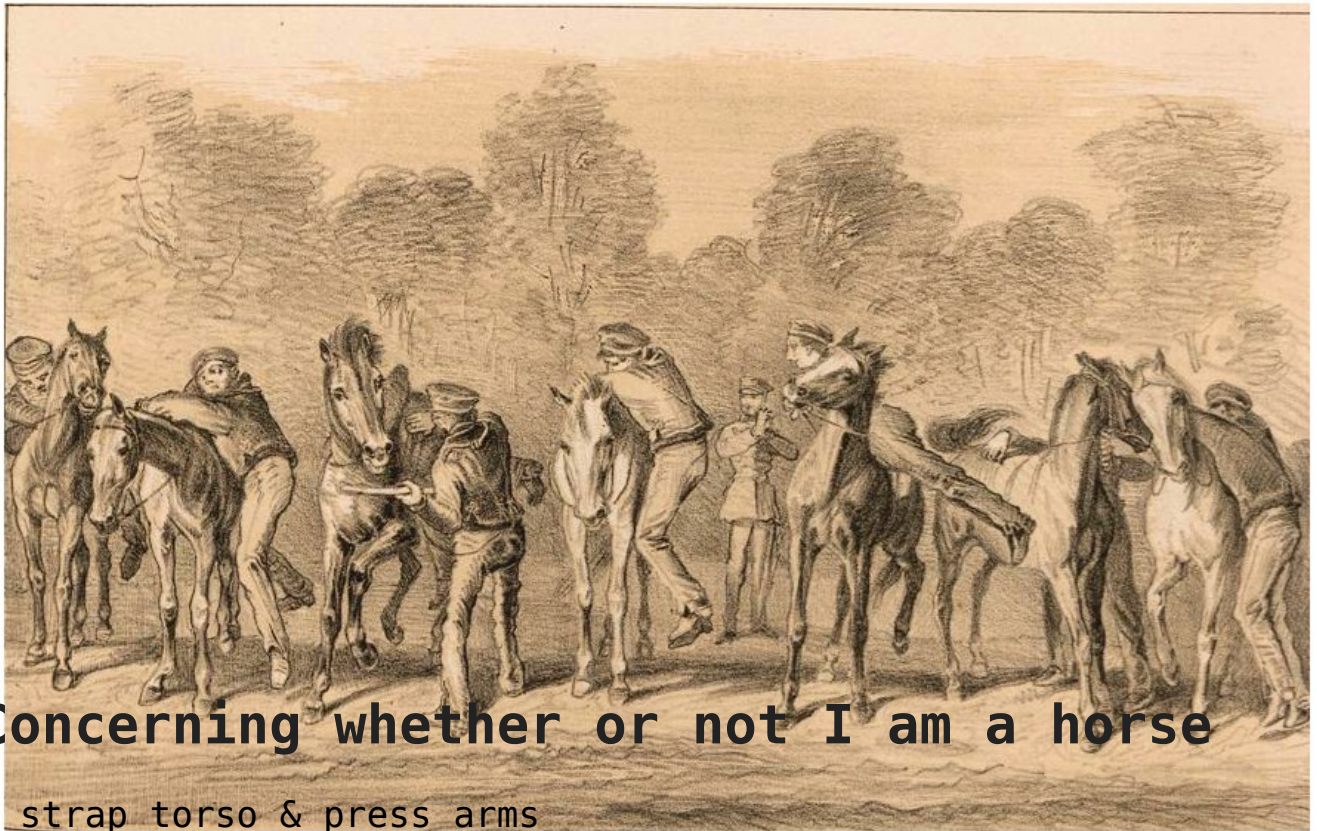


# **New Poetry by J.J. Starr**



## Concerning whether or not I am a horse

I strap torso & press arms

to diaphragm with breath

deep the distressed

voice of mistress

mumbles wishes

amid plum trees

& white headlight

bum-rushes the alleyway—

Am I a horse

kicking at its leathers?

How many full rides & how should I count?

Thought made in moonlight appearing

cogent, succinct behind glass

what makes a full ride?

Pulling hard & pulling harder, making iron  
break soil, dancing in dirt, hooves  
wet, mane draping the strength of a neck—

Am I

if no bit made better a turning  
head? No harm but tightened  
hips? & if my breast hardened by use?  
My rump sheened in sunlight

Am I a horse?

Many hands have made my length  
& I've never been bought.

Many hands have made  
my length. Many hands.

---

## God Between Us & All Harm

Lighted hallway, delighted guest,  
the television the  
lens of it, lends itself to you.  
Trump again, brackish, weighted  
eyes dilated, throat-moaning

“The beauty of me is that I'm very rich.”

Beleaguered, who can even remember a face  
these days? My grandfather used to say things  
like you can drown in a teacup of water

if you fall right. He was gladly on his way out.

Sometimes I see his point:

LSU live tiger-mascot dies of cancer at age eleven  
his empty cage strewn with flowers, paper cards  
a student says, “nobody else had a live tiger.”

company shares tumble by 8%  
top of the news feed  
taking so much light  
I’ve forgotten there’s war in Ukraine •

Afghanistan • Iraq • Nigeria • Cameroon • Niger •  
Chad • Syria • Turkey • Somalia • Kenya • Ethiopia •  
Libya • Yemen • Saudi Arabia • Egypt • India • Iran •  
Myanmar • Thailand • Israel • Palestine • Philippines •  
Colombia • Armenia • Azerbaijan • China • Bangladesh •  
DRC • Algeria • Tunisia • Burundi • Russia • Mali •  
Angola • Peru • Lebanon • Mozambique •

where &

& where else?

---

## **L asks what I think of the song**

Listening with ears pricked upon  
to Young Thug’s Wyclef Jean  
I cannot be sure where I meet it

when he says let me put it  
& I think of course not—but then  
fingering the hem of my skirt

do I reject his desire to squirt

his cum on my face slick as a ghost  
because I'm honestly or dishonestly

deposed? I want my skin touched—  
perhaps it's how he asks,  
telling me to deny my desire to bask

In the wet filth & become  
part perversion myself. Because it was me  
that morning who told

my beloved to do it & yes, I did want  
kneeling deep in the tub looking up  
all my skin like a socket, drooling mouth

blossomed, filled like a pocket.  
L said to me, You don't think  
about the implication, the intention.

I said, I don't think  
of the gesture as blind contravention  
or anything more than body & mess

upon mess in the deluge of sex. I confessed  
I want to be seen as a canvass.  
She said, I don't want to be mean,

with the swat of her hand, but  
he's no Jackson Pollack.

**Photo Credit:** [Cesar Ojeda](#)