of historical land power' (Raulff 2017, 346) the horse, has all but disappeared from our daily lived reality, taking on an increasingly 'imaginary and chimeric form' (Raulff 2017, 11).



Ulrich Raulff,  
*Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship*,  
(2017)

## The Four Riders of the Anthropocene

There were four riders on the *Athens-Kassel Ride*, there were obvious associations with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, from the *Book of Revelation* (6:1–8) as depicted by Dürer, among other representations of the Biblical scene. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse represented:

War, Famine, Pestilence and Death

The four riders on the *Athens-Kassel Ride* could be described as the Four Riders of the Anthropocene, representing:

Civil War, Climate Crisis, Precarity and Mass Extinction



Albrecht Dürer, *The Four Horsemen*, from *The Apocalypse* (1498)  
Metropolitan Museum of Art