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# Decollations

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# DECOLLATIONS

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# DECOLLATIONS

by

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## THESIS

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## Introduction

In Don Quixote, Cervantes' protagonist criticizes the translations of his age by claiming: "*Me parece que el traducir de una lengua en otra... es como quien mira los tapices flamencos por el revés, que, aunque se veen las figuras, son llenas de hilos que las escurecen, y no se veen con la lisura y tez de la haz*" (483). This threadbare quotation fits not only with my idea of translation, but also of art in general, insofar as I find myself presenting the audience with an almost inverse representation of a presupposed likeness, a set of disparate strung passages which only form a complete representation in their relationships to each other and to the audience.

Thus settling with the metaphor of the writer of *Decollations* as a *tapicero*, I will recount how each phase in the weaving process relates to a section within the collection as well as to the artistic process that I myself have taken when writing. Thereby, I hope to establish the Proustian, fractal-like manner in which certain processes repeat in each section and how by virtue of their relationship with other processes, particular concepts manifest themselves in a number of different ways: namely, the concepts of "gapping" and "relationships as substance."

To begin, the string for me serves metaphorically as the articulated, poetic devices an artist uses. Just as an individual string is composed of interwoven threads whose dilatory beginnings and premature ends don't affect the integrity of the whole, I attempt to accomplish these same sorts of intertwined relationships between the poetic elements of sound, image and lexical fields within each of the individual poems, and across the collection itself.

For example, "Fixed Love Beyond Side Effects," which is itself a "panoramic" translation of Quevedo's "*Amor constante más allá de la muerte*," attempts to weave together the sonic strands of a doctored sonnet, the lexical strands of posterity and medicine, and the imagistic strands of vials and their contents. While each of these fail to fully embroider the poem

by forming a consistent pattern or by existing throughout the entire poem, I hope these fragments might reference each other and thereby constitute another level of significance through their relationships with each other; and so this doctored sonnet should allude to a doctored art and society, the vials of medicine which might reference a vile posterity, etc.

Furthermore, I attempt to accomplish a similar dynamic within the entire collection regarding the images, lexical fields and sounds which reappear throughout the work. For instance, the concept of glass as it relates to vision and reflections reoccurs imagistically (e.g.: the hot glass of “Chewing Gruel”), sonically (e.g.: *Douglas* in “Where Are You in Your Relationship?”), and semantically (e.g. the snow globes of “Shun the Wheel”) throughout “Decollations.” In this case, I strive to establish how vision and reflections are evolving throughout the work by demonstrating how the glass in each poem relates differently with other concepts within and across poems. For instance, with the glass clouds and fragments, I hope to reinforce the idea of an untrustworthy experience of reality and of self.

Put in a different way, repetition is never truly repetition. Each reoccurring image, sound and lexical field should remind the reader how in fact it has changed. Frank Glass, for example, when considering the bar form, conceives of the *Aufgesang* as parents which generate a discrete *Abgesang* that demonstrates the difference between the two parents (178). Alice Fulton also addresses this process:

Poetry is a form of extrasexual procreation. Rather than trying to duplicate reality, it emerges from the amniotic of what-is with its own solidity. It grows out of experience without recounting experience. It isn't mimetic, but it isn't fashioned from whole cloth either. Out of the chronic wilderness it comes. (104)

## Prologue: The Likeness

My subject is not so much Pope's "Nature methodiz'd" and definitely not Blake's "Four-fold Man"; rather, it perhaps most resembles Coleridge's "*Natur-geist*." Resembling the concepts (and misunderstandings of) Platonic idealism, Jung's primordial mood, and Lacan's *imaginaire*, what I will henceforth refer to as a likeness bears a resemblance to Eliot's use of the objective correlative: "the presence of some outward object, predetermined to correspond to the preexisting idea in its living power, [which] is essential to the evolution of its proper end" (Allston 16). It is that which we imaginarily see before language and throughout our lives: the ubiquitous images of a woman, apple and man, which represent for the Hebrews the exile from paradise and for the Greeks the judgment of Paris; psychologically, likenesses are the primordial archetypes inspiring a child to repeatedly re-enact his mother's leaving by casting a wooden reel behind a curtain and alternating *os* when it disappears with *das* when it returns (Freud 12).

The reader of *Decollations* may find a parallel between my attempts at representing a likeness with my attempts at translating Quevedo's sonnets and Japanese kanji. For instance, here I'd like to stress the relational substance which constitutes both the likeness and the original work. Paris isn't Paris without Hera, Athena and Aphrodite; there's no Adam without Eve; Agata only exists through her relationship with Gnese (q.v. "I Read It for the Articles"). Likewise, within Quevedo's "*Amor constante más allá de la muerte*," the soul, veins and marrow have significance only in relation to their transformations into incorporeality, ashes and dust. Furthermore, the word 解< in Japanese has significance only with respect to its interacting images of a cow being sheared of its horns, its semantic meaning of "to solve, untie, or comb," and its sonic homophonic connections to "to explain," "profit," "shelter," "virtue," "quickly," and "to dissolve in nirvana."

Thereby approaching all my poems as works of translation in some sense to capture the likeness-self/*tapicero*-tapestry dynamic, I utilize a kind of distancing or gapping that I came to fully understand in my earliest attempts at literary translation. The intricate word play used by Quevedo led me to back away from the literal meaning of his phrases and to opt for phrasing that would preserve similar functions or relationships (e.g. Quevedo's *vizcondes* becomes *Camreign* in "Diagnosis of a Cross-Eyed, Color-Blind Woman"). Thereby, these seemingly "loose" translations become for me "panoramic" ones.

Thus, I believe that the artist wishing to represent a landscape must first sufficiently distance himself from the subject. Only then might he perceive and capture the whole and the relations among its elements. A similar lesson may be drawn from Arachne's losing to Minerva: she failed not for a lack of skill, but for her proximity to her subject. This resulted in my taking upon a persona which would serve in the same way, placing a gap between myself and the likeness I sought to capture. Using the likes of Eliot's escape from personality, Keats' informing and filling another body, and Yeats' mask, I could freely explore the archetypal relationships between, say, a son abandoned to his father, while using language, imagery, and a past not bound to my own autobiography. And so while I am not a 16 year-old-girl or Jewish man, the separation these personas afforded me allowed me nearer to the likenesses I wished to render. In effect, the persona becomes better able to fulfill the objective correlative insofar as it provides the necessary "set of objects, situation, [or] chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion" (Eliot 58).

Returning to the tapestry metaphor, I found that the same sort of distancing occurs on the micro-level. Just as the *tapicero* passes his thread all the way through and around the canvas, i.e. the concept, before it returns to the next entry point, the poet can divert the written poetic

elements of sound, imagery, and lexical fields around a given concept. Thus, though the passage seemingly took a long and oblique path, it nonetheless can return remarkably close to where it began. And so I embraced the estrangement techniques exemplified in the works of Plath and Cumming to better approach the individual concepts within each poem: just as Freud believed that a psychoanalyst could get at the truth of a psyche by having the patient reveal what is “farthest from their mind,” and every Arabic word has a basic meaning, a second meaning which is the exact opposite of the first, a third meaning which refers to either a camel or horse, and a fourth meaning that is so obscene that you'll have to look it up for yourself. Therefore, hoping to use verbs like “felt” within phrases like “eyelashes felting bottle rims”, which seemingly undercuts the general tone of “\$ Cows,” I attempt to better approach the violent yet intimate undertones of the poem through the word’s lexical connections to “feel” and its sonic connection to “pelt.”

Furthermore, the gap between entries and exits within the tapestry come to represent the transformative abilities of poetry I seek to capture. I recall understanding this after reading Komunyakaa’s “After Summer Fell Apart” and realizing how the initial imagery (i.e. the inability of touching) slips through a world of imagery and sound before returning to a similar yet undeniably different place (i.e. touching something unably). Thus, the distance between where the thread exits and enters is where the spark of poetry occurs, and as if obeying Paschen’s law, the distance between beginnings and ends must be sufficiently close, but not too close, to form an electric arc. In Komunyakaa’s poem, I found that the spark was successful insofar as it affords the reader with enough space to enter in and acknowledge the tragic dramatic irony of the speaker’s situation. I attempt similar moves, for example, in “Room 513,” in which the speaker(s) is/are unaware of each other and his/their conflicting desires.

## Act I: The Broken Likeness

Within this section I hope to represent the kind of art in which the artist renders a sort of emptiness or unsaid significance so that the readers come to experience or fulfill that void themselves. Exemplars of this form include Lyn Hejinian who advocates for an open text and Li Young Li who speaks around certain silences. Wallace Stevens refers to this process in “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” expressing Keats’ negative capability through the speaker and artist’s ability to revel “in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (32).

These poets demonstrate to me the obligation of poetry to hollow out its sonic patterns, to invoke contrasting imagery and to manipulate semantics. If we are to represent a compromised reality, our art must suffer appropriate compromises; hence, a conflicted relationship, for example, between an ambassador and his daughter should be characterized by interruptions and asides.

But the concept of a hollowed-out poetry evolved beyond modernism, coinciding with society’s disenchantment with the modes of the past. Concerning the psychological relationship between the ego and the likeness as explored by Lacan in his analysis of the *imaginaire*, I begin to understand how these embedded psychological images could sabotage an individual. Refraining from my own personal experience, I sought to portray a similar situation, for example, with the woman in “Love-less Ghazal” who chooses to identify with other women, including even Tours’ *La Madeleine à la veilleuse*, to the point of staying in an unfulfilling relationship. Thereby, the hollowness of poetry—particularly in its imagistic, sonic, and lexical diversions—becomes the fitting instrument of representing the hollow organ of reality, that is, the fact that those likenesses to which we are drawn have demonically led us astray.

To stretch the metaphor further, poets play upon the hollow organ to reflect the self's own hollowness:

*Tu n'as jamais été, dans tes jours les plus rares,  
Qu'un banal instrument sous mon archet vainqueur,  
Et, comme un air qui sonne, au bois creux des guitares,  
J'ai fait chanter mon rêve au vide de ton cœur.* (Bouilhet 34)

So just as the speaker enters into and supplements what he believes to be an incomplete, desirable woman, only by virtue of the analogous unspoken relationship between the artist/persona and the art form can the representation be complete. Referring back to the concept of relationship as substance, I defer to similar concepts of the self as a set of relations, including Kierkegaard's *selvet* and Pascal's *moi*. Calling it a dialectic vortex, Adorno also reinforces this in the context of art:

Even objectified the work remains a developing process by virtue of the propensities active in it. Conversely, the parts are not something given, as which analysis almost inevitably mistakes them: rather, they are centers of energy that strain toward the whole on the basis of a necessity that they equally perform. The vortex of this dialectic ultimately consumes the concept of meaning. (178)

In effect, the aforementioned hollowness and incompleteness of the poetry thereby calls for a good amount of dissonance. Besides the already aforementioned contrast exemplified through estrangement, poetry demands a reprieve from its predictable patterns, for "dissonance is the truth about harmony [and] art whatever its material, has always desired dissonance" (Adorno 145). Even referring back to the my most influential and seemingly formal era in art, Nietzsche claims:

The Baroque style rises at the time of decay of a great art, when the demands of art in classical expression have become too great. It is a natural phenomenon which will be observed with melancholy—for it is a forerunner of the night—but at the same time with admiration for its peculiar compensatory arts of expression and narration. (246)

I interpret this as an offense against form. It is that which reinforces the incompleteness or hollowness of the poem, refers to the relationship-as-substance motif and invokes the existence of a reader who can fulfill that void. Wagner, certainly decollated from the Baroque, accomplished similar feats in opera. For example, Kundry's libretto restrained itself from revealing what the music of the lullaby already betrayed: a desire for Parfisal to return to a childlike dependence on her. Regarding poetry, understatement naturally invoke the unstated, and sprung rhythm allows for a subconscious internal meter: Stephen Dunn, for example, tends to create lines of almost equal length to create a unique rhythm and consistently strews poems with understatement, like those in "The Imagined" wherein directions to the museum and "times to not talk about it" whisper so clearly that they echo. I have also tried to accomplish something similar with imagined rhyme. For instance, "Love-less Ghazal" attempts at illustrating how the coached repetition of similar sounding words might hopefully induce the subconscious expression of the unsaid *radif* (i.e. "clove" and "glove" but no "love"). With moves like these, I hoped to have the reader actively participate in the creation of the work, as if, in the aforementioned case, the reader were the audience who shouted the refrain, thereby allowing the poet to refrain from doing so.

## Act II: The Role of Desire

This segues to the concept of representing art forms that become complete through their relationship with the speaker's and reader-listener's desire. Returning to the artist as *tapicero* metaphor, I envision that the reverse image of Cervantes' Flemish tapestry depicts disparate threads that the reader connects into a cohesive representation not only through the recognition of an unspoken pattern (e.g. a base rhythm, an obliquely invoked image, an unspoken refrain), but also through the recognition of what the speaker and reader want from the representations they experience.

I hoped to accomplish this through the portrayal of speakers looking back at lost likenesses and finding themselves unable to reconcile themselves to them, whether it is through a job applicant's relationship with his commercial past, a father's with his estranged son or a woman's with her lost lover. Therefore, I attempted to express not only that art pertains to inability in some way (e.g. Cage's having nothing to say but saying it), but also that the distance and relationship between reality and the expectation represents desire itself. Imogen-like, the artist looks to his subject:

I would have broke mine eye-strings; crack'd them, but  
To look upon him, till the diminution  
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle,  
Nay, follow'd him, till he had melted from  
The smallness of a gnat to air, and then  
Have turn'd mine eye and wept. (*Cymbeline* I.iv.22-7)

Thereby, his and the reader's desire grows proportionately with distance from the desired object.

And so in keeping with the principles of gapping, I also attempt to practice restraint in tone and revelation, so that by placing obstacles and boundaries between the artist and likeness, speaker and other, and reader-listener and understanding through plot and emotion, a different

spark of poetry might occur, one that speaks to the psychological need to wish that things weren't as they were.

Regarding the restrained tone, I heeded Barthelme's call to silence an existing rhetoric particularly within this section and refrained from the use of the media-driven voice and opted instead to consider art as a "struggle between law of form and the anarchic resistance" (Adorno 3). Thereby, I attempted to exemplify the struggle among the linguistic demands of poetry, logic and desire by employing montage. Through this brokenness or inability to satisfy all these demands, I sought to create a void which has a form all its own:

The articulation, by which the artwork achieves its form, also always coincides in a certain sense with the defeat of form... Artworks... that negate meaning must also necessarily be disrupted in their unity; this is the function of montage, which disavows unity through the emerging disparateness of the parts at the same time that, as a principle of form, it affirms unity... [in montage the] negation of synthesis becomes a principle of form. (Adorno 146)

Hence, in a shameless attempt to present the concept visually, "The Declension of the Halo" balances the demands of logic (e.g. the legibility left to right and column-wise) with the demands of musicality (e.g. the nursery rhyme quality of "ring around a posing").

With respect to the restraint in revelation, the persona-based poets provided me with the idea of the self as a kind of reluctant soothsayer. Interestingly, though Marvin Bell claimed that poetry is the telling of elegant lies, some literary criticism reveals that though the poet may not be "genuine," the voice is. Like Iago who deceives Othello by recounting how Cassio groped him as though Iago were Desdemona, these lies reveal the truth about the desires of the liar.

Hence, the narratives in this collection are certainly not accurate, but the machinations of the narrative voices hopefully achieves something genuine.

To accomplish this, I find the use of line and double entendre to be the most helpful in conveying some sort of inadvertent truth through a speaker. Perhaps in no better place do I find an example than in Posthumous' monologue in which he would condemn Imogen and all women for what he believes to be her infidelity but manages to deliver such lines:

Is there no way for men to be, but women...  
The Dian of that time; so doth my wife...  
But what he look'd for should oppose and she  
Should from encounter guard. Could I find out  
The woman's part in me! For there's no motion  
That tends to vice in man but I affirm... (*Cymbeline*, II.v.154,159,170-3)

And so even when using a media-driven voice, I attempted to use line and double entendre to convey the desire and tragedy lurking beneath, so that lines like “sent securely by mail, your samples dilute / in a host of databases: people like you...” might undermine the commercial message of “DNA: Do Not Ask” and reinforce the shallow conventionality of defining oneself on genetic terms.

Of course, the realization of such misunderstanding on the level of line and tone suggests that the reader knows what should be understood. André Morellet describes it as such:

*Il faut qu'il y ait un moment où nous ignorions qu'on nous trompe, et un moment où nous sachions qu'on nous a trompés ; un moment où nous croyons voir la nature, et un autre où nous apercevons l'art qui fuit et se cache, mais qui, comme la bergère de Virgile, Se cupit antè videri... C'est peut-être à cette alternative soutenue d'illusions et de détrompemens... que nous sommes redevables des plus grands plaisirs que les arts nous procurent. (398)*

And so my reluctant soothsayer becomes a *détrompeur* instead; his projected, likeness-orientated self wishes to be seen through the alternations between a seemingly genuine tone and a clearly fabricated plot, through the tension between the content of the prose and the lines of the poetry.

Furthermore, the whole function of line work fittingly revolves around the idea of time: as in what the reader first reads or hears in relation to what is stated afterwards. Appropriately, loss and desire as it invariably relates to time fits here as well. Therefore, we can establish its relationship not only to memory, but also to music and myth. Lévi Strauss, for instance, understood music and myth as both simultaneously diachronic and synchronic. In music, sounds follow each other diachronically, but “because of the internal organization of the musical work, the act of listening to it immobilizes passing time; it catches it and enfolds it as one catches and enfolds a cloth flapping in the wind” (16). Likewise, in myth (as which I believe poetry functions in its representation of distant likenesses), bundles of items resonate with each other and thereby transcend the time in which they are iterated. Grisèle Brelet similarly notes how tone affects a union between remembrance and expectation: “it makes us live in that metaphysical time in which evolution is the captive of the eternal present” (Lippman 447). In the same way, the reverse image of the tapestry can lend itself to the optical illusions utilizing negative space and depicting more than one image at once. Yet moving beyond creating multiple significances through line and word play, I aim at a kind of polyphonic voice, so that the reader-listener shares the experiences with the speaker. Though that statement seems banal at this point, it does require that poetry consistently understate and have voices who have distanced themselves from explicit emotions. In effect, “consciousness does not ignore a feeling; it disowns that feeling” (Collingwood 218). Therefore, I attempted to characterize this section and the entire collection for that matter as one in which multiple speakers exist, many of whom are expressing or

demonstrating their inability linguistically, socially, and psychologically to reach a true language, the desired, or a likeness.

Perhaps a better artistic equivalent lies in the Japanese concept of *ma*, 間, of which it was said of Noh theatre:

Nowadays space is often described as positive or negative... Both kinds of space exist in Noh: negative space [*ma*] is the stillness and emptiness just before or after a unit of performance, positive space is produced by stage properties and by the dramatic activities of performers... The two kinds of space are connected by time... While there may be empty, or negative time, there will never be unsubstantial, uncreative or uncreated time. (Fu 59)

Thereby, the said components of the speaker coupled with the unsaid invoked in the reader-listener should produce some semblance of a whole; after all, only by having a hole or emptiness can anything be desired. Thus, the presented poetry acts as illusory contours mapping something only pathetic desire can reify. Perhaps I demonstrated this most pronouncedly in “Callbacks,” as the speaker finds herself addressing that desired image or person in her life, but must continually pull back from her expression and in so doing contours a hollow representation that the reader-listener can perceive.

### Act III: Language as Likeness

However, the reliance upon both language and the reader by an unable or broken speaker or poetic form leads to a sickness-unto-death like quandary: as the poet attempts to render a likeness and the speakers attempt at regaining the desired, both have no choice but to utilize an equally compromised language to approach their subjects.

In fact, language goes beyond mere use. It's said that language originated as our first consolation: a mother's way of soothing an inconsolable child by offering dulcet noise, symptomatically revealing a mother's desire in a manner not unlike the aforementioned *détrompeur*. Psychologically, Lacan framed language as the *symbolique*, the set of symbols, gestures and expressions which promises to compensate for or return to the *imaginaire*, the idealistic images and relationships we had before entering language. Within this section, I had hoped to exemplify the concept of language as consolation in such poems as "A Left Napkin," wherein the speaker effectively forms a relationship with his own drunken language in the place of what must be a very desirable bartender.

But language itself suffers from the same compromises as likenesses and desire: namely, that it is nothing more than a set of relations and is as far from what it attempts to represent as the likeness is to the poet and the desired is to the speaker. Lacan, Derrida, and Kierkegaard all demonstrated that language is itself subject to the same fragmentation that any likeness is. Both, as we have seen, revolve around shiftable structures, subjective relations, and meanings only meaningful in relation to the reader-listener and speaker. The poems in this section thereby attempt to mirror the aforementioned fragmentation of the likeness with respect to the artist, speaker and reader-listener by demonstrating the fragmentation of language with respect to the artist, signifier and signified. Poems like "Overlooking the Fall of the Vaulter" aim at

approaching the phenomenon on a historically linguistic level while “Memorandum” and “Top 7 Ways to Make a Cliché” do so socially.

Moreover, the problem of language as it relates to desire should also become apparent here. Lacan supposes that language can never conform to intent because by its very expression, the intent is transformed: a child asking his mother for water doesn’t want to go through the trouble of actually asking for it. Thus, desire is what is left after the spoken demand is taken from the need: in the aforementioned case, the desire would be that his mother cares enough to anticipate his needs. So as artists, we seem to suffer similarly in our attempt to express what is inexpressible, as the speaker of “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” proclaims:

It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
“That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all.”

Moreover, we rely upon a reader-listener that may be as imaginary as the likenesses for which they grope, or upon a reader-listener whom we feel we should not have to use language to address, as words would only compromise need. As if self-expression only reinforces the self-desired and self-likeness gaps through its articulation of a self-language gap, poems such as “♂o\*d@μ Rondel” attempt to portray how language symptomatically represents those distances while “FREE TO A GOOD HOME” expresses the desire to rid oneself of such language but also the inability to do so.

## Act IV: Self *Jouissant*

Moreover, the fragmentation of likeness and language extends to the fragmentation of the self. The self in relation to the likeness, the desired and language as I have portrayed it seems to only exist in relational terms. Just as the artist is defined by his art, the desirer to her desired and the speaker to his language, those elusive and fungible representations (which themselves consist only of a set of relations to themselves) apparently compromise the concept of self and lead one to believe that the self doesn't exist as a consistent, centered individual but as a relationship between these aforementioned representations. Returning to Lacanian terminology, the self is merely the relationship between the *symbolique* and *imaginaire*, desire and the desired. I attempt to depict such selves in poems like "Speak Lo[e]w," which attempts to address how we are defined by a compromised language, shiftable desires and elusive likenesses to the point of becoming golems. I strive to further evidence this by the manipulation of poetic forms within this section, wherein spaces and mazelike structure might create multiple readings, such as within "A Woman's Art: A Villanelle." In fact, while organizing the collection, I realized how the poems in this section all seemed to demand this manipulation of traditional forms. Therefore, I discovered that some poems such as "Make Me Another Window" required more manipulation, and I found myself altering them accordingly.

Indeed, as if motivated by a Lacanian *jouissance*, the speakers in this section seek pain beyond pleasure, excess beyond the limits of language; for I believe along with the existentialists that there are no *pre*-determined Platonic ideals to which we conform, but that we are condemned to freely associate and identify with the relations within those *determining* primordial likenesses. Thus, a man drawn toward the oedipal complex needn't identify solely with Oedipus, but may find himself positioned as Laius or even Jocasta; the man appreciating the

image of both Gnese and Agata boarding with another man can desire also to house those Roman idols in himself as those women. Hence, “Where Are You in Your Relationship?” attempts to address this existential choice while speakers like those in “Writing a Woman’s Spam” and “Make Me Another Window” virtually inhabit other people through language. In fact, throughout this section I strive to demonstrate transformations of past repeated imagery (e.g. glass and water) into new forms (e.g. salt and milk) to reinforce the mutability of the self.

I had also hoped to highlight the concept of language as a psychological symptom of the speaker within this section. I think of Freud’s exposition of the suppressed feelings of a patient towards his grandmother when he recounted his impression of a butterfly, or бабушка, which in his native language was synonymous with grandmother, or when he established the motivation for a patient’s fetish for shiny noses when he revealed he was in fact attracted to *Glanz auf der naze* (248). So within my own work, I venture to portray, for example, a speaker’s disdain for candles as a reflection of his disdain for Candaulism.

Yet here I find one of my greatest weaknesses as a poet, in that I fail to live up to the tradition of poets whose criticism tends to focus upon who the speakers are, what leads the speakers to express themselves as such and what kind of society produces them. Unlike the representation of art as an inverse tapestry, whose threads move towards an unspoken desire or likeness that the reader must fulfill and reify, these poets differ in that the speaker or artist himself becomes the object of analysis. I think of Marvin Bell who embraces spontaneity with the conviction that “words should have a little dirt on their shoes” so as to arrive at a voice that exemplifies “a rage for inclusion, a reconciliation with the human condition, a demand that words go beyond words, a metabolic rush akin to dance” (42). In this regard, I find myself unable to let language genuinely represent something that I do not know or cannot control. While

my relative youth or reliance upon taking a persona may be to blame, I nevertheless envy the Dylans and Tarantinos of the art world who are willing and able to create without a stifling sense of control. Mine, in fact, seems to suffer from Heidegger's *Gestell*. Unlike Pygmalion, I presently prefer my Galatea to be an enframed work rather than something which commences something new.

## Conclusion

To synthesize the tapestry metaphor, the likeness represents the fragmentary, imaginary, and primordial set of relations that an artist and self attempts to capture through symbolic language, which is itself fragmentary, ethereal, and distant. So the artist as *tapicero* uses the symbolic, whose string-like rhizomatic strands of repeating and contrasting sounds, images, and lexical fields weave in and around the canvas much as our psychological desires approach the ineffable desired.

And so the artist is doomed from the start, for the only medium available to him reinforces his inability to approach the likeness and the desired. Here, we might revisit the threads' gap between entry and exit points, not only in the way that distance resembles the ability of estrangement in language to approach a subject at a distance and return as close as possible to its essence. Here the speaker returns to the distance between the representations of likeness and the desired and the persona which the artist has taken. Poems like "Men by Thirty" and "~~Hear~~ Here lies..." attempt to demonstrate the artist looking at the persona like Hamlet looks at the skull of Yorick, wondering if art (and indeed the organ of reality as an endless attempt at approaching ineffable likenesses and desires) is worth it.

Indeed, the tapestry has been transformed into a hole-ridden mantle, not unlike that of Julius Caesar, which Antony describes in negative terms so as to lead his audience to virtually place their fingers and hands through the wound marks and mourn:

Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through.  
See what a rent the envious Casca made.  
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed.  
And as he plucked his cursed steel away,  
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,  
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved  
If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no.  
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel. (*Julius Caesar* III.ii.153-160)

So verily in these absences of fixed selves and immoveable linguistic structures, I hope to render the relational constructions while also lamenting and questioning those aforementioned losses.

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