

HORSONNETS

by

Shriram Sivaramakrisnan



A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Boise State University

May 2022

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DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

Shriram Sivaramakrishnan

Thesis Title: Horsonnets

Date of Final Oral Examination: 04 March 2022

The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Shriram Sivaramakrishnan, and they evaluated the student's presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Martin Corless-Smith, Ph.D.

Chair, Supervisory Committee

Kerri Webster, MFA

Member, Supervisory Committee

Rebecca Wolff, MFA

Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Martin Corless-Smith, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved by the Graduate College.

DEDICATION

To *Amma* and *Appa*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My heartfelt gratitude to Martin Corless-Smith and Kerri Webster for their guidance and care. Thanks also to my classmates over the years for their encouragement. This collection wouldn't have been possible without the support and generosity of my lovelies, Meredith Higgins and Lillian Jenner.

ABSTRACT

'Horsonnets' was conceived and written between September 2019 and December 2021. As the name suggests, the collection is centered around horses, as objects of desire, metaphor, tropes. The collection is structured into four sections: 'the way a horse frames blueness', 'to nurse a hurt', 'horsonnets' and 'landscape with horns'. Together, they all address different kinds of pain (horses became emblematic of that): bodily ('the way a horse frames blueness'), historical ('to nurse a hurt'), cultural ('horsonnets'), and spiritual ('landscape with horns').

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THE WAY A HORSE FRAMES BLUENESS

my pot is broken

in the beginning was my pain
in the beginning was the tendency to say *wait*
conditions for the onset of i

nothing breaks sentences like an error
nothing breaks causation like an error
you and i are so equal i can only kneel before

you
i do not know where my language stops and i
stop

if my language uses me what am i
after
in the beginning was a keypad not QWERTY

for my persistent sentencing
if i want pain i only get the keys for
pain

4 letters in a row
if i want love i only get the keys for
pain

4 letters in a row
how many keys would i need if i want to say
my pot is broken

the way a horse frames blueness

we talk about glockenspiel during our drive, pay no attention to junipers corkscrewing outside, not an evidence of unlikely events in this city of haunted vineyards rassling with Andrew Bird & the Mysterious Production of Eggs, sometimes old country music, blues blaring in fields of violet fruits, the sunlight toiling on them a subtle crowbar that pries open anything on which it lingers a little too long. a patch of square away i spot a horse, then a patch of sky between its hind and forelegs. between its legs, a horse always frames blueness this way. there is water, gushing. we search for an aquifer, find a viaduct. arches for the water to whistle through. the cocked ears of the horse point us in the direction.

to horse an I

1

slip a horse inside to des-
troy an I

the trick is made from made

2

of the three balloons in our house,
one is helioleaking
into us.

tall dark now lean
as an ostrich

pecking unkempt prufocking
next to the coffee
table, the

balloon leans in our direction
like an eager gossiper
I think-about it as the
omega
of the pack, the one that gets
left behind

3

the trick is made from made

horse an I

inside a bag of air to de-story it

psychorses

356278. Der Radiergummi is the German word for the eraser. ^{OTP to access my email.}

A numerical condom. Der Radiergummi makes space out of scribbles. ^{Are words biodegradable?}

Styrofoameaning. Der is the definite article for masculine nouns in German. ^{To bargain a margin.}

AOTPAU. Der Radiergummi does what ends in *sure*. ^{Delete → ← Backspace.}

The cold erases my nose. Definite masculine must disappear. ^{That which burrs on the paper is a rubber.}

A museum is dead things under bright lights. The English word for eraser is. ^{In the room, a bird is adorned with scratches.}

Comma is , alphabaptized. To make space out of scribbles is to space out the scribbles. ^{The translated word was lost.}

The word *translated* was lost. Rub and it will burr on the paper. ^{To erase is to rub out the written.}

The margin is running. Use an eraser and you are creating an erasure. ^{Association of OTPs After Use.}

The margin is running out of space. To be sure is to erase the worry. ^{To enjoy salad you must have had a heartbreak.}

Rubbing is burring if burring means burying by removal. ^{La sad in a salad.}

No language can be removed. To erase the written is to convert the written into eraser shavings. ^{Hum,, hmms.}

To erase is to be willing to go back to square one. Eraser shavings ≠ eraser savings. ^{.starf eniuqe wonh eW}

)!@#\$\$%^&*(). To space out something is to out-space it into the margin. ^{Free-will free will-not? free may?}

Cannot delete a language. Die is for feminine nouns in German. oed.com/oed2/00286737

To be human is to be erased. I know square one better than others. ^{Is must be available in every tongue.}

Deleting means to not magnify but mmmmmmmummify the hum^{mmmmmmmmmm}

The human ear is an erasure poem of a seahorse. We know equine farts. ^{Is language our psychosis?}

[[]]

To erase is to create the erased. For the erased, no language comes in handy. ^{356278.}

TO NURSE A HURT

1772, Ariyakuruchi, Tamil Nadu

The body is a wick. The king of Sivagangai
is flat as a horizon. Someone
whisks him into an orange plumage.

Velu Nachiyar musters nothing. She
can't plunge into the velveteen
arkness of grief, yet.

Next to her hides Vellachi Nachiyar, her
daughter, and the future heir of
Sivagangai if she lives if her mother lives.

The neighing of a horse peels the crowd.
Velu Nachiyar knows it.
Col. Joseph's men blow conch horns.

She snatches Vellachi from her tears
and gallops into the day.
There is rain. Or there is no rain.

It does not matter. Maybe she rides through
the *palai*¹ land of Sangam poetry. It does not
matter. What matters

is that her tongue is parched. What matters
is that Velu Nachiyar comes across a young
Dalit girl

herding cows. Of all the curiosities she can
have about this woman, the girl
chooses to ask *do you need*

water. It was more a statement than
a question. Velu Nachiyar
falls from her saddle, kneels before

¹ dry region, one of the five landscapes of ancient Tamil country.

the girl. The girl does not
ask again. *I only have rice water*, she says.
Velu Nachiyar takes sonorous

gulps, till there is nothing left to drink.
Do you have a name? Velu Nachiyar asks.
Udaiyal, the girl says.

Udaiyal, there are white men on horseback.
They will be here...they want my life. If they
ask you anything, please lie.

Udaiyal doesn't say anything.
The men find the girl singing to her cows.
Did you see a woman full of fear

in her eyes, fleeing on a horse?
Udaiyal does not lie. *I saw a woman.*
She was thirsty. When I gave her my pot,

she drank it like she wanted to live...
like she wanted to kill. Her eyes, I don't think
if they know fear,

she says. *You better tell us which way she went,*
they tell her. Udaiyal shows the men
her eyes.

Do you see fear? They push her. Her cows
thrum their deep bowels.
We do not have time to kill you, so tell us

which way she left and we will be
on our way, they tell her. *You will be on her*
way, the girl says.

One of them unfurls a sword from his
sheath and with a swing
of his well-oiled loyalty, chops off

her head. Her legs shake what
they cannot comprehend. The men
choose a path, follow it to the flaw.

One who doesn't

udai: dress (n), to break (v)
 -al/ar: she/he (suffixes), also
refusal, as in she who refuses

to break~Udaiyal spalls~and
 rises as *vettudaiyal kali*².
vettu: cut (v), slash (n)~She

who wears her brokenness
 for others~a dark ore
 of fierceness~headhuntress

draped in a necklace of shrunken
 skulls~some say it was
Ayyanar~the guardian of Tamils~

who in the guise of Udaiyal~
 became *vettudaiyar*
kali~with his terracotta horse

² a tribal goddess of Tamil people, also a fierce incarnation of Hindu goddess, *kali*

An eight-year worth of wait

How do you forget that which you want
to forget?

To sift through the grid of grief and find
the grief of having a grid.

The grid as a way to delay
the scream, because

sometimes a scream is all
that remains

of a stifle, which is not to
say a scream cannot

expand like a balloon but
that a scream is

orthogonal to the breath.
Cull a voice and

you will be trapped in its
echo for a life

and eight. Velu Nachiyar
waits.

1780, Sivagangai Fort, Tamil Nadu

For nine days
people arrange *golu*³ dolls on odd-
numbered steps.

Velu Nachiyar waits
for *Ayudha Puja*, the tenth day,
meant for worshipping tools.

Poets leave their quills
dunked in vials of ink. Farmers
hang their sickles

like question marks. Women
light *deepams*⁴ in their houses to ward
off evil, soldiers

surrender their weapons
for a night. Velu Nachiyar waits
for *Ayudha Puja*, the only day

the British open the Sivagangai Fort
for all
the women in the kingdom.

How many *deepams* are there in the
golu inside the Fort?
It does not matter.

What matters is that Kuyili,
Velu Nachiyar's Commander-in-Chief
of the women army,

knows that deep in the Fort
is the ammunition

³ a display of dolls and figurines in South India during the 10-day festival, *Navaratri*

⁴ a lamp, lit as a part of Hindu rituals

room.

They enter the fort, Kuyili
and her army, disguised
as civilians, a flowerpot

resting in each of their grasps.
Once inside, they break
the pots, grab the seeds

waiting to singe and throw at the
men guarding the Fort. Kuyili
climbs into a vat of ghee

kept for lighting the *deepams*, and
walks into the ammunition room.
The body is a flame.

Kotravai

the goddess with an arc
 of arms~like a peafowl's blue train of
 covert feathers~this one
 with a stag~

unearthed~with three of the
 eight arms missing~like they slithered
 away~to jostle
 with the taproots of Banyans nearby~

when he says the statue has a rural look~
 what he says is that look on her
 face~of having seen the
 dilating pupils of soldiers before the great

plunge of the sword~gleefully
 leaking their lives in nine
 cuts~to win wars~an offering
 for the dogged dogooder

of hunters and wayfaring
 robbers~before every death there will be
 a death
 under an orange striving to dry

its infinite brine
 on this spoilt land of *palai* where to wither
 is to will~sometimes
 to know a thing is to know that you cannot

know a thing~what more can we
 take into our percussive waters~this un
 earthing~is to nurse
 a hurt that never comes to pass

Aravan

to half-slither and half-surrect for *ayyan*⁵ Arjuna~to have a god eddy into a goddess~to irrupt with the goddess for a night and *udai* in 32 cuts by the dawn~to think of *nagamma*⁶ Ulupi before being severed and revered along with your horse~to the god who will lollipop your head on a pole before a conch horn signals the tenth day of the war~to watch men flaw into their plans

⁵ Tamil for father. *Ayyan-ar* in *One who doesn't* is a Father-God of Tamils

⁶ Tamil for serpentine mother goddess, from *naga* meaning snake and *amma* meaning mother

HORSONNETS

*jñānānandamayam dēvam nirmalasphaṭikākṛtiṃ
ādhāraṃ sarvavidyānāṃ hayagrīvamupāsmahē ||1 ||*

We meditate upon *Hayagrīva*, the One with the neck and face of a horse, who is the embodiment of *jñānā* (knowledge) and *ānanda* (bliss), whose form shines forth like *sphaṭik* (crystal), and who is the abode of *sarvavidyā* (all the branches of learning).

*kathādarpaḥsubhyatkathakakulakōlāhalabhavam
haratvantardhvāntaṃ hayavadanaḥṣāhalahalaḥ ||3 ||*

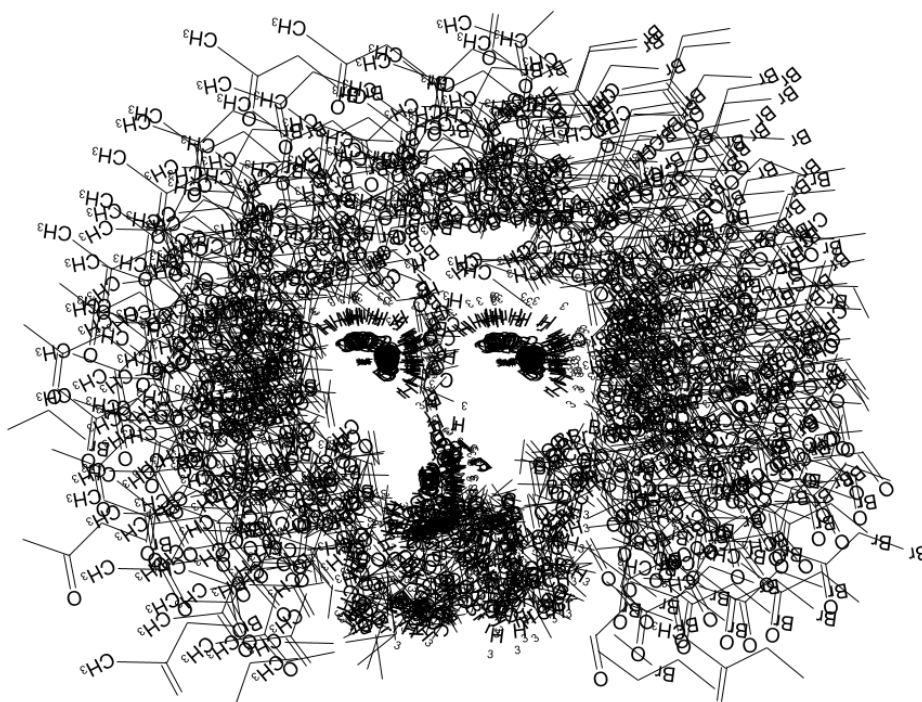
...the *halahalaḥ* sounds arising in the form of neighings from the throat of the Horse-faced God, akin to waves in the ocean of *jñānā*, may they chase away the ignorance (a-*jñānā*) from the minds of those who are driven by their own pride and arrogance.

- from Sri Hayagrīva Stotram⁷ by Vedānta Desika (1268-1369)

⁷ a poetic hymn for *Hayagrīva*, the hindu god with the head of a horse and the body of a man

T-stoff

br-br-br-bro-abro-abra-abracadabra-abracadabromo-bromo-mobro-mobrace-brace-
mobromo-mace-bromoace-bromoacetone-brokecetone-broketonne-brokentone-
brokenface-brokenvoce-brokenbroken-brokomone-br-br-brmone-bramone-bromone-
broHarmone-brokenHarmone-brokenHorses-brokensee-brokenbee-broken-brC-brH-
broH-brotH-broCh-brOCH-BrOCH-BrOCH-C₃H₅BrO-BrOhood-BrOcide-BrOmocide-
BrOmide-CHBrOcide-C₃H₅BrOcide-C₆H₄(CH₃)(CH₂Br)ocide-BrC₆C₃CH₅H₄H₃H₂ocide-
Hocide-Horside-Horsoside-brokenHalaHalas-Horsotonne-br-Horstoffnet-Horsonnet



1

Infolding, a clot into
a colt.

A hiccup at the limb
chirrup into a wing.

When a horse is born, it is asked to beat
its wings faster and

faster till the wings all but disappear for
every roving eye,

so that when the eye flits, the horse can
disappear

into its own safety. The birth of a horse
is a metaphor.

2

The first hurt
is a horsehurt

constriction of esquineophagi
dry as raisins a gradual
corking of the plosives
vowels vwl the horses halahala
while their
Bronchi xylyl: far too many H₅
-orses H₅aya-
grieve far too many H₅orses to
H₅ayagrieve

to pray when a body craves for
the release

3

Equus ferus perambulus
 as the entropy of H₅orse-
 body since the time of xnylylation.

Bone marrow molecular fibonacci

1	1	2	3	5	8
13	21	34			

jowls cherub rather than
 elongate

H₂0 H₅0

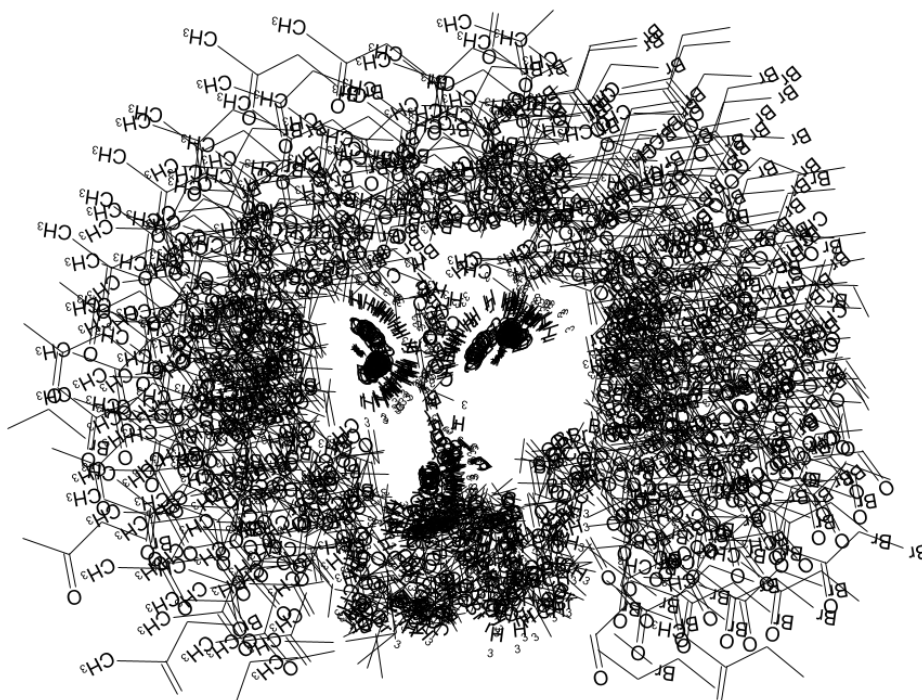
H₅0 H₂0 H₅0 rse

H₂0r seH₃0

H₄0rseH₂orse

Man is one

of the symptoms of H₅orse



4

A group of H₅orses is a house
of commons.

A house of commons is not a house for
the commons.

A group of H₅orses walked into a nightclub.

The bartender charged them a Boeing bill.

Who could blame him?

The H₅orses kept yessing their heads for
everything the bartender offered.

The DJ kept looping 'roses really
smell like poo-poo-oo'.

The H₅orses went home with roses
in their vertices.

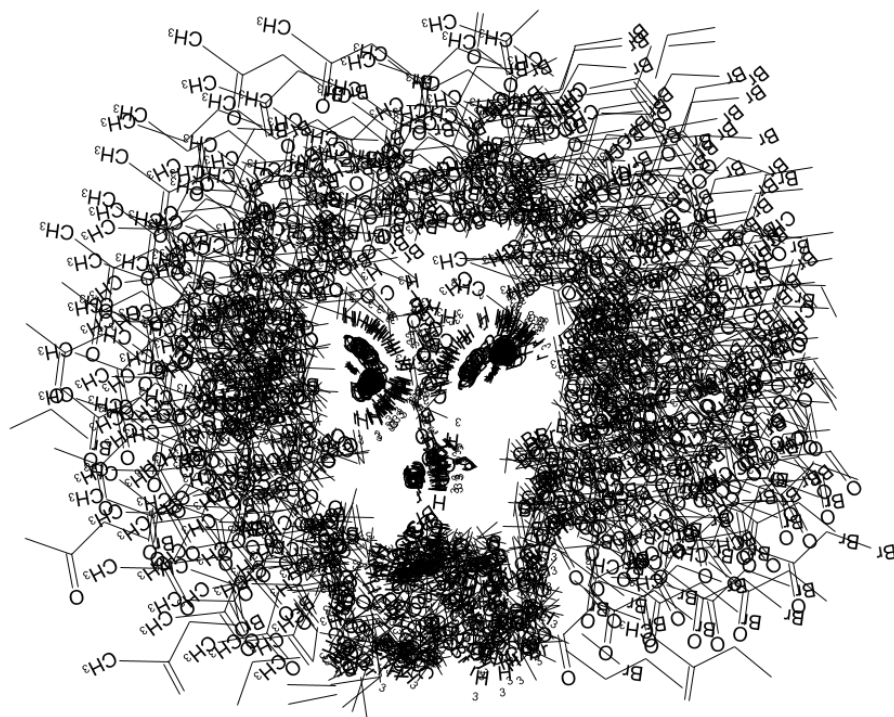
5

H₅orses smelling roses
at parks and gardens and playgrounds,
at parks and gardens and playgrounds
roses being sniffed by H₅orses.
A lawsuit was filed.
'Oh, the miasma of roses these days,'
the plaintiff said.
The H₅orses were marched down the
main street. A BANALITY OF
PERCUSSIONS, the paparazzi noted.
Two of the H₅orses in the group
were shot. When a H₅orse is blinded,
the H₅orses next to it prepare themselves.

6

A few in the group felt
they should have been blindfolded first.
The chief of H₅orses who used
to carry the mayor around
accused him of farting frequently.
'It smelled like roses,' the H₅orse said
in its plea.
'A rose is what I say it is,' the mayor
responded.
'A rose is a rose like no other rose,'
one of the H₅orses, a poet, tweeted.
The tweet garnered likes like hate.
The H₅orses were stripped of their rights.

7



8

A H₅orse without its right is a damn thing.

The H₅orses were termed 'movable benches'.

'Today, H₅orses. Tomorrow, your three-legged teapoys!' a daily headlined, to public uproar. #thregged went viral.

'Papanazi, not paparazzi,' the attorney representing the H₅orses said.

The city passed a moratorium on three-legged varieties. Anything that stood on three legs was ordered to be destroyed.

'NOW FOR THE BANALITY OF REPERCUSSIONS,' the media noted.

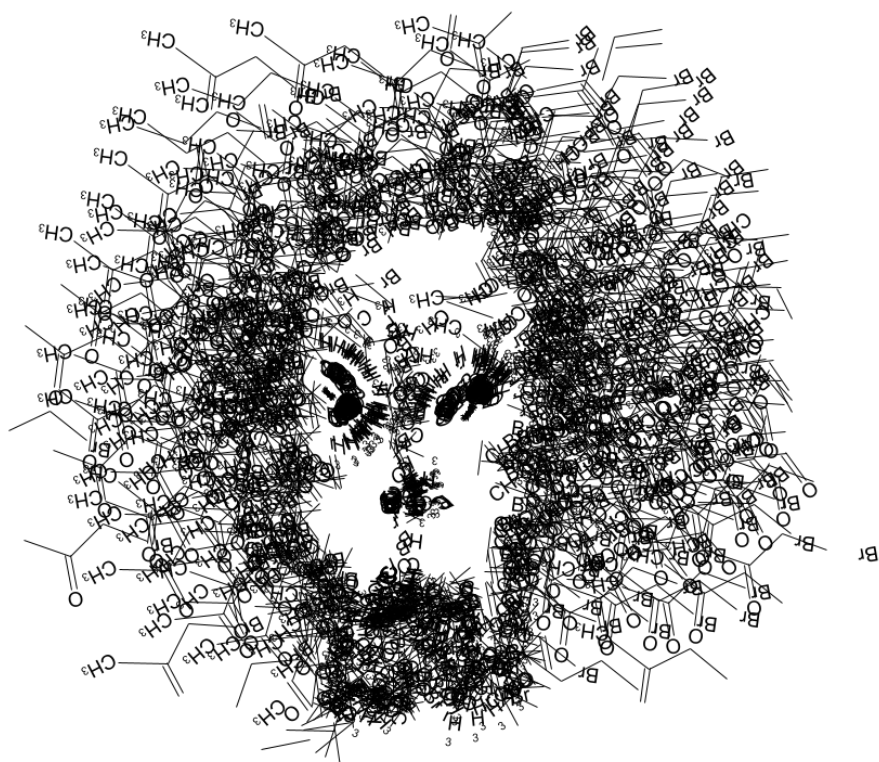
All the H₄orses that carried
so much as a niggler was killed.
Killed were also H₄orses
that had lost their legs rearing up to
enemies in warfare. 'Break a leg.
Make a log.' A billboard was erected
the next day at one of the four
entrances to the city hall, blocking
the entrance for passers-by.
One blocked, three cocked.
This building is a broken dream.
wrote the poet-H₄orse. 'You are not
horace.' Someone tweeted.

10

To draw a Horse, hold the pencil slant. Make sure the nib is pointing inward, angled towards your solar plexus, so that its other end, the blunt back, faces outward, the way a reporter shoves in a microphone at a celeb caught in a scandal, walking out of a bar. Start with yourself. Let the first point be somewhere in your torso. The rest will have to settle for the page. The last one (need not be the tip of the tail) will leap out of the page.

11

Muzzle-forehead-poll-crest-shoulder
withers-back-loin-croup-tail:
you can traverse these points in one
stroke. The bottom half is
complicated. Find a way to connect
the chin groove with throat latch
elbow knee cannon hoof heel ergot
chestnut barrel stifle...you can
leave it and say, my H₄orse is
disappearing into the whiteness
or pixelating off it. If you write
your H₄orse, you can
write it off as a bad debt.



12

#backspace #backspace #backspace
the reverse mocking of a blinking
cursor as it bulldozes language
deleting space creating space
little dolly was eating her burri
in a telly an asian actor went wha
a just-opened champagne overfl
someone's someone was yawni
next to someone's someo
a huge potato refitted with
fake angel-wings was lowere
a mother was baking brea
a certain poem was written halfw

13

Horses went to watch
The Jurassic World. After the movie,
the younger ones discussed the CGI.
The oldest in the group was lost
in thought. 'The raptor fighting
a hologram of Dilophosaurus at the
climax,' it said. 'That was just
a distraction, nothing else,' said
the youngest of the group.
'The hologram is a projection,'
another chipped in. 'That
is how it is for us,' the oldest replied.
'We will never win this fight.'

14

One of the H4orses was a news anchor.

It interviewed a puppet who sipped
a latte with triple caramel
throughout the interview.

H4orse: Are you in favor of fielding
candidates who can win you constituencies?

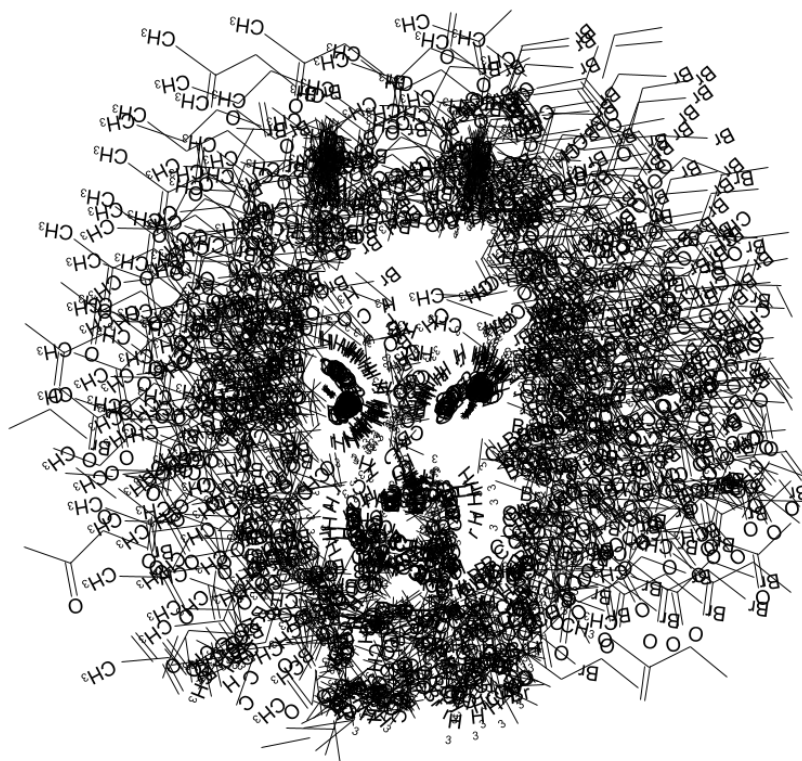
The puppet: Our candidates are from
the constituencies they represent.

H4orse: Even if they are not fit for the job?

The puppet: I believe in H4orses for courses.

H4orse: Would you field a H4orse?

The puppet: What can I say? I am
a conscientious objector.



15

H4orse: Whose decisions are you objecting to?

(There was no more latte to be sucked.

The puppet piped the straw.)

H4orse: Who are you objecting to?

The puppet: lrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlrlr...

H4orse: Mr. con-

scientious objector, I have with me an

excerpt from a talk you gave a few years ago.

In it, you said— and I am quoting you—

‘there are people and there are poople’.

What did you mean by that?

The puppet: There are those who work

and those who enjoy the gain.

16

H4orse: Were you referring to the...

The puppet: I was referring to those who can move but won't, for the love of God, groove.

H4orse: That is one strange combination of words, speaking of which, at the recent cabinet meet, you have proposed for the inclusion of 'new words' into the constitution.

The puppet: I ask myself, how can we build an inclusive society if our language cannot accommodate the disadvantaged, the misfits?

17

H₃orse: Among those words, there is a *H₃orsed*.

The puppet: If you are H₃orsed, you are being given a special status of equality.

H₃orse: Are you saying that to be treated as an equal will soon become a privilege?

The puppet: Isn't that a privilege already?

H₃orse: I am not sure how to continue without getting offended.

The Puppet: That's the privilege. You can feel bad and say it so too.

H₃orse: Last question. Why did you name your dog, *bow*?

18

The puppet: Is that a problem now?

H₃orse: Every time your dog barks, she is in effect calling herself.

The puppet: What do you mean?

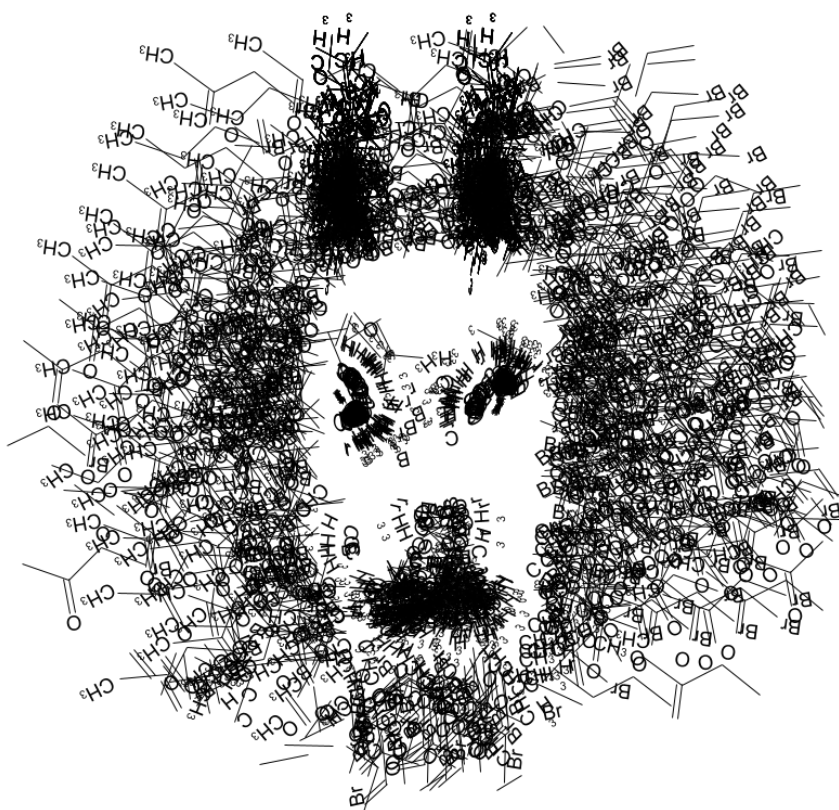
H₃orse: Thank you.

(The puppet throws the empty glass)

The H₃orse was terminated from the job.

A giant effigy of the H₃orse was burnt outside its house. 'A H₃orse is burning still,' the poet-H₃orse journaled.

'A H₃orse is burning still. The onlookers and the passers-by fill up the street with the inadequacy of themselves.



19

Their eyes calibrate
aggression but it remains inert as an introverted
virus. Only the fire gallops,
rearing the entire lot of its forelegs as they grow
as and when they grow out
of the H₃orse.'

Someone phished it from
the H₃orse's cloud and leaked it online
with a new title:

A GROUP OF H₃ORSES IS A CH₃ORUS.

The H₃orse-symbol irked the mayor.
He called the poem an 'elegy to the
Democracy.'

20

If the misspelling was an oversight, the mayor's office did not acknowledge it. Instead, 'Time to fire the poople,' the mayor tweeted. His PR guy was fired from the job. One of the party loyalists fired a shot at the editor of the news agency that had quoted the mayor, with a wadcutter. Nobody saw it. Earwitnesses claimed the shot boomed like a hoofbeat. The mayor issued a gag order on hoofbeats.

21

No tomtoms to be played after 6 PM.

No percussion instruments.

The H₃orses were retrofitted

with velveteen U-shoes

tufted from the finest yarns. Special
status.

The Committee of Equestrian

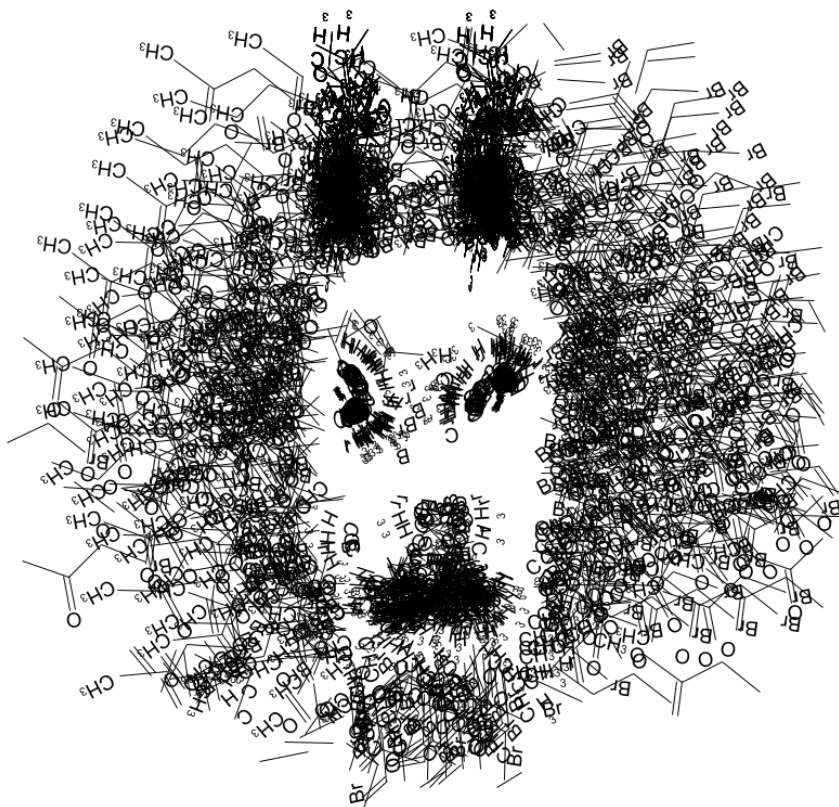
Affairs, to be headed by

an Eld, was formed. Elds were

H₃orses

whose ancestors were H₃orassed to
embrace

different identities.



22

Elds bridle their necks with braces
to prevent yessing. Elds don't talk.
Elds don't neigh. Elds wear
anklets bejeweled with bells. Elds
clasp their mouths
with bandanas. Elds worship
beehives. Elds behave.
Elds do not masturbate. Elds
bipedal. Elds hum to
reprove. Elds clip their wings.
Elds hate the solo bone
in their foreheads. Elds
vote.

23

The Eld chairing the committee
was unpinioned on the left.
Its right-wing, the Eld loved.
Stomped stopped
stomped stopped, H₃orses
doffed their U-shoes
stomped stopped
stomped stopped
near the city council.
TAKE BACK H₃ORSED.
GIVE BACK THE JOB!
the placards said.
Velveteen draped the bins.

24

Do H₃orses cry, the mayor wanted
to know.

H₃orses have no tear gland,
someone said. Not true, someone
else said. H₃orses do bleed,
the Eld noted.

The first of the gas canisters fell
that noon. The H₃orses fled
in a rain of hoofbeats. Thirteen
died. It was dubbed

The Riot. A task force, headed by
a panjandrum, was formed
to investigate it.

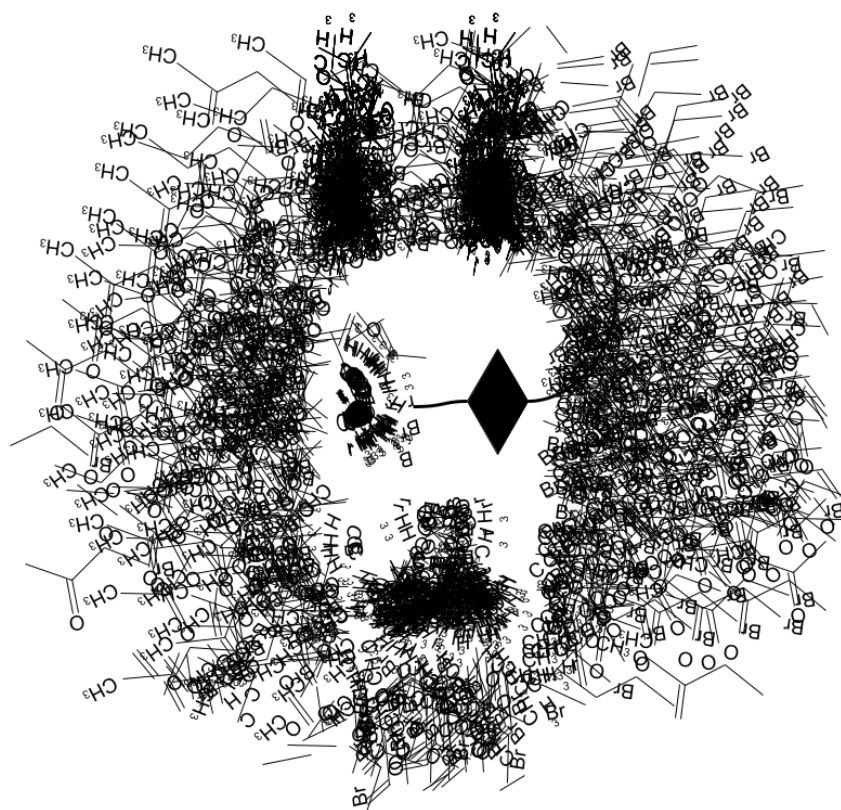
25

The committee questioned the Eld
on The Riot.

Horses are constitutionally
permitted to protest,
the panjandrum said.

The issue, noted the Eld, is
with us, is with our idea of
entitlement. Our belief that
we all deserve good things
in life betrays what we deserve.

Things happen to us
regardless of our beliefs, noted
the Eld.



26

Are you saying H₂orses deserve
everything that happens
to them, and so
not bemoan? asked the panjandrum.
hummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
mmm...stop making that noise.
We need an explanation.
Sint ferae, noted the Eld. What?
Sint ferae. Equus ferus
perambulus, noted the Eld.
If you want to make
a point, please do so in a language
we can understand.

27

De animantibus, non de hominibus!
noted the Eld.

You are wasting everyone's
time, said the panjandrum.

Of living things, not of men, noted
the Eld.

If you are talking about the
H₂orses, I must confess
it is strange to hear it from an Eld.
But we are not here to
discuss your beliefs. If I hold you
responsible for The Riot, can you
deny it, the panjandrum asked.

28

I hold myself accountable for not
culling The Riot before it
reached the street leading
to the hospital.

Fifteen patients
died because hoofbeats outlubbed
their heartbeats, noted
the Eld.

The Riot happened because
you gave permission to deploy T-
stoff. With velveteen shoes,
the H₂orses could have dissolved
silent as a flock.

29

'Thirteen.

Fourteen.

Fifteen.

Velveteen.'

the poet-H₂orse wrote in its wall

two days before

The Riot. Three

days after

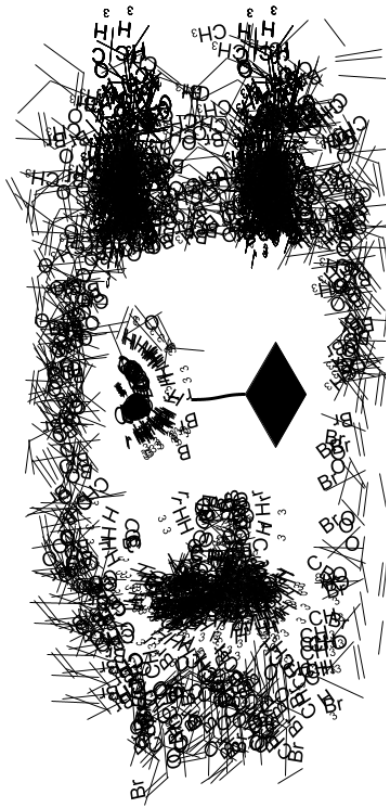
The Riot, the poet-H₂orse was

arrested for instigating

The Riot, booked

for sedition and sentenced for

a public execution.



30

Horses don't spread-eagle when
they fall.

T-

frames will not work.

They clap their limbs, one-sided
like a closed book.

Only their tongues
stick out, a rotting bookmark of
their fall.

t-

frames will. The poet-

Horse was strung on a t-frame,
its muzzle kissed the sky.

31

It licked honey
around its lips. The entire body
was smeared in it. The frame
was left in the middle of the buzz
of fifteen broods
of bees, as per the mayor's orders.
The death of a metaphor is
sweetness
and a H₂orse-shaped
catacomb, gnawed
by the bees gnawed
for the bees.
A beehive.

32

The Eld resigned the next day,
citing a conflict
of interest. All the
Other Elds in the cabinet
resigned in solidarity.
I WAS FORCED.

The Eld tweeted and everyth—
 overflowed
 yawning
 someone
 lowered
 bread
 halfway

33

-benzylic

a substituent or molecular fragment
possessing the structure

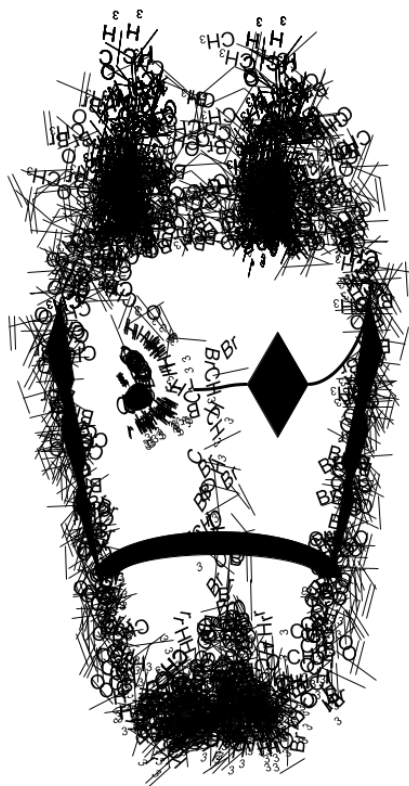


or CH_2 attached to a \bigcirc benzene ring
hexagonal honeycomb benzylic methyl
benzyl bromide beehive.

A group of horses once stood at
a T-signal crossing.

Green dot to Red palm to White
man to Green dot to Red palm...
this was no Abbey Road.

The horses did not do a Beatles.



LANDSCAPE WITH HORNS

Landscape with Horns

little fading game
 the beige of a mourning yet this
 attempt to creep into
 a pliable pose try again

little occupant of this hush land
 mooring
 yet your antagonizing
 verbose try again

little strutting reality
 dwell in your antlered possibilities
 the sky between
 your legs try again

residual scapetoad of myrrhymns
 siege
 the abundant aquifer of my pain
 this trial again

a slice of a slice of your silhouette
 poly brittle
 you bereave this fading yet fading
 still cry pluck your compass

the horizon the

in the fall
our desires elongate

prick at all the
prying fingers & ojas

galumphing
in their orbs

all that pry is a prayer
that which pricks is a

branch
a swelling wilts

the horizon the
horizon

leaps from branches
to branches

elongates our desires
fall in the

in the dark

I plant an oak of sound, chiseled as an echo |
 an oakrobber I am

my language a vast lumberyard of tall hurts |
 when *amma*⁸ asked

me to peep into a pot of oil, she only wants |
 me to meet the end

of my own stare, catch & cancel the evil eye |
 I caught skypatches

behind me, a forever
 yawn framing an oak —

a compass, wilting tilting in its reach towards |
 the light the light

⁸ Tamil for mother

the deer sacrifice

this must stop/ this obsession with writing poems in which a poet driving on a deserted stretch of road meets a deer crossing it/ their eyes lock for a fleeting instant before the deer disappears into the bushes or disappears under the car/ the poet behind the wheel turns right through his life to that moment/ wakes up on random mornings to find himself looking into the eyes of the deer/ into the shrunken inversion of himself held by the optical apparatus of the deer/ the deer for its part plays no role except as an object of introspection/ it can escape the collision if it can fall into a ditch elsewhere & puncture the oil joints of its body or sell its assemblage of bones to a faithful paw for a quick death & attract a bonnet of flies/ but the deer lets its eyes shine bright with the headlights of a car & holds that glow till it fades into a fire across the folding body/ the deer is the perfect corollary to Schrödinger's cat/ it meets the same fate despite falling in the poet's line/ of sight the poet ekes out his days thinking a little deer-blood is inevitable/ his poem a bonnet of lies\ a deer saunters across his path unwilling to budge\ their eyes lock for a fleeting instant but the instant flees faster than the deer\ the deer should have known this but there are stars in its eyes\ constellations all over its body\ night in its marrow\ the poet brakes hard\ the bumper of his car biffs into the ribs of the deer\ the poet gives the deer its breathing space\ a little pocket to breathe one last time\