The poetics of *ekphrasis*

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The earliest ekphrastic poetry describes what doesn't exist, save in the poetry's own fiction. What Jean Hagstrum called the "iconic" poem (he reserved the term "ecphrastic" for a sort of dramatic monologue in which the picture or sculpture is itself made to speak) (1) has a long history which I need hardly recite in detail to this audience. It would include: the shields of Herakles and of Achilles, so differently represented by Hesiod and Homer; the ivory cup given by the goatherd to the shepherd Thyrsis in Theocritus' first idyll, whose description by the poet involves readings of feelings and intentions in the human figures depicted there even as all ekphrasis - poetic or art-historical - continues to do so today; the armor of Aeneas and the paintings in the Temple of Juno, both described with great regard to how Aeneas himself reads those images; the relief sculpture in Dante's Purgatorio, the tapestries and frescoes in Ariosto and Spenser and - in a remarkable scene of reading and misreading - in Shakespeare's The Rape of Lucrece.

All of these constitute what I shall call "notional ekphrasis". They conjure up an image, describing some things about it and ignoring a multitude of others which, particularly before 1400, we might assume were supplied by any reader who knew what images - there being so few conventional options - looked like (that is, a style could be said to be assumed by the basic terms of the descriptive language). And while we might want to suggest that a student in class imagine the reliefs in Dante as looking rather like a Pisano - rather than Signorelli's "illustrations" of them (in the Capella di San Brizio in Orvieto) - it is still clear that, at best, we can only adduce partial or conventional paradigms in actual works of art for notional ekphrases. The realm of notional ekphrasis is partially extended to include what are virtually notional - ekphrastic poems or passages in literary works which may or may not describe some actual, but totally lost, work of art. Examples of this would range from the debate over Philostratus' Eikones and their actual or notional status to the fact that the great majority of the paintings addressed by poems in Giambattista Marino's La Galeria are now lost.

But the fact remains that it is the tradition of notional ekphrasis which provides the paradigms and the precursor texts, the rhetorical models and the interpretive strategies, for the fully developed modern ekphrastic poem. Notional ekphrasis inheres in modern poetry's actual ekphrasis, and provides a thematic microcosm of a basic paradox about poetry and truth. Just as late-coming, allusive, "modern" poems (from, say, Theocritus and Virgil, certainly, on) authentically represent reality in good part by means of the ways in which they represent themselves, so too with smaller instance of ekphrasis. Ekphrastic poems that are always representing poetic process, and the history of poetic readings of works of art, can by those means get to say rather profound things about the works of art in question. By constructing some fictional versions of them, they put powerful interpretive constructions on them, construe them with deep effect. The way in which this works can only be revealed in detailed readings of such poetic readings, and I should like in this paper to explore, if only briefly, some of the modes and strategies of ekphrastic poetry. But I should continue to emphasize the word "modern" here: as we shall see, there are many ekphrases in verse that are far less poetic than some in prose (as Svetlana Alpers implied twenty-five years ago,

Vasari's ekphrases had more literary power than those of most sixteenth-century poems to or on works of art). (2) I shall also not have time here to explore in detail some of the basic devices of notional ekphrases which continue to develop in the actual ones. But I might remark on only one at the outset, because it manifests a very early sense of the problematics of ekphrasis itself.

In Virgil's third eclogue, the shepherd Menalcas, in allusion to his prototype in Theocritus, stakes a pair of carved beechwood cups on the outcome of a singing contest with Damoetas. He describes the carving on them: "a pliant vine, overlaid with skillful chisel drapes the clusters spread by the pale ivy" (lenta quibus torno facili superaddita vitis / diffusos hedera vestit pallente corymbos.) But then it continues: "In the middle are two figures, Conon and - uh, whatsisname - you know, the one who marked out for man the whole of the skies with his rod ..." (in medio duo signa, Conon et - quis fuit alter, / descripsit radio totum qui gentibus orbem ...) Menalcas forgets the name (probably Eudoxus of Cnidus) of the other astronomer. While some commentators treat this merely as a deployment of naturalism in dialogue, we may observe that it ruptures the certainty of the ekphrastic reading, calling attention to the contingent and even fragile quality of the relation of any description to its object.

Such moments as this are frequent in interesting ekphrastic poems. Two examples that leap immediately to mind are the very end of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's fascinating sonnet on Botticelli's Primavera, which breaks down into questions about its own power even to ask its poetic and ekphrastic question: "But how command / Dead Springs to answer? And how question here? / These mummers of that wind-withered New Year?", and Randall Jarrell's poem on Durer's The Knight, Death and the Devil, in which, after twenty-seven lines of assured and sophisticated reading of the elements of the scene in the engraving (concentrating mostly on the Devil however) the Knight is invoked in his response to the Devil's presence:

> He listens in assurance, has no glance
> To spare for them, but looks past steadily
> At - at -
> a man's look completes itself.

But compared with modern ekphrastic poems, those of the older sort show no traces of self-scrutiny; they are both more epigrammatic - in their tendency to reduce the painted image to a paradigm - and more likely to regard the specific interpretation of the avowed "subject" by the artist, and the matter of execution, as a mere occasion for encomium. Take, for example, Marino's little poem, from that prodigious collection of ekphrases called La Galeria just mentioned, on the Caravaggio head of Medusa in the Uffizi. It speaks only to the fact that the head is on a shield, and that the shield belongs to the Duke of Tuscany. Otherwise, the poem might be "on" any Gorgon's head on a shield, and, indeed, seems to evade the fact that Medusa usually occupies either the boss of Athena's shield or her aegis:

> What foes are there who could not suddenly
> Turn cold into marble
> On looking at that Gorgon in your shield,
> Proud, Signor, and cruel,
> For whose locks bundled vipers horribly
> Frame a dreary ornament, and frightful?
> But Oh! the fearful monster
> Would be of little help to you in war,
> The true Medusa being your own valor.
>
> La testa di Medusa in una rotella di
> Michelagnolo da Caravaggio, nella Galeria
> del Gran Duca di Toscana
>
> Or quai nemici fian, che freddi marmi
> non divengan repente
> in mirando, Signor, nel vostro scudo
> quel fier Gorgone, e crudo,
> cui fanno orribilmente
> volumi viperini
> squallida pompa e spaventosa ai crini?
> Ma che! Poco fra l'armi
> a voi fia d'uopo il formidabil mostro:
> ché la vera Medusa è il valor vostro.

Here the Duke's valor surpasses the image's own spavento, which is about all Marino credits it with. On the other hand, consider Shelley's poem (on which Mary

Shelley may perhaps have collaborated) on another head of Medusa, also in the Uffizi, which looks forward to the problems of modernity. The painting is seventeenth century, possibly Flemish and after a lost original by Leonardo or at least Vasari's description of it. To romantic eyes, this somewhat Caravaggesque image represented the problematic and murderous beauty of the severed head of Medusa after she had been killed by Perseus. For Walter Pater, this seemed to be the canonical view of the Gorgon, and he remarked of this painting, "The subject has been treated in various ways; Leonardo alone cuts to its centre; he alone realises it as the head of a corpse, exercising its power through all the circumstances of death." The remainder of this passage from The Renaissance is remarkable;

> What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch its exquisitely finished beauty. About the dainty lines of the cheek the bats flit unheeded. The delicate snakes seem literally strangling each other in terrified struggle to escape the Medusa brain. The hue which violent death always brings with it is in the features; features singularly massive and grand, as we catch them inverted, in a dexterous foreshortening, crown foremost, like a great calm stone against which a wave of serpents breaks. (3)

To break this up into lines of verse - although more expertly than did W.B. Yeats in the case of Pater's more famous remarks on the Mona Lisa - would produce a piece of free-verse, a contemporary-sounding ekphrasis. Shelley's lines are also very strange (I shall quote only from the first and last stanzas, with a few lines from the second):

It lieth gazing on the midnight sky,
  Upon the cloudy mountain-peak supine;
Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
  Its horror and its beauty are divine.
Upon its lips and eyelids seem to lie
  Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath.
  The agonies of anguish and of death.

II

Yet it is less the horror than the grace
  Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,
Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
  Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace...

V

'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror;
  For from the serpent gleams a brazen glare
Kindled by that inextricable error,
  Which makes a thrilling vapor of the air
Become a (dim) and ever-shifting mirror
  Of all the beauty and the terror there -
A woman's countenance, with serpent-locks,
  Gazing in death on Heaven from those wet rocks.(4)

The intervening stanzas are intent upon the snakes, the attendant lizards and frog, and so forth; but it is the final lines which are entranced by the skyward gaze of the petrifying Gorgon. Even as, in the second stanza, the viewer of the painting has become its victim, here the viewer seems momentarily safe from the monster's gaze which, however, has turned the very air into a mirror.

Similarly, we might consider a sonnet of Pietro Aretino on Titian's portrait of the Duke of Urbino (cited by Mary Rogers). (5) It employs, like so many other Renaissance ekphrases of portraits, what had become almost natural Petrarchan rhetorical strategies. Outward appearance is taken as the mere residence or locus of some transcendent virtue or other abstract quality (e.g., "In her X dwells A"). But in such poems, it becomes the encomiastic tactic to praise both sitter and painter, the first for possessing the virtue, the second for his skill in being able to reveal it. This ability to represent the A in the X comes to replace the classical cliché of eikastic perfection as praised in verse about visual representation in, for example, the Greek Anthology. It is part of the

substance of renaissance portraiture that John Pope-Hennessy, following Leonardo, calls the portraying of the "motions of the mind". (6)

Aretino elevates Titian above Apelles, who merely portrayed Alexander, but not the "pellegrin subietto, / l'alto vigor, che l'anima comparte" (the rare subject, the noble vigor his soul possessed). Titian, conversely, paints the awesome power lurking between the Duke's eyebrows, the honor and good counsel residing in his face, and so forth. It is only the last tercet which actually reads Titian's painting, rather than set of paradigmatic conventions: "In his breastplate and in his readied arms courage burns" ("Nel busto armato e ne la braccia pronte / arde il valor"). The malerisch light reflected in the breastplate is momentarily allegorized (through "arde") as "valor", even as the gesture of the Ducal hands on sword and, elegantly foreshortened, on mace, are literally read.

In contrast with the strategies of Aretino's lines on the Titian, I should like to turn to what is probably the very first English poem presenting some interesting features of modern poetic ekphrasis. The cavalier poet Richard Lovelace, a friend of Peter Lely (and a knowledgeable lover of painting who probably had read both Vasari and van Mander) wrote some lines addressed "To My Worthy Friend Mr. Peter Lilly: on that excellent picture of his Majesty, and the Duke of York, drawne by him at Hampton-Court". (7) The Lely portrait, painted in 1647 when Charles I was being held by the army at Hampton Court, shows the already partially-eclipsed king and his second son in a pictorial format made popular by Van Dyck: the background divided, with drapery and, frequently a column, on one side, and open landscape on the other. Lovelace reads the painting in a powerful way; or, rather, misreads it, by taking the matter of the clouds visible behind the head of James as if it were an allegorical detail, however naturalistically domesticated. Since his concern is with the sorts of verbal paradoxes that characterize for him, a lyrical royalist, the particular moment in the decline of the king's fortunes, he starts out in the first line with one of the poem's two governing figures:

> See! What a clouded Majesty! and eyes
> Whose glory through their mist doth
> brighter rise! ...

The oxymoron of "clouded majesty" connects the painted sky behind James with the monarch's own occluded reign. In addition, it engages the question of gaze and eyes which, after the next lines of reiterated paradox, will re-emerge in importance:

> See! what an humble bravery doth shine,
> And grief triumphant breaking through
> each line;
> How it commands the face! so sweet a
> scorne
> Never did happy misery adorne!
> So sacred a contempt! that others show
> To this, (oth 'height of all the wheele)
> below;
> That mightiest Monarchs by this shaded
> booke
> May coppy out their proudest, richest
> looke.

The lines, or lineaments of the painted face, and those lines of verse of the poem addressing it, are delicately associated here, as, later on, the eyes of the king are more forcefully to be connected with those of the painter himself. But the comparison which immediately follows turns its attention to the eyes of the young prince, more prominently directed than those of the king, in a strange trope which makes the son a young eagle and his father the shining sun, an English roi soleil:

> Whilst the true Eaglet this quick luster
> spies,
> And by his Sun's enlightens his own eyes;
> He cares his cares, his burthen feeles,
> then streight
> Joyes that so lightly he can beare such
> weight;
> Whilst either eithers passion doth borrow,
> And both do grieve the same victorious
> sorrow.

This has, so far, exhibited a significant problematic feature of poetic ekphrasis: its strangeness lies as much in what it does not notice as in what it singles out as points for interpretation. What is the boy handing his father? What is the paper the king is holding? On the other hand, the

poem broods upon cloudedness, and upon eyes. Its attention next shifts to the painter Lely, and praises him, in essence, for having painted what was only in Lovelace's poem:

> These my best Lilly with so bold a spirit
> And soft a grace, as if thou didst inherit
> For that time all their greatnesse, and
> didst draw
> With those brave eyes your Royal Sitters
> saw.

"Those brave eyes", the painter's eyes, are now focused upon as an object of the royal gaze, perhaps in the intervals of posing, and the poem puts us momentarily in the room at Hampton Court where the painting is being done. There is a touch here in the poem, though not at all in the painting, of some of the recently propounded epistemological agenda of Velasquez' Las Meninas.

The rest of the poem abandons ekphrasis for an encomium of Lely for painting feelings and virtues directly, without being reductively iconographic (in Lovelace's term, understanding "by Hieroglyphickes".) It ends with a revisionary allusion to an epigram of Ausonius, well-known in the seventeenth century, that Lovelace had earlier translated, challenging a painter who would depict the nymph Echo as a personification with a more figurative matter: "If you'll paint me like" says Echo, "paint a sound", and the analogy is extended to the modern portraitist's obligation:

> Not as of old, when a rough hand did
> speake
> A strong Aspect, and a faire face, a weake;
> When only a black beard cried Villaine, and
> By Hieroglyphicks we could understand;
> When Chrystall typified in a white spot,
> And the bright ruby but was one red blot;
> Thou dost the things Orientally the same,
> Not only paintst its colour, but its Flame:
> Thou sorrow canst designe without a teare.
> And with the Man his very Hope or Feare;
> So that th'amazed world shall henceforth
> finde
> None but my Lilly ever drew a Minde.

This famous poem is, as had been observed, problematically selective in its reading, and calls attention to itself; it pretends that the Van Dyckian convention of framing portrait in landscape is the painting's own, and energetically deploys poetry's figurative resources to represent those of painting. Save for the imperative "See!" used twice, the poem eschews the rhetorical formulae of notional ekphrasis (the Horatian "Here an x, and there a y ... now see an a appear, and then a b:) so common in seventeenth and eighteenth-century verse. If the poem is emblematically reductive, after all, it is a radically original reading (See this picture? It means - it should be called, something like "Clouded Majesty") that concluded by praising the painter for not being a merely emblematic designer.

There is hardly time in a short paper such as this to look in detail at an array of modern ekphrastic poems and to give readings of their readings of the works of art they purport to speak for. But I should like to glance more briefly at a number of interpretive situations which arise, as always, from the meeting of a particular notion of what a poem is (that is, its bundle of formal, rhetorical and epistemological conventions, and whatever original topos upon which the poem may turn) with another set of conventions of discourse, outside of verse, about works of art. For example, if a painter writes an ekphrastic poem, one might expect some of his or her conceptual program as an artist to show up in the verse. Certainly this has been widely recognized in J.M.W. Turner's poems, whether rigidly or loosely associated with particular paintings. An interesting case is that of the American painter Washington Allston, whose sonnets on paintings are far from trivial. Among them is a consideration (published posthumously in 1850, but probably written before 1811, when he was in close contact with Coleridge and Wordsworth) of one of the small fresco scenes in the Loggie of the Vatican. Known as "Raphael's Bible", they were designed but not executed by him (the one in question is thought to be by Penni). The three angels - or so they have been officially interpreted - before the tent of Abraham at Mamre (Genesis 18) are seen from below, and together form a unified structure (a "Celestial Group") for the viewer's searching eye and hermeneutic mind:

Oh, now I feel as though another sense
From Heaven descending had inform'd my soul;
I feel the pleasurable, full control
Of Grace, harmonious, boundless, and intense.
In thee, celestial Group, embodied lives
The subtle mystery; that speaking gives
Itself resolv'd: the essences combin'd
Of Motion ceaseless, Unity complete.
Borne like a leaf by some soft eddying wind,
Mine eyes, impell'd as by enchantment sweet,
From part to part with circling motion rove,
Yet seem unconscious of the power to move;
From line to line through endless changes run,
O'er countless shapes, yet seem to gaze on One.

The formal "Unity complete" of Allston's octave, with its theologically trinitarian overtones, is followed by a strangely analogous passage, in the sestet. It constitutes a scanning of the very act of scanning a pictorial structure, particular as a painter might scan form, medium, composition and effect. The Wordsworthian opening of the poem speaks to the condition of looking upward in general; the last six lines are more epistemological in their concerns. The "One" at the end is a concept both esthetic and divine - a final putting together of the elements of the reading of the painting, and the presence of God hidden among the three "men" who appear before Abraham in Genesis, perhaps reflecting some of the ad hoc Unitarian scriptural reading to which he had been introduced at Harvard. (8) The painter's technically informed eye is by no means blinded, or even blurred, in religious experience, but rather enlisted uncompromisingly in its working out.

It is another painter-poet, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, however, whose remarkable sonnets on paintings seem to set in place the whole agenda for modern interpretive ekphrastic poems. It would be tempting to spend a good deal of time on any one of them - the splendid poem, for example, on Leonardo's Madonna of the Rocks in Paris, raising profound questions about the darkness and the landscape in the painting, and only obliquely suggesting answers in the sestet. (And, as George Hersey has pointed out, (9) significantly suppressing the prominent presence in the painting of the angel Gabriel - as pointer-at and pointer-out of prophetic meanings, perhaps replacing him by the Dante Gabriel, the Sprecher of the poem itself.)

A painting in the Louvre, once ascribed to Giorgione and now thought to be by Titian, occasioned another of Rossetti's remarkable ekphrastic sonnets. Walter Pater in The Renaissance, quite aware of this poem, wrote of this and other Venetian landscapes that its favorite incidents were "music or musical intervals in our existence" (by which he meant not "interval" in a technical sense, an octave or third, but a silence or space or gap of time made musical in a figurative sense):

> Life is conceived as a sort of listening, listening to music ... to the sound of water, to time as it flies ... in the school of Giorgione, the presence of water -- the well, or marble-rimmed pool, the drawing or pouring of water, as the woman pours it from a pitcher with her jewelled hand in the Fête Champêtre, listening, perhaps, to the cool sound as it falls, blent with the music of the pipes -- is as characteristic, and almost as suggestive, as that of music itself. (10)

Pater was himself poetically associating marine Venice with music and water in the visions of its art. But the pitcher in the well, with which Rossetti's poem starts out, is clearly audible in the background of Pater's thought.

Rossetti sees invisible elements of the painting the way the well water will slowly move into the narrow lip of the pitcher, and the averted mouth ("pouting"?) of the seated woman. He asks a question which he decides to leave unanswered -- not "Are these mortals or gods?" or "What are the men saying to one another?" or "How are the men and women paired?" or "What makes the distant house deserve to be the apex of just that important triangle in the formal structure of the painting?"

Instead he asks "What is she looking at?" Despite literal "mistakes" in reading - the musical instruments here are a lute not a viol, and a recorder or flute, not "pipes" -- Rossetti moves to the heart of the pictorial matter here by pointing to the momentary suspension -- Pater's "musical interval" -- of the sound of water and of wind-music in the recorder. That moment of pause even in the women's music is the relation between spots of time and the clear expanse of eternity named in the poem's last line:

Water, for anguish of the solstice: -- nay,
But dip the vessel slowly, -- nay, but lean
And hark now at its verge the wave sighs in
Reluctant. Hush! beyond all depth away
The heat lies silent at the brink of day:
Now the hand trails upon the viol-string
That sobs, and the brown faces cease to sing.
Sad with the whole of pleasure. Whither stray
Her eyes now, from whose mouth the thin pipes creep
And leave it pouting, while the shadowed grass
Is cool against her naked side? Let be: --
Say nothing now unto her lest she weep,
Nor name this ever. Be it as it was, --
Life touching lips with Immortality.

I have been dealing primarily with poetry in English, and in the nineteenth century a good deal of ekphrastic poetry emerges, both actual and notional, with the added complication that the notional becomes to derive from and be influenced by the growing body of actual ones. The Renaissance tradition, too, of ekphrastic moments or sections in long poems is revised in Keats, (11) and in such moments as this one from Browning's early poem, "Pauline", in which he deals for the first time with an image which will haunt him throughout his poetic career. An engraving after a Polidoro da Caravaggio Andromeda hung above his desk when young, and the effusive narrator of Browning's first published poem invokes that image explicitly:

Andromeda!
And she is with me: years roll, I shall change
But change can touch her not - so beautiful
With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair
Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze.
And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,
Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach
By the dark rock and the white wave just breaking
At her feet; quite naked and alone ...

This we might call a latent ekphrasis, as the lines do not purport to address the cinquecento painting at all; in it, a particular pictured image will serve rather as a particular, unnamed bit of landscape does in a poem or novel, emerging as an ekphrastic "source" only under scholarly analysis.

But I should like to bring these remarks to an end now with a last glance at a poem by a contemporary American poet, James Merrill. It is exemplary in many respects. (1) It starts out with the ekphrastic questioning which is a dominant rhetorical device of this sort of poem, but in this case, with the question displaced from the straightforward inquiry to the painting -- "What do you mean?" -- but to the missing parts of the sculptured group from which we have only one standing figure. (2) A great modern ekphrastic poem seems to stand behind it, and (3) its misprision of the figure is deliberate and effective. The bronze charioteer found in the Delphic sanctuary of Apollo originally held the reins of a four-horse chariot or quadriga - the group was originally a votive offering, erected on the temple terrace, for victory in a chariot race. In Merrill's poem, only the horses are invoked, but they are immediately identified as those of the sun-God, and the youthful figure momentarily becomes a version of Apollo himself. Confronting a piece of figure sculpture, a carved or cast human image, can place the viewer under an intense meditative injunction. Rainer Maria Rilke, gazing at a torso of a kouros from Miletus in the Louvre, saw no answering

gaze from the headless trunk. Instead, his famous poem from the Neue Gedichte felt a metaphoric version of that answering, half-mirroring look in the entire form - "Aber / sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber" ("Yet his torso still glows like a candelabrum"). It is this light, says Rilke's sonnet, which sees you; without it, this stone could not have burst, like a star, from its own margins, until "da ist keine Stelle. / die dich nicht sieht" - there is no place which doesn't see you". Rilke's poem ends with the famous injunction (but spoken by the torso? the poet? the reader? - the ambiguity echoes some of the indeterminacy of what is said by whom at the end of Keats' great notional ekphrasis of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn"): "You must alter your life" ("Du musst dein Leben ändern"), which is one of the things all true art always says to the true serious observer.

Merrill's poem, acutely conscious of Rilke's (which treats the kouros as an "Archaic Torso of Apollo" in its title) starts out by asking of the figure where the rest of its group is. But, as we have observed, the figure is mistaken for a divine one, and it leads the poem to meditate on travellers to Delphi and to the gods' sanctuary in antiquity, who came with one kind of innocence to this image, and on the poet's own journey to it, childlike in another way, but aware of the deep psychic consequences for a human viewer of a mirroring gaze.

> Where are the horses of the sun?
> Their master's green bronze hand, empty
> of all
> But a tangle of reins, seems less to call
> Its horses back than to wait out their
> run ...

After a fairly detailed ekphrastic opening, the poem moves in its last stanzas into this matter of the gaze:

> For watch, his eyes in the still air
> alone
> Look shining and nowhere
> Unless indeed into our own
>
> Who are reflected there
> Littler than dolls wound up by a child's
> fear
> How tight, their postures only know.
>
> And loosely, watch them now, the reins
> overflow
> His fist, as if once more the unsubdued
> Beasts shivering and docile stood
>
> Like us before him. Do you remember how
> A small brown pony would
> Nuzzle the cube of sugar from you hand?
>
> Broken from his mild reprimand
> In fire and fury hard upon the taste
> Of a sweet license, even these have
> raced
>
> Uncurbed in us, where fires are fanned.

Merrill's charioteer holds the reins on the horses of our own human sun, our erotic passion. The lesson of Rilke's archaic Apollo has already been learned by the speaker of this poem, which goes beyond that inscrutable command, and starts to change its own life by remembering a dismembered fragment of childhood memory. Notice, too, how in Merrill's tercets rhymes occur, wander away and return, and in their own structure compose a picture of forward motion, backward recollection, and reined-in-control. Ut pictura poesis.

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3. Walter Pater, The Renaissance, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1980), p. 83.
4. The text of this poem is imperfect; I have filled in an obvious lacuna with the bracketed word.
5. Mary Rogers, "Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy", Word and Image 2.4 (1986), pp. 291-305.

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7. Lely's painting is discussed, and Lovelace's poem considered in its encomiastic dimension, but without regard to ekphrasis, in Norman K. Farmer, Jr., Poets and the Visual Arts in Renaissance England, (Austin, University of Texas Press), pp. 53-65.

8. See Bryan Jay Wolf, Romantic Re-Vision (Chicago, University of Chicago Press), pp.24-77.

9. In an unpublished article on Rossetti.

10. Pater, The Renaissance, p. 120

11. See Ian Jack, Keats and the Mirror of Art, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967).