

Dear Poets,

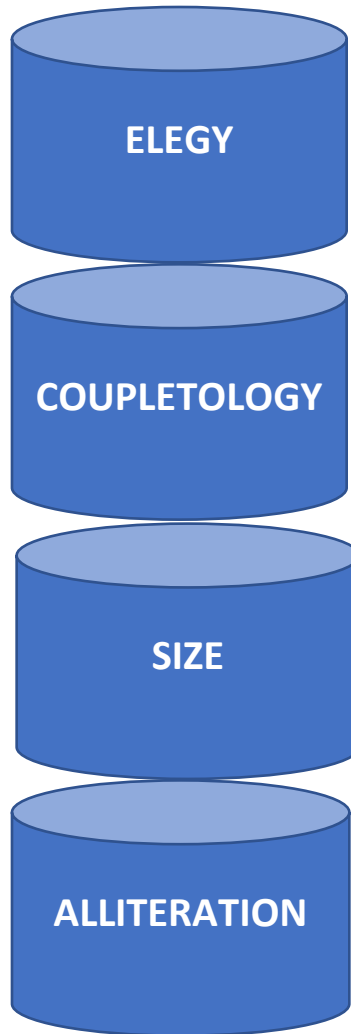
Today's teaching takeaway examines Devon Balwit's "The Made Mourns its Maker" (after Nic Fiddian-Green's sculpture, *Still Water*),ⁱ a patina behemoth.



Still Water

How It's Put Together

Balwit's ekphrastic comes from a headquarters not unlike the supply carts gyring one's art class memories.



In this cathedralized silo, alliteration must serve a purpose beyond contendership for the sonic Oscars. Though Fiddian-Green's is a maneless sculpture, *currycombs* (line one) pertains to equine hair, line five's *brushes bronze* a gentility divvied among towering ore. Whereas lashes have volume via cosmetic sound systems Revlon and Maybelline, the *whispery whiskers* of line nine are communicative qualities assigned to follicles we don't usually associate with speech. The ending's "briefest bit / of a first father." complements a truth about ekphrasis: Interpretation parents what another creates.

Through proportionality, we parse the maker as miniature and the made as expressive skyscraper:

little groom
tiny smith

god-horse
vast muzzle
great beast

These adjectives raise the feasibles of Fiddian-Green’s project: Was the sculpture completed vertically? With a crane? What allowances precede a telescoping ladder? I appreciate the presence of logistics in an art meditation, as it is a behind-the-scenes that inklings rather than shouts. In aesthetic terms, the artist is literally the height of his vision’s mouth (“pressing his whole length to its vast / muzzle.”), *groom*’s duality—noun, husband; verb, caretaking with brush—an opening nuance. Who could manage a metaphysical trough (“the waters of time”), but a *great beast*?

With space above and below them, couplets are the guardrails of denser poems. Balwit’s composition is sparse, though its coupletology is impeccable when you think of her second lines as pedestals and to whom they belong:

the god-horse,	religioning the made
muzzle.	anatomizing the made
to drink	hydrating the made
future rain	weathering the made
Its eyes	socketing the made
of a first father.	paternalized, the maker

The coexistence of elegy and ekphrasis is the work’s main highlight, dolefulness achieved with line eleven’s seven short i’s, “brim pity for its tiny smith, its briefest bit” (don’t forget, the alliterated title). If two modes and an appearance resembling fulcraⁱⁱ don’t solidify the multifaceted in a 58-word poem, nothing does. Lastly, “future rain // greening”—elemental wear and tear, the only possible damage meted to a *god-horse*.

Prompt

Write an ekphrastic ode, 60-70 words in length. What might you convey with couplets and lines of long vowels? Consider the sculptures of Joana Vasconcelos, Jaume Plensa, Senga Nengudi, and Antony Gormley as places to start.

Happy Poeming,

Jon

ⁱ “The Made Mourns its Maker” appeared in *SORTES* 5 (March 2021)
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hA_QSvn-QFde7UVN-mE0n21Xs0JYief0/view

ⁱⁱ Am I the only one who just learned this is an acceptable plural for fulcrum?