

STUDY FOR THE FIGURE OF POETRY  
ON THE CEILING OF THE SEGNATURA

Stand in the stanza  
della Segnatura. Look up  
at the Vatican eyes,  
and the Renaissance smile,  
at the expression  
of excessive lovemaking,  
a Roman nose, distraction,  
and a book poised against  
a knee by a sensitive hand.

Look down at the feet  
crossed in concentration,  
tense, about to pavanne,  
galliard, or minuet. Turn  
your eyes to her perfect  
navel: it catches tears,  
implies the right breast,  
while her lyre stays taut  
as a wishbone and conceals  
the unfashionable left.  
Raphael says such  
an instrument plays itself:  
when she flies her wings  
gather the music, the ecstasy,  
and the lies.