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Study for the Figure of Poetry on the Ceiling of the Segnatura

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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.