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### Poetry, portraiture and praise

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Title: Poetry, Portraiture and Praise: Suckling and Van Dyck, Lovelace and Lely

Abstract: The interrelationship between poetry and painting, a perennial focus for critical enquiry, takes on a particular cast in the cavalier poetry of the early to middle seventeenth century. Influenced both by the dominance of Van Dyck's style of portraiture and by the public prominence of epideictic rhetoric, the moment of ekphrasis becomes an opportunity to practice and to explore the viability of praise. This essay examines the reflexivity of an epideictic poetry that makes the praising art its focus, through an examination of works in which claims for the qualities of the artistry in question are permitted to reflect back on the accomplishment of the works themselves. In poems by John Suckling and Richard Lovelace we see how the resort to ekphrasis permits a moment of aesthetic and poetic self-criticism that demonstrates the extent to which cavalier poetry could involve a searching examination of its own enabling conditions.

Keywords: Cavalier, Poetry, Portraiture, Praise, Epideictic, Ekphrasis

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That there is a mutual influence on each other of poetry and painting is, of course, among the most commonplace of the commonplaces of Western culture. The practice of ekphrastic writing is a consistent presence, and the ways in which the likenesses and differences of word and image might be configured are a perennial topic for both artistic and critical enquiry. There are, though, particular moments when the relationship takes on a singular form, different and distinctive enough to be worthy of comment. In such instances, a subtending topical or thematic consistency gives the interaction of literary and figurative art a shape or pattern that takes us beyond the general or the commonplace. This essay suggests that just such a conjunction can be discerned in English culture in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. This conjunction was the product of a range of different cultural phenomena: prominent among these were a flourishing practice of verse reading, writing and circulation in the elite institutions of early Stuart England, the permissible forms of public discourse in an increasingly court-centred realm, and the unique impact made by Antony Van Dyck on English assumptions about the proper power and nature of painting. Poetry and painting here came together in the conjoined practices of portraiture and praise – practices which were common to both arts, but which could also permit the establishment of a more reflexive relationship between works of different kinds, in which the capacity of poetry both to conjure up and comment on the powers of painting could allow the interrogation of the enabling conditions, and distinctive qualities, of each. And while I would not wish to go so far as to suggest that there are particular combinations of works that necessarily typify this conjunction, it is certainly possible to discern works that illuminate its possibilities and ramifications.

In a poem first published in Humphrey Moseley's posthumous collection of 1646, *Fragmenta Aurea*, Sir John Suckling works through some perhaps typical moments or aspects of Caroline court culture.<sup>1</sup> Set up as a dialogue between Suckling and his friend Thomas Carew, 'Upon my Lady Carliles walking in Hampton-Court garden' begins by attributing to Carew a stance entirely in keeping with what we might reasonably think of as the era's courtly norms. 'Thom' speaks, conventionally enough, of the garden's response to the Countess as to an animating or divine principle, with an equally conventional emphasis on the pleasurable aesthetic force that her admirers register:

*THOM.* Didst thou not find the place inspir'd,  
And flow'rs, as if they had desir'd  
No other Sun, start from their beds,  
And for a sight steal out their heads?  
Heardst thou not musick when she talk't?  
And didst not find that as she walkt  
She threw rare perfumes all about  
Such as bean-blossoms newly out,  
Or chafed spices give? — (ll. 1-9)<sup>2</sup>

Such lightly platonised sensuality seems likely to result in a work akin to Henry Wotton's celebrated paean to Elizabeth of Bohemia, or William Strode's similarly popular lyric 'I saw fair Chloris walk alone'.<sup>3</sup>

But in fact Tom's effusion is cut off even before it has properly completed its first

stanza, as the lack of a rhyme, and the long dash in the printed text, clearly indicates. This poem is headed elsewhere. The direction it is to take is now established by Suckling's persona, who drily demurs from Tom's demand for recognition of his adulatory response by refusing its aesthetic claims: there are no perfumes, no feeling plants, 'the flowers had all their birth from you'. To the accusation that he is therefore 'dull and insensible' not to be able to respond fully, Jack again refuses its terms: there is no incapacity, only a different and more interested affective response, which draws on a poet's imaginative resources in a much more earthy way: his response to the sight of the Countess has been to mentally undress her.

Yet this response too has been interrupted: perhaps by the demand put to Jack by Tom at the poem's opening, perhaps instead by Lady Carlisle's ending her walk. In the printed text, the poem gives the last stanza and word to Tom, who does not so much rebuke Jack for his frank confession of his arousal as remark on his narrow escape. 'There's great danger in that face,' he remarks: if Suckling had had opportunity or power to imagine her fully naked, 'No time or age had ever seen / So lost a thing as thou hadst been'. His peril here seems to be an unspecified combination of moral, mortal and social damage: the Countess would have become a new Diana to his Actaeon, but whether it would have been his soul, his character or his standing at Court that would have been shredded is not finally determined. The point, perhaps, is that the three are not to be easily separated anyway.

In a surviving manuscript copy, however, the poem continues for another ten line stanza in which Suckling again dismisses the very basis on which Carew builds his claims.<sup>4</sup>

'Troth in her face I could descry

No danger, no divinity.

But since the pillars were so good  
On which the lovely fountain stood,  
Being once come so near, I think  
I should have ventur'd hard to drink.  
What ever fool like me had been  
If I'd not done as well as seen?  
There to be lost why should I doubt  
Where fools with ease go in and out? (ll. 40-9)

This stanza changes everything. It not only gives the real last word to Suckling, it also extends the distance between his position and that of the poem's opening. Now Jack's iconoclasm is directed not at Tom's overheated portrayal, but at the Countess herself. In this account, she is certainly no Diana. The force she exerts is instead only a function of her sexual availability, and this itself is registered in a not atypically masculine libidinal economy of desire and contempt. The poem thus concludes, in its fullest version, with the starkest possible dismissal of the cultural norms and conventions from which it set out.

The twists and turns of this particular work make it a suitable test case for an examination of the cavalier poetics of praise. That such a poetry should be seen as central to cavalier culture is well established, as is the suggestion that poets such as Carew and Suckling helped to develop a particular poetics of 'criticism and compliment', or perhaps of negotiation, through which cavalier writing sought to imagine and practise its political commitments and obligations.<sup>5</sup> What's more, the critical language here, I would suggest, has a profound kinship with the kind of setting forth of its subject also seen in standardly 'cavalier' portraiture, of which Van Dyck, surely, is the profoundest exemplar.<sup>6</sup> Suckling, of

course, was famously painted by Van Dyck (Figure 1); for a long while, Carew was also seen in one of his double portraits.<sup>7</sup> The vivid aesthetic of this poem's first stanza, meanwhile, can be seen as consonant with Van Dyck's own renderings of the Countess of Carlisle's image, and both the countess and her portraits were the occasion of effusive praise (Figure 2).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Robert Wilcher has suggested that Suckling's poem, which is customarily dated to around 1632 – precisely the moment of Van Dyck's triumphant return to England – was itself a response to one or both of two panegyrics on Lady Carlisle by Carew, offered to 'Lucinda' as New Year's gifts in 1632 and 1633.<sup>9</sup>

Yet there are clearly complications, too. The first to note is the mediating effect of the exigencies of the 1640s on perceptions and understandings of the pre-war world, an effect that can even today be said to influence our sense of that world and its cultures. The absence of this final section from most manuscript witnesses and from the printed text of 1646 is capable of multiple interpretations. Were these libellous lines better known than their survival in only one copy suggests? Given the poem's attribution to 'T: C.' in the manuscript witness, is it reasonable to read the extra stanza as evidence of an actual poetic dialogue with Carew, and therefore of co-authorship of sorts – with Carew taking it upon himself to speak in Suckling's voice, just as Suckling – presumably – had been ventriloquizing him? Is it, perhaps, an addition by a reader? Might avoidance or suppression in print, if that's what happened, speak of a determination to paint the deceased Suckling in the colours of a particular kind of courtliness, ensuring that the portrait reaching a print readership in 1646 is tailored to a particular sense of the needs or demands of the moment? Or could it instead point up the fact that not all the habituées of the Caroline court were now eligible for the kind of public vituperation that Suckling or, in the year after the publication of *The King's Cabinet Opened*, the royal couple themselves had suffered?<sup>10</sup> The

countess's brother, the Earl of Northumberland, had also been one of Van Dyck's patrons and a Caroline courtier of appropriate magnificence, but by 1646 his power had grown, not diminished.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the King, he was still able to act as a patron to accomplished artists such as Van Dyck's imitator and successor, Peter Lely. And Lely, crucially, had not chosen the path of another of Van Dyck's disciples, William Dobson, and hitched his wagon to the clouded fortunes of the royal court. He had, instead, set himself up in Parliamentary London, and sought to rework the Van Dyckian inheritance, with all of its tensions, in very different circumstances.<sup>12</sup> That he was to do so in the context of an apparently close friendship with Richard Lovelace, not just one of the most traditionally cavalier of cavalier poets, but also a friend who was to comment critically, ekphrastically, on Lely's own paintings, is a provocation to which I will return.

As thought-provoking, though, are the broader implications for an approach to the cavalier arts of praise. For a long time a venerable whiggish critical strain encouraged readers to see such work as so much servile flattery, and the renewal of interest in radical or republican categories and topoi over recent decades has made clear the historical licence of some critiques of this kind.<sup>13</sup> Others have pointed instead to the workings of various economies of praise within which much panegyric of the period undoubtedly circulated: Francis Bacon famously set out the terms of one such economy, observing in his essay 'Of Praise' that praisers 'by telling Men, what they are, they represent to them, what they should be'.<sup>14</sup> Ben Jonson put it more bluntly, if as hopefully, in *Epigram 65*, 'To My Muse': 'Who'er is raised / For worth he has not, he is taxed, not praised' (ll. 15-16).<sup>15</sup> This kind of economy can be seen in the delicate co-implication of compliment and criticism in 1630s poetry of which the late Kevin Sharpe so suggestively and persuasively wrote, or in Jonson's own care to characterise himself as a servant, rather than a slave.<sup>16</sup> Yet in the same epigram

Jonson acknowledges that such moral economies are themselves not uncontaminated by more venal exchanges. As the poem makes clear in identifying the ill effects attributed to its errant muse, something more (or less) than compromised integrity has been suffered here:

Be thy next master's more unlucky muse,  
And, as th'hast mine, his hours and youth abuse.  
Get him the time's long grudge, the court's ill-will,  
And, reconciled, keep him suspected still.  
Make him lose all his friends; and, which is worse,  
Almost all ways to any better course. (ll. 5-10)

While he berates his muse for making him flatter a 'worthless lord', he also suggests that part of the problem – an aspect of this lord's worthlessness – is his incapacity to advance his clients, or to avoid taking them down with him when his star declines.

In facing the articulation of effusive praise with a much more disenchanting perspective, Suckling's poem might appear to be seeking to temper it merely, to attend like Jonson – if in a startlingly different manner – to the issue of its moral hygiene. But the eventual extent of its refusal of its starting point, its transmutation of initial panegyric into concluding libel, points instead to a more fundamental engagement with the bases of epideictic poetry as a cultural mode.

art, the capacity to generate the kind of vivid phenomenality claimed for his impression of Lady Carlisle by the Carew figure in Suckling's poem often looms particularly large. Accounts of such figurative resources as *hypotyposis* or *ekphrasis* stress the experiential charge at which such representation aims: the *enargeia* or *evidentia* of lively portraiture is the proper aspiration of the poet, even if, as the emphasis which George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* places on hearing makes clear, account needs to be taken of the ways in which the senses are differentially brought into play by different artistic means.<sup>17</sup> In the first stanza of Suckling's poem, as so often elsewhere, sight is reinforced by other senses to suggest an overwhelming – if here, eventually, parodic – impression in the apprehender, an impression the articulation of which is itself the instantiation of praise. If this is to some degree a synaesthetic fusion of different capacities, it is also one that is comprehensible not just with reference to the familiar Horatian claim that as painting is, so is poetry, or any descendant or variation on that claim (however it is interpreted);<sup>18</sup> it can also be usefully illuminated by a selective reminder of the diverse classical roots of Renaissance poetics.

The origins of this poetics, unsurprisingly, lie in classical rhetorical theory. David Colclough has demonstrated the extent to which the theorisation of epideictic poetry in the English Renaissance drew on and continued Julius Caesar Scaliger's wholesale transplantation to poetics of typologies developed earlier in rhetorical contexts, even though those earlier developments were themselves the rendering rhetorical of classical poetic genres that had fallen into disuse.<sup>19</sup> This kind of two-way traffic testifies not just to a general sense that poetics and rhetoric share characteristics, occasions and goals, but more specifically to the commonly held view that, as Colclough reminds us, 'epideictic traditionally had a special relationship to poetry', a view he finds articulated by Puttenham and Arthur Golding among others.<sup>20</sup> It is a view which can be traced back to Aristotle's

*Poetics*, as John Burrow has emphasised.<sup>21</sup> Noting that the genres of epideictic oratory are reworked as poetic kinds, or that poetry is imagined as the more or less polarised work of *laus* or *vituperatio*, though, does not perhaps take us as far as we need to go in order to illuminate the cavalier poetry of praise, and the kinds of dynamics we find both at work and the focus for wry reflection in Suckling. In what, if anything, does this kinship between poetry and epideictic consist?

Colclough also points out that ‘in some of the best scholarship on rhetoric, especially political rhetoric, epideictic has remained the Cinderella of the three sisters’;<sup>22</sup> this status reflects the biases of the classical theorists who had the most influence on rhetoric’s early formulations. For Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero epideictic or demonstrative oratory was the genre that called for the most perfunctory treatment, primarily because its occasions and demands were understood as either marginal, or too diffuse, to be worth the kind of detailed theorising they devoted to the more substantive genres of forensic and deliberative oratory. Quintilian, who gives one of the fuller accounts of this genre in Book 3 of *The Orator’s Education*, avers the difficulty of decisively distinguishing the singular qualities of epideictic, accepting the familiar tripartite division of causes while acknowledging that demonstrative oratory can serve deliberative ends, and that some aspects of deliberative rhetoric are also at work in the demonstrative.<sup>23</sup> Here he is to some extent opposing the kind of account of demonstrative rhetoric which sees in it no ‘pragmatic’ purpose, as he puts it, citing the Greek examples of Aristotle and Theophrastus; he is saving it for seriousness.<sup>24</sup> In particular, he is attempting to counter the suggestion that demonstrative rhetoric is primarily about display, as its name in fact suggests. In Book 1, chapter 3 of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains that all oratory is aimed at an audience constituted either as a spectator (*theoros*) or a judge (*krites*). Deliberative oratory is aimed at judges of future

things; forensic rhetoric aimed at the judgment of past matters. Demonstrative or epideictic oratory, by contrast requires a spectator rather than a judge.<sup>25</sup> Thus even provisionally or heuristically separated from judicial or political ends, utterance risks becoming a kind of free-standing image-making that merely foregrounds its own capacities.

A reluctance to see one of the genres of oratory in such terms perhaps underpins the kind of refusal to see epideictic as a genre that is voiced in Book 2 of Cicero's *De Oratore*.<sup>26</sup> But it also means that treatments of epideictic like Quintilian's find a way to temper the image of unhooked spectacle with pragmatic or propositional considerations. That could mean simply showing how epideictic was really a bit deliberative in its workings, or could be directed at deliberative ends; but could also involve finding seriousness in epideictic itself. For Aristotle, the image of pure spectatorship is tempered by an insistence on the engagement, too, of more active forms of response – as he says, in epideictic 'the speech is composed for the spectator as a judge'.<sup>27</sup> Where the audience's faculty of discrimination in forensic or deliberative contexts had an object on which to work, a question at issue, in the face of demonstrative display the issue, insofar as there was one, had to become formal or aesthetic: what the audience was required to judge was the speech itself, its power to move, its appropriateness, and through that the orator himself. The neat, or rather too neat, temporal categorisation that Aristotle offers in some ways reinforces this sense of the epideictic or demonstrative, as Richard Lockwood has suggested:<sup>28</sup> while forensic oratory required the apprehension and understanding of past events or courses of action, and deliberative oratory pointed its audience towards the future, demonstrative rhetoric was of the present – but if so, its referent, the question it called its recipients to judge, was in large part its performance or taking place here and now: epi-deixis. The spectators' response must mingle the affective and the critical, since these are only aspects of the total

apprehension, even though they are not the same. Consequently, the oration becomes a kind of autostereogram that demands something like parallel viewing: to perceive it in its fullness is to see it and to see through it, with an unusually strong awareness of the process of seeing. And the more vivid or immediate the picture is, the greater its *enargeia*, the more heightened the experience of such layered apprehension.

It is in this way of constituting the event of epideictic that its kinship with poetry, that other kind of 'speaking picture', can perhaps be said to lie. Both accounts of the poetic that in a Horatian manner stress poetry's capacity to teach, as well as to move and delight, and those that take the pattern of poetry from the categories of epideictic oratory, are as likely as theories of such oratory to stress this sense of poetry's moment. And what applies generally to poetics applies even more keenly to the workings of the key figure of ekphrasis. Claire Preston has shown how the understanding of ekphrasis as a poetic figure develops out of and alongside a rhetorical account still current in English Renaissance treatises such as Henry Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence*. As she puts it:

Ekphrasis began in oratorical practice as a set piece, imposed on or tessellated in the discursive flow. As a literary device, it is similarly interruptive, suspending, a figure whose static heft enforces a particular kind of readerly attention to detail. All purely descriptive passages have this arresting quality, of course, when intruded upon active narrative progress. Ekphrastic description, however, because it purports not simply to borrow the visual but to be it, deliberately designs and compels scrutiny, carefully directing that attentiveness away from narrative sequence and toward precise interpretive responses to obtruded and ostentatious physical facts which encode abstract meanings.<sup>29</sup>

Ekphrasis, then, like epideictic, impedes the flow of time and story, arresting us in a heightened awareness of the now. It brings to the fore the experience of looking at, as opposed to looking through, the work before us.

There are some noteworthy implications of this way of apprehending the *enargeia* of epideictic poetry for a reading of Suckling's doubtful paean to the Countess of Carlisle. While it might be excepted that this is not, strictly speaking, an ekphrastic work, the walking countess is undoubtedly positioned as a spectacle for artistic and aesthetic contemplation. In this the poem is entirely consonant not only with the contemporaneous rash of poems celebrating Lady Carlisle for her beauty, but also with the poetic interest in the singular aesthetic force of Van Dyck's portraits (the 1630s poetry of Edmund Waller offers ample demonstration of both tendencies).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the dialogue form of the poem allows the attribution of both voice and proper name to the artist whose work it sets out in its first stanza and then goes on to interrogate, and it is – as we've seen – entirely possible that one or both of Carew's 'Lucinda' poems in praise of Lady Carlisle were the prompt for the work. In which case, the poem's first section effectively imitates or recreates Carew's encomia, and the rest of the poem forms a response to and enframing of this work of art.

What effect, in this context, does the poem's trajectory from praise to vituperation have on the process of reading it? Most obviously, of course, the opening portrait of Lady Carlisle is ironised, increasingly pointedly. More interestingly, though, and at a more reflexive level, the terms and conditions of such image-making and image-consumption are brought out through disputation. While Carew is made to locate *enargeia* in the moving image of Lady Carlisle, Suckling insists it is all his friend's own work, as the flowers Carew discerns in the garden are punningly transformed into rhetorical 'flores':

J. S. I must confesse those perfumes (Tom)

I did not smell; nor found that from

Her passing by, ought sprung up new:

The flow'rs had all their birth from you;

For I pass't o're the self same walk,

And did not find one single stalk

Of any thing that was to bring

This unknown after after-spring. (ll. 10-17)

Not only this, but he then refuses Carew's subsequent claim that this merely demonstrates his sensory and cognitive impairment, as if experience were in this mode or none: 'I had my Thoughts, but not your way, / All are not born (Sir) to the Bay' (ll. 22-3). Carew's apprehension of vividness, then, is properly poetic or epideictic; to it, Suckling counterposes his own unworthy invention, tied not to the faculty of sight but to appetite and action:

'What ever fool like me had been / If I'd not done as well as seen?' (ll. 46-7). The

transformation of enamoured praise into libellous abuse is therefore not, or not just, a shift *within* a poetic mode, as if all that had to be done to make blame out of praise was to invert it on one axis, as many theorists of epideictic perfunctorily suggested; instead, it is a more thoroughgoing transformation of sensibility, a more fundamental undoing that suggests the poetic libel, and the satire with teeth, were perhaps deserving of the sense of the uncanny with which they could sometimes be invested.<sup>31</sup>

And then the ironies multiply. Sir John Suckling, himself portrayed by Van Dyck in a quasi-theatrical costume and with a copy of Shakespeare's works, sufficiently interested in artistic glory to pay for the printing of his play *Aglaura* in the full pomp of folio, claiming not

to be born to the bay?<sup>32</sup> This is part of the joke, of course; but the kinds of framing from which these ironies are generated also raise a further possibility. Such frames make us consider anew where the experience of panegyric is to be found, insofar as the poem is itself not entirely identical with such an experience. Suckling's insistence that the *enargeia* of this image is all Carew's invention makes the latter the panegyrist; yet the Carew persona himself needs to take up the stance of a beholder in order to instantiate his praise. He is both the producer and the consumer of such images, just as his audience – the audience he hopes to find, that is, not the uncooperative Suckling – admire him as artist by admiring both what he praises and his articulate praise of it. What we have here, then, is a miniature – or rather, condensed – ekphrasis in the form in which it is most commonly encountered in poetry, as much an autostereogram, and in the same way, as epideictic. Enframing the experience of art within a work of art, usually the visual experience of a pictorial image conveyed in language, it serves to produce multiple instances of the relation between artist and audience. In doing so, it can often draw particular attention to those processes, giving a thematic explicitness to what would otherwise be more implicitly at work in the epideictic sense of its spectatorial availability. Thus, making the experience of art the object of art also produces the kinds of irony or feedback or distention that are discernible here. We might think of them as complications in the art of praise, laid peculiarly bare by the invocation of an ekphrasis; but we might also see them as more clearly fundamental to its workings, immanent in its deixis, while also establishing the possibility of a critical relation to, and reflection on, such an art. They are part of what make praise and its bestowal such a serious business – for all parties to the transaction.

The presence of Van Dyck in the courtly poetry of the 1630s makes possible the narrative unpacking of epideictic's doubling address to its audience. Drawing on the long history of disputes for pre-eminence between visual and verbal art, it offers the poets of the time the chance to reflect critically on their own art's creation of demonstrative vividness, the embellished or amplified image that is the very stuff of praise. It also permits a degree of reflection on the status of the epideictic artist, and on the exchanges – moral and otherwise – in which they participate. All this, though, takes place within the context of epideictic address to the painter, in which his praising art becomes itself the object of praise; his transactions with his subject are interleaved with the poet's own transactions with him; and the relation between poem and painting itself models the epideictic relations between subject, artist and audience on which both are predicated.

What, then, of those cavalier writers who came of age, or to prominence, after the moment of Van Dyck had passed, and who either witnessed or participated in the polemicisation of both poetry and epideictic in the 1640s? Again, an exemplary instance can shed some distinctive light on the question. The bond between that sly poet, Richard Lovelace, and the equally oblique Peter Lely was marked by the former in two ekphrastic poems, the first published in *Lucasta* in 1649 and the second only in the *Posthume Poems* ten years later. The first, more celebrated poem involves exactly the kind of narrative unpacking of the work of epideictic that ekphrasis, in the fashion delineated here, makes possible. It involves an address by Lovelace to 'my Worthy Friend Mr Peter Lilly', and it focuses 'on that excellent Picture of his Majesty, and the Duke of Yorke, drawne by him at Hampton-Court' (Figure 3).<sup>33</sup> The poem is a work of praise, celebrating and elevating the painter's capabilities; but those are here defined as the capacity to present a vivid, lively

portrait of the king and his second son, where the *enargeia* of the image is defined in contrast to an older symbolic or emblematic approach which reduces painting to ‘*Hieroglyphics*’. Lely, by contrast, paints both ‘colour’ and ‘*Flame*’ – appearance and substance – ‘*Orientally* the same’ – that is, with singular lustrousness or brilliance.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the poem configures the set of relationships between sitters, painter and viewer through the reciprocity of seeing and being seen. The opening portrait of Charles bring our attention immediately to his eyes (the word ends the first line, enjambéd for emphasis), and concludes with the suggestion that other monarchs might use the king as an exemplary visual artwork: he is a ‘shaded booke’, from which they ‘May cobby out their proudest, richest looke’. When the poem shifts to the prince it maintains the focus: ‘the true *Eaglet* this quick luster spies, / And by his *Sun*’s enlightens his own eyes’. Lely is then brought into the circulation of looks:

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 *Royall Sitters* saw.

The elision of a main verb here delays the lines’ construal until the final word, and suggests that Lely’s painterly boldness and grace is properly consonant with the regal vision possessed by its subjects.

Nor does Lovelace neglect his and his readers’ shared position: both the first and third lines begin with the forceful injunction ‘See!’, and we are compelled to visualise both the scene of painting and the finished work in exactly the terms stipulated, as the

thoroughgoing co-implication of an art of praise and praiseworthy subjects. The poem's insistence on attributing a specifically royalist value to the *enargeia* it finds in the portrait – this kind of lustre is proper only to kings, it seems – claims Lely's vivid art for royalism. This, though, leaves out something of the poem's occasion in ignoring the crucial relationship between painter and patron.<sup>35</sup> The work was commissioned and paid for by Algernon Percy, tenth earl of Northumberland and jailer of the king's youngest surviving children, Princess Elizabeth and Henry, Duke of Gloucester. It seems likely, too, that Northumberland commissioned a painting of them with the Duke of York that was transported from Hampton Court, where Charles I had been imprisoned in 1647, to the earl's residence at Syon House in April 1649.<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Wood points out, though, that no entry for such a commission can be found in the earl's account books, so perhaps his patronage here was of a more indirect kind.<sup>37</sup> It is also worth noting here that in addition to being the brother of the Countess of Carlisle and a leading patron of Van Dyck the earl assembled a collection of the painter's portraits of court and aristocratic women, including two of his celebrated sister, for his gallery in Northumberland House.<sup>38</sup>

There are further knots of complication here, that the poem's ekphrasis occludes. Lely's double portrait is itself directly modelled on a Van Dyck painting of Charles and Henrietta Maria which was then hanging in the 'great closet' or 'queen's cabinet' at Somerset House (Figure 4); that royal residence, in which the queen had lived and which housed her Catholic chapel, had been – like the royal children – in the care of Northumberland since 1645.<sup>39</sup> Lely clearly knew the work, and given his relationship with Northumberland would have had opportunities to study it close up in preparing his own double portrait. It is possible that this painting is a lurking presence in another poem published in *Lucasta*, 'Amyntor's Grove', which would make of that a closely related – but

interestingly different – work in ekphrastic epideictic. Susan Clarke has argued that Somerset House is the setting for Lovelace’s strange ‘Elogie’, which evokes a somewhat un-rural ‘grove’ belonging to Amyntor and once inhabited by Chloris, though it now only ‘For ever Ecchoes [her] and her Glories’.<sup>40</sup> It is a place to which the speaker ‘is brought’ by an unseen agent, and which he explores visually before combining with unknown and unnumbered others to pledge a toast to Chloris in the performance of sensuous yet pagan rites; thus ‘ravisht’, the company are surprised by ‘two Cherubins’, a ‘Blooming Boy, and blossoming Mayd’, in whose praise the poem concludes.

Clarke marshals more than enough evidence to support (though not to put beyond argument) the claim that the two children can be most readily identified with Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth, rather than other candidates;<sup>41</sup> this in turn reinforces the plausible suggestion that Amyntor and Chloris are to be read as Charles and Henrietta Maria. The identification of the grove itself with Somerset House follows not only from this, nor just from the way in which ownership and occupation are defined and associated with the two principals in its opening lines. Once again, painting is involved. On his tour of the place’s rooms, the speaker encounters ‘a stand / Of *Titian, Raphael, Georgone*’ – all three artists were represented in the withdrawing room at Somerset House, with Raphael’s ‘Madonna’ being one of the most important pieces in the collection.<sup>42</sup>

Given this, it is possible to read the poem’s invocation of the meeting of Charles and his queen as an implicit ekphrasis, a comment on the painting hung in the queen’s cabinet, especially since the speaker presents it as a visual experience to which the winds are adding an olfactory complement:

The Windes have brought their hyre of sweet

To see *Amyntor Chloris* greet;  
Balme and Nard, and each perfume  
To blesse this payre chase and consume.

Indeed, the speaker's encounter with the grove is almost entirely couched as an overwhelming aesthetic experience. Brought back from his initial entrancement, he is able 't' observe the curious ordering / Of every Roome, where 'ts hard to know / Which most excels in *sent* or *show*'. The focus on the old masters, and their creation of 'livelier, nobler Company' than can be encountered in nature further heightens the experience, with the ravishment of sight and smell to the fore. This is a place of aesthetic superabundance; the paintings are 'Gems'

so rarely, richly set,  
For them we love the Cabinet;  
So intricately plac't withal,  
As if th' imbrodered the Wall,  
So that the Pictures seem'd to be  
But one continued Tapestrie.

As the poem shifts from 'this travell of mine eyes' to the sensory superabundance of the communal or collective rites offered in praise of Chloris this invocation of ravishment becomes plainly idolatrous, for all that the speaker suggests – conceding too much, perhaps – that these are 'harmlesse sins'. Thus the pen portraits of the two 'cherubins' who intrude into the poem at exactly this point serve to retrieve it from the sensuous drenching of

'oppressing cares' and 'the wide Jawes of our feares', and appear to steady it, ethically and aesthetically, in the enactment of praise: the 'Blooming Boy, and blossoming Mayd' become the focus for visual attention and political hope, once again demonstrating both attributes in their vivid, visual presence: the boy 'did looke / Like *Love* in *Armes*', while the *enargeia* of his sister's image is most evident in looking and being looked at:

So through her vayle her bright Haire flew,  
And yet its Glory did appeare  
But thinne, because her eyes were neare.

In this reading, 'Amyntor's Grove' forms something of a companion piece to his first poem to Lely. The latter work steadies itself on its redoubling of the praise it locates in the painter's epideictic presentation of the king and his second son – or, rather, it attributes to Lely the aesthetic and political clarity of vision it requires for itself. The emphatic oxymorons arrayed across its first half – '*clouded majesty*', '*humble bravery*', '*happy misery*' – seem to signal a failure of sense-making, the hobbling of praise – but the poem goes on to insist on a deeper coherence in the persons portrayed that Lely's art alone can render. The painter, Lovelace insists, unconceals his subjects: they appear as they are in the fullest sense, 'with the Man his very Hope or Feare'. Praising Lely's vision, the poem reinvigorates its own royalist epideixis at a moment of profound crisis, and in so doing refocuses the art that praises on objects worthy of its attention. Similarly, in 'Amyntor's Grove' the living image of the royal children reorientates the experience of sensory pleasure which might otherwise only be an opiate for the defeated. In so doing, it – and they – reaffirm the political and moral relevance of the aesthetic; and in ensuring that the cultivation of *enargeia* will

continue to have a proper object, they sustain the very possibility of a properly epideictic art. Unlike in the address to Lely, however, this is here the poet's work, a function of an encounter between poet and royalty unmediated by the framing art of another. It appears providential, or perhaps fortuitous, an almost salvific interruption which recalls the poet from the distortions of a kind of idol-worship.

Lovelace's later address to Lely, by contrast, seems less sanguine about the dangers facing the art of praise. In this, it forms something of a companion piece or complement to another poem about art published in *Lucasta: Posthume Poems*, 'On Sanazar's being Honoured with Six Hundred Duckets', which labels itself 'a Satyre' while inquiring mirthlessly into the fallen condition of praise.<sup>43</sup> Here Lovelace recalls the patronage relationship underlying a particular poem of praise, when Jacoppo Sannazaro was paid a disproportionate sum for a hexastich on the virtues of Venice – in this example, and in current circumstances, the work of epideictic is all out of joint:

And now methinks we ape Augustus state,  
So ugly we his high worth imitate,  
Monkey his Godlike glories; so that we  
Keep light and form, with such deformitie,  
As I have seen an arrogant Baboon  
With a small piece of Glasse Zany the Sun.

Evidence of our simian debasement of 'worth', Lovelace suggests, is to be found particularly in optical distortions, failures of image-making: light and form are deformed, while a small mirror zanies – imitates, mimics, with the implication of parody or mockery – the source of

light itself. We are such ape-like zanyies, but crucially the poem distinguishes the mockeries that we are from the mockeries we make. Indecorous imitations ourselves, we create only crazed images.

It might be thought that Lovelace, like many of his contemporaries, could find a renewal of epideictic in the vigorous poetry of blame, exactly the satiric mode which he is here trying out. Indeed, the poem invokes the 'rev'rend shade' of Ben Jonson as a personification of this kind of satiric chastisement of the age, and is itself rich with allusions to Jonson's satire *Poetaster: or, The Arraignment*, in which Augustan Rome is purged of bad poets who would distort the politically and ethically proper practice of writing.<sup>44</sup> But Lovelace does not appear to believe in the efficacy of his Jonsonian vision – instead, the 'masc'line Spirit' of the satirist is silent before the spectacle of a host of upstart women writers, whose poetic image-making is here derisively likened to the 'false dye' with which they 'blind' their faces. Satire seemingly fails: instead, the poem turns for its conclusion to another figural invocation, this time of a 'nobler Son' who serves instead of 'the whole gen'rous state of Venice' to provide a worthy focus of poetic attention:

You whose correcting Sweetnesse hath forbad  
Shame to the good, and glory to the bad,  
Whose honour hath ev'n into vertue tam'd,  
These Swarms that now so angerly I nam'd.

So once again a noble vision proves restorative: although Lovelace concedes, with Juvenal, that 'it is hard a Satyre not to write', this is not a justification so much as an excuse, a plea for forgiveness. The son's presence recreates the conditions for non-satiric writing, and thus

brings the poem to its end:

So when to you I my devotions raise

*All wrath and storms do end in calms and praise.*

This way of ending things resembles the redemptive interruption created by the royal children in 'Amyntor's Grove', but with a greater sense both of its necessity and its dependence on the poet's own generative capacities. Here, as in the earlier work, there is no other art, no painterly skill or eye, which might be held apart from, or kept above, the tribulations of the poetic moment.

Lovelace's second poem to Lely is entitled 'Peinture', and styles itself 'a Panegyrick' addressed to – just to make the point unavoidably clear – 'the best Picture of Friendship'.<sup>45</sup> It is an ekphrastic praise of a painter, which lauds the vivid *enargeia* of the images he makes and provides an emphatic restatement of the ongoing viability of panegyric itself. Here, too, we get an exploration of the necessary workings of the art of praise, the kinds of deflections and deferrals that permit its sustenance. Praising Lely's 'victorious Pencil', the poem states:

the Deities

Bold Poets first but feign'd, you do, and make,

And from your awe they our Devotion take.

As usual with Lovelace, the syntax makes things strange – nonetheless, the collision of 'your awe they our' in the last line quoted demonstrates how the different parties to these artful and epideictic transactions form a complex, if not impenetrable, set of interdependent

relations. Devotion is both given and taken; the painter enables it through his art, but its objects derive it, nonetheless, from the painter's admirers, who are also – therefore – the admirers of his subjects.

As in his earlier poem, Lovelace uses Lely to support his own art. His championing of the painter means he can face up, undaunted, to a world, like that of his satire, in which people fail to recognise the proper power of art. This is a world unfit for panegyric: despite the poet's praise of his friend's all-conquering talents, their contemporaries demonstrate a 'transalpine barbarous Neglect' of painting. Thus the poem concludes with an invitation:

Now my best *Lilly* let's walk hand in hand,  
And smile at this un-understanding land;  
Let them their own dull counterfeits adore,  
Their Rainbow-cloaths admire, and no more;  
Within one shade of thine more substance is  
Than all their varnish'd Idol-Mistresses:  
Whilst great *Vasari* and *Vermander* shall  
Interpret the deep mystery of all,  
And I unto our modern Picts shall show,  
What due renown to thy fair Art they owe,  
In the delineated lives of those,  
By whom this everlasting Lawrel grows.

The barbarity of these 'modern Picts' (echoing his satire's condemnation of 'Vandall ore-runners, Goths in Literature' – is presumably apparent in the crass representations they

choose of themselves, though also with the suggestion that such images are engraved upon them. The very language of epideictic, its claim on seriousness, has decayed in their hands – so the poem’s closing notes are closer to satire, wishing that ‘one great blot’ might ‘give to their fame an end’ if these picts will not apprehend the true point and purpose of such art in Lely’s example. ‘They and their Effigies’ will perish, their hearses unadorned with any ‘Poetick flower’. While the poem thus imagines a world devoid of praiseworthy objects, in which the paying of tribute in verse will have no meaningful place, its sense of the unbesmirched value of Lely’s art still gives it a vantage point from which to make an epideictic intervention: the poet and painter go ‘hand in hand’, the capabilities and integrity of the one sustained and supported by the other. Thus, and only thus, the poetry of praise retains its currency. The practice of ekphrasis, which puts the workings of epideictic on show, helps to ensure the latter’s survival. Faced with the undermining of its constitutive conditions, Lovelace’s poetry resorts to the kind of poetic survival strategies which are enough, I would suggest, to make it a continuing object of our critical interest.

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<sup>1</sup> While Suckling’s sole authorship is assumed by modern editors, and the poem’s invocation of two voices can readily be reconciled with such an assumption, the possibility that this is in some degree a collaborative or dialogic poem cannot be discounted. See Wilcher, *The Discontented Cavalier*, 132–36; Kerrigan, ‘Thomas Carew’, 328–29; Parker, ‘“All Are Not Born (Sir) to the Bay”: “Jack” Suckling, “Tom” Carew, and the Making of a Poet’, 348.

<sup>2</sup> Citations are from Suckling, *The Works of Sir John Suckling. The Non-Dramatic Works ; Edited with Introduction and Commentary by Thomas Clayton*.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Wotton, ‘On his Mistress, the Queen of Bohemia’, also known by its first line, ‘You meaner beauties of the night’. The poem survives in a large number of manuscript copies, indicating that it circulated widely among a contemporary audience: (‘CELM: Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639)’. For Strode’s popularity, see Smyth, ‘Art Reflexive’, 436.

<sup>4</sup> Bodl. MS Rawl. Poet, p.95-6; cited by Clayton. This copy is entitled ‘A Dialogue betw: T: C: and Sr: I: S:’ and subscribed ‘T: C:’.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed setting out of this idea, see Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*.

<sup>6</sup> The consonance has been traced most fully in Larsen, ‘Van Dyck’s English Period and Cavalier Poetry’, and Parry, ‘Van Dyck and the Caroline Court Poets’.

<sup>7</sup> Brown and Vlieghe, *Van Dyck, 1599-1641*, 244, 314.

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- <sup>8</sup> See Anselment, 'The Countess of Carlisle and Caroline Praise'.
- <sup>9</sup> Wilcher, *The Discontented Cavalier*, 133–35.
- <sup>10</sup> On the partisan denigration of Suckling, see *Ibid.*, 331–45.
- <sup>11</sup> Wood, 'Van Dyck and the Earl of Northumberland: Taste and Collecting in Stuart England'; Loxley, *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars*, 157–66.
- <sup>12</sup> Campbell, *Peter Lely*.
- <sup>13</sup> The renewed attention to forms of writing apt to define themselves as the resistance to such servility can be traced most readily in Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*; McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination*; Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660*; Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England*.
- <sup>14</sup> Bacon, *Oxford Francis Bacon, Vol. 15*, 160.
- <sup>15</sup> Jonson, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 5, 144.
- <sup>16</sup> Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*; Butler, "'Servant, but Not Slave": Ben Jonson at the Jacobean Court'.
- <sup>17</sup> Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, 227, 238–46.
- <sup>18</sup> Trimpi, 'The Meaning of Horace's Ut Pictura Poesis'.
- <sup>19</sup> Colclough, 'Verse Libels and the Epideictic Tradition in Early Stuart England', 24–25.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.
- <sup>21</sup> Burrow, *The Poetry of Praise*, 5–8.
- <sup>22</sup> Colclough, 'Verse Libels and the Epideictic Tradition in Early Stuart England', 17.
- <sup>23</sup> Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume 2*, 31–37, 103–17.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.
- <sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 47–50.
- <sup>26</sup> Cicero, *Cicero on the Ideal Orator (De Oratore)*, 134–37.
- <sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 173.
- <sup>28</sup> Lockwood, *The Reader's Figure*, 69–71.
- <sup>29</sup> Preston, 'Ekphrasis: Painting in Words', 119.
- <sup>30</sup> Waller, *The Poems of Edmund Waller*, 21–26, 43–44.
- <sup>31</sup> Loxley, 'On Exegetical Duty', 89–91.
- <sup>32</sup> Wilcher, *The Discontented Cavalier*, 194–95, 221–23.
- <sup>33</sup> Lovelace, *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*, 57–58. Quotations from Lovelace are from this edition, which omits lineation.
- <sup>34</sup> 'Orientally, Adv.'
- <sup>35</sup> Loxley, *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars*, 157–66.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 160; Wood, 'Van Dyck and the Earl of Northumberland: Taste and Collecting in Stuart England', 311.
- <sup>37</sup> Wood, 'Van Dyck and the Earl of Northumberland: Taste and Collecting in Stuart England', 295.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 290–91.
- <sup>39</sup> Loxley, *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars*, 160; Clarke, 'Richard Lovelace: Royalist Poetry in Context, 1639–1649', 252; Millar, *The Inventories and Valuations of the King's Goods 1649-51*, 317.
- <sup>40</sup> Clarke, 'Richard Lovelace: Royalist Poetry in Context, 1639–1649', 249–53; Lovelace, *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*, 71–74.
- <sup>41</sup> Clarke, 'Richard Lovelace: Royalist Poetry in Context, 1639–1649', 258–59.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 252; Millar, *The Inventories and Valuations of the King's Goods 1649-51*, 304–7. It is worth noting here that the Somerset House collections also included two of Van Dyck's portraits of the three elder children of Charles and Henrietta Maria, which served as models for Lely's portrait of Prince James and his two younger siblings.
- <sup>43</sup> Lovelace, *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*, 192–201.
- <sup>44</sup> Loxley, 'Echoes as Evidence in the Poetry of Andrew Marvell', 178.
- <sup>45</sup> Lovelace, *The Poems of Richard Lovelace*, 180–83.

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Figure captions:

Figure 1 – Sir John Suckling, by Anthony Van Dyck

Figure 2 – Lucy Hay, Countess of Carlisle, by Anthony Van Dyck

Figure 3 – Charles I and James, Duke of York, by Peter Lely

Figure 4 – Charles I and Henrietta Maria, by Anthony Van Dyck