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## YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH EKPHRASIS

Ekphrasis is an ancient rhetorical term variously defined throughout the twentieth century for the contemporary reader. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for instance, explains ekphrasis as “a plain declaration or interpretation of a thing”<sup>1</sup> and the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* as “the rhetorical description of a work of art”<sup>2</sup> while George Saintsbury’s *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe* defines it as “a set description intended to bring person, place, picture, &c., vividly before the mind’s eye.”<sup>3</sup> What is common to all these definitions is that ekphrasis is a verbal representation of a thing but whether the “thing” denotes anything or whether its reference is confined to artworks remains undecided. This disparity between definitions of ekphrasis may result from the history of the term. At various stages of its evolution the meaning of the word “ekphrasis,” initially understood broadly, has been drastically narrowed. The Greek habit of relating verbal art to visual art and the ancient *literary* practice of verbally representing sculptures and paintings as well as the fact that the most striking examples of ekphrasis – beginning with the description of the shield of Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad* – were devoted to visual artworks made descriptions of works of visual art so popular that visual artworks were not only identified within a group of objects to be ekphrastically represented but assumed a privileged position among them.

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<sup>1</sup> J.A. SIMPSON and E. S. C. WEINER, eds., *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> N.G.L. HAMMOND and H. H. SCULLARD, eds., *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 377.

<sup>3</sup> G. SAINTSBURY, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 491.

A collection of ekphrases of paintings published in the third century AD by Philostratos the Elder exemplifies, according to Graf, the emergence of a rhetorical genre devoted to descriptions of visual artworks.<sup>4</sup> Parallel to the rhetorical practice there appeared also a separate genre of literary ekphrases, either in the form of individual poems or set pieces within larger literary texts.

The ekphrasis that interests us in the present study is not a rhetorical but a literary term and a literary phenomenon, whose origin in rhetoric, however, determines the way ekphrasis is perceived in contemporary literary studies. There are numerous examples of descriptions of visual artworks in literary works and the multitude is best illustrated in James Heffernan's *Museum of Words*, whose very subtitle *The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*<sup>5</sup> as well as the full range of writers under study, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, the Renaissance writers in England (Shakespeare, Spenser), the major romantic poets (Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Shelley) and, in the modern period, Auden, Williams, and Ashbery, indicate the wide scale of the ekphrastic phenomenon in literature. Despite its constant presence in literary texts from antique to modern times, however, the path of ekphrasis as a generic term for descriptions of visual art objects into the terminology of contemporary literary criticism was not straightforward. The term entered literary studies as late as in the second half of the twentieth century, appearing in analyses of poetic representations of paintings and sculptures. The way ekphrasis was defined there was inspired by the above presented specification of the term in classical times. Next to Jean Hagstrum's brief mention of ekphrasis in his *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism from Dryden to Gray* (1958), Leo Spitzer's explanation of the term as "the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art"<sup>6</sup> in "The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' or Content vs. Metagrammar" (1962) is considered "the earliest instance of the use of the term *ekphrasis* in modern literary scholarship, and a startlingly competent one."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> F. GRAF, "Ekphrasis: Die Entstehung der Gattung in der Antike," *Beschreibungskunst – Kunstbeschreibung: Ekphrasis von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, eds. G. Boehm and H. Pfoten-hauer (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1995), p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> J.A.W. HEFFERNAN, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> L. SPITZER, "The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' or Content vs. Metagrammar," in: *Essays on English and American Literature*, ed. Anna Hatcher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> B.F. SCHOLZ, "'Sub Oculos Subiectio' – Quintilian on Ekphrasis and Enargeia," in: *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis*, eds. Valerie Robillard and Els Jongeneel (Amsterdam: VU University Press: 1998), p. 93, note 3.

Hagstrum's citing of ekphrasis as an aspect of his broad study of pictorialism, Spitzer's analysis of Keats's ode as an exemplary case of ekphrasis as well as, coming soon after, Murray Krieger's attempt at formulating the first and the most influential theory of ekphrasis<sup>8</sup> in his "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited" (1967) made ekphrasis an object of growing interest for literary critics studying word-and-image relations. Commentaries on ekphrasis that appeared in the wake of the pioneer works by Hagstrum, Spitzer and Krieger were concordant with both Spitzer's definition of ekphrasis as a *poetic* description of an artwork as well as Hagstrum's and Krieger's interest in ekphrastic descriptions in poetry exclusively. Used in ancient rhetoric "to intrude upon the flow of discourse and, for its duration, to suspend the argument of the rhetor or the action of the poet ... to interrupt the temporality of discourse, to freeze it during its indulgence in spatial exploration,"<sup>9</sup> ekphrasis was considered improper for narrative works. In his article Krieger claims that due to its overt temporality prose fiction is handicapped in creating the illusion of spatiality that the presence of ekphrasis guarantees poetry.<sup>10</sup> In a similar fashion, Wendy Steiner, who in *The Colors of Rhetoric* (1982) explains ekphrasis as the verbal equivalent of the pregnant moment<sup>11</sup> in the visual arts, excludes novels from studies of ekphrasis due to their self-evident temporality made "explicit in the sequence of events depicted."<sup>12</sup> As "the topos of the still, transcendent moment," Steiner explains, ekphrasis "opposes the contingency of plot flow and temporal progression in the novel."<sup>13</sup> George Kurman's claim that it was "the nostalgia for timelessness that was to make the device of ekphrasis so attractive to later poets"<sup>14</sup> also argues against the suitability of ekphrasis for temporal narrative. Even in epic narratives, from which ekphrasis originated

<sup>8</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> M. KRIEGER, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> IDEM, "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited" (1967), reprinted in *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, pp. 263-288.

<sup>11</sup> The term "pregnant moment" was first used by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766; trans. Ellen Frothingham [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005]) where it is explained as "a single moment of an action, ... the one most suggestive of what has gone before and what is to follow" (p. 92).

<sup>12</sup> W. STEINER, *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> EADEM, "The Causes of Effect: Edith Wharton and the Economics of Ekphrasis," *Poetics Today* 10.2 (1989), p. 279.

<sup>14</sup> G. KURMAN, "Ekphrasis in Epic Poetry," *Comparative Literature* 26.1 (1974), p. 3.

(Homer's *Iliad*), an ekphrastic description was treated as a minor and dispensable unit, "[an] ornamental digression, a descriptive detour from the high road of epic narrative, ... a detachable fragment which can be moved from one work to another,"<sup>15</sup> whose role was to "slow the pace of the narrative in characteristic epic retardation."<sup>16</sup>

Numerous instances of ekphrastic descriptions in fiction could not, however, remain neglected for long and left out from the theoretical debate on ekphrasis. Therefore, my interest in ekphrasis in this article concerns what I identify as the pro-narrative drive in the evolution of ekphrastic studies. This pro-narrativity of ekphrastic theories shows in the growing interest in examining the workings of ekphrasis in modern fiction (predominantly the novel) in search of such a form of ekphrasis which would best correspond with the narrative. Basically, the discussion concerns two such forms – descriptive ekphrasis and non-descriptive ekphrastic model – the latter considered more agreeable towards the narrative and its temporality due to its compressed form. Below I present the pro-narrative evolution of ekphrastic theories in the second half of the twentieth century as well as a solution to the problem the direction of the progress poses.

The detailed exploration of the pro-narrative track in the thicket of ekphrastic theories in the second half of the twentieth century starts with Jean Hagstrum's *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism from Dryden to Gray*,<sup>17</sup> regarded by Krieger a "pioneering work."<sup>18</sup> Despite being familiar with the definition of ekphrasis as it was inherited from antiquity and preserved throughout the centuries – a poetical description of a visual artwork<sup>19</sup> – Hagstrum delves into the history of the word "ekphrasis" to establish his way of using the term. Trying to be etymologically faithful to the Greek "ekphrasein," translated as "speak out" and "tell in full," Hagstrum defines ekphrasis narrowly as the "quality of giving voice and language to the otherwise mute art object."<sup>20</sup> Hagstrum's restriction of the meaning of ekphrasis makes it equal with *prosopopeia*, a rhetorical term de-

<sup>15</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> KURMAN, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> J. H. HAGSTRUM, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>18</sup> KRIEGER, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Hagstrum himself provides definitions of ekphrasis from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and George Saintsbury's *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*.

<sup>20</sup> HAGSTRUM, p. 18, note 34.

noting “a technique of envoicing a silent object.”<sup>21</sup> Viewed as such, ekphrasis is contrasted with iconic poetry in which “the poet contemplates a real or imaginary work of art that he describes or responds to in some other way”<sup>22</sup> and which, however, has no verbal message. Ekphrasis, along with iconic poetry and poetical imagery, constitutes a phenomenon which Hagstrum studies under a more general term – “pictorialism.” The cardinal properties of poetic descriptions or images which make them “pictorial” are the following:

- a) such an arrangement of presented details which makes them imaginable as a painting or sculpture (without the need to resemble a particular work);
- b) reference to any school or method of painting – “it may bear relations with art that is imitative or abstract, representational or symbolic”<sup>23</sup>;
- c) apparent reduction of motion to stasis in the verbal medium;
- d) subordination of the communicated message to the visual presentation.<sup>24</sup>

The “immobilising” facet of pictorialism (point c) is definitely the most important postulate of Hagstrum’s study, and becomes a bone of contention among theoreticians of ekphrasis. It underscores and propels all subsequent studies of ekphrasis which try either to retain the immobility or break the stagnancy. The pro-narrative tendency among the theories of ekphrasis arises in protest against this assumption that language should succumb to pictorial paralysis. More specifically, it appears as a challenge to Murray Krieger’s treatment of ekphrasis as an indicator of atemporality in the language of poetry. Krieger’s standpoint on ekphrasis, although it was criticised – or because it was criticised – works as a direct stepping stone for future narrative-oriented theories of ekphrasis.

Krieger’s views on ekphrasis are related to Hagstrum’s pictorialism and the notion of capturing language in time in particular. Besides, both studies are anchored in poetry, showing little interest for analysing ekphrasis in prose narrative works. What differentiates the two scholars is that, unlike Hagstrum who deals with ekphrasis in a footnote, Krieger makes it a pivotal point of his discussion. Such a promotion on the interart stage requires a definition of the analysed phenomenon. In his seminal essay “*Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or Laokoön Revisited*” (1967) Krieger refutes Hagstrum’s reductive equation of ekphrasis and prosopopeia. He aims at expanding Hags-

<sup>21</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> HAGSTRUM, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> HAGSTRUM, xxii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

trum's narrow understanding of the term so that it includes "what Hagstrum calls 'iconic' as well as what he calls 'ekphrastic.'"<sup>25</sup> To embrace both iconic depictions of visual artworks and their envoicing in a single definition, Krieger explains ekphrasis as "the imitation in literature of a work of plastic art."<sup>26</sup> As the article shows, however, Krieger's interest in ekphrasis reaches far beyond the question of definition or the definitional mimetic depictions of spatial art objects. He adopts a wider perspective and studies the function ekphrastic representations of visual artworks can perform in poetry.

Krieger advocates for the recognition of pictorial stasis in the language of poetry. He argues that the ability of a poem to make an impression of freezing its own temporality is proof of the poem's excellence. The apparent stoppage is manifested through ekphrasis, produced and enclosed by the poem. To explain the mechanism of this relation Krieger draws on Leo Spitzer's critical analysis of John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Spitzer observes that the described urn lends its shape to the poem which becomes circular or "perfectly symmetrical"<sup>27</sup> as it reproduces symbolically the form of the *objet d'art* which is its model. Generalising Spitzer's reflection Krieger states that whenever a visual artwork is depicted in a poem, it becomes a symbol of the underlying structure of the poem which, as is the case in the visual arts, is perceived as a spatial form. Thus, the "stilled world of plastic relationships"<sup>28</sup> evoked by ekphrasis points to the existence of the "stilled world of internal repetitions and relationships"<sup>29</sup> within a poem. Careful arrangement of reiterated or juxtaposed themes, ideas or images requires "conceptual mapping or spatializing"<sup>30</sup> and makes the reader "see" the poem as a formal pattern. Thus, even though the poem is unveiled gradually in the reading process, the described image signals a possibility of suspending the temporal movement of language in the realisation of the simultaneous collaboration of the structural elements of the work. Krieger explains this paradoxical co-existence of progression and fixity by addressing our

<sup>25</sup> KRIEGER, "Ekphrasis and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoön* Revisited", p. 267, note 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 265. By "plastic arts" Krieger understands "those arts in which the artist shapes or fashions or molds a material into a perceptible physical object, principally sculpture or painting" (*Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, p. 6, note 5).

<sup>27</sup> SPITZER, p. 73.

<sup>28</sup> R. GWEN, "Ekphrasis and the Temporal/Spatial Metaphor in Murray Krieger's Critical Theory," *New Orleans Review* 12.4 (1985), p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> RAABERG, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

imagination with a spatial metaphor of an eternal loop. He argues that the use of self-reflexive devices – “all sorts of repetitions, echoes, complexes of internal relations”<sup>31</sup> – gives the poem a “sense of roundedness”<sup>32</sup> and “converts its chronological progression into simultaneity, its temporally unrepeatable flow into eternal recurrence; through a metaphorical bending under the pressure of aesthetic tension, it converts its linear movement into circle.”<sup>33</sup>

Such a symbolic use of plastic arts in poetry fulfils Krieger’s desire for arresting the flow of the poetical language in, using Hagstrum’s words, the “motionlessness of the arrangement.”<sup>34</sup> The correspondence between the verbally reproduced spatial design and the imagined outline of the poem’s intricate structure is called by Krieger an ekphrastic principle which, as a sort of poetic manifesto, when followed, makes the poem successfully poetic. If we were to define the ekphrastic principle more succinctly, we could resort to Krieger’s initial definition of ekphrasis (“the imitation in literature of a work of plastic art”), whose expansion into “the imitation *by* literature of a work of plastic art” can be used now to show the universal character of Krieger’s ekphrastic principle.

James A. W. Heffernan sees Krieger’s ekphrastic principle as too wide-ranging and imprecise. Focused on the status of a visual artwork as an autonomous art object which is to be acquired by a literary work through the “assertion of its integrity,”<sup>35</sup> Krieger’s theory becomes for Heffernan “a new name for formalism.”<sup>36</sup> Even though Heffernan appreciates the fact that Krieger’s theory of ekphrasis “give[s] this moribund term a new lease on life,” he also notes that it “stretches ekphrasis to the breaking point: to the point where it no longer serves to contain any particular body of literature.”<sup>37</sup> In order to compensate for the hazy universality of Krieger’s theory Heffernan resolves to find a definition of ekphrasis which would be “sharp enough to identify a distinguishable body of literature and yet also elastic enough to reach from classicism to postmodernism, from Homer to Ashbery.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, he proposes to view ekphrasis as “the verbal representa-

<sup>31</sup> KRIEGER, “Ekphrasis”, p. 263.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> HAGSTRUM, p. xxii.

<sup>35</sup> KRIEGER, “Ekphrasis”, p. 284.

<sup>36</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.



tion of visual representation.”<sup>39</sup> “The verbal representation” suggests vivid references to and the strict dependence of the text on the object which is to be depicted/represented in words, whereas the second part of Heffernan’s definition restricts the objects prone to ekphrastic rendition to artworks which are themselves representational of reality.<sup>40</sup>

Heffernan swerves drastically from Krieger’s use of ekphrasis as a guarantee of fixity in language, taking in this way a big step towards exposing the temporal and pro-narrative nature of ekphrasis. In his opposition to Krieger, whose ekphrastic principle hinges on the idea of the immediately grasped structural entirety of a poem, Heffernan lifts the obligation imposed on language to freeze its temporal progression in space. In this way he also rejects Wendy Steiner’s suggestion that ekphrasis is the verbal equivalent of the pregnant moment in the visual arts, which denotes a single moment isolated in action that reveals all that has led up to it and all that will follow,<sup>41</sup> and thus makes a poem pursue the “atemporal ‘eternity’ of the stopped-action painting.”<sup>42</sup> Unlike Krieger and Steiner, Heffernan sees ekphrasis as dynamic and driven by its inherent narrative impulse. Instead of being restrained by the pregnant moment of the visual arts, ekphrasis uses the visual details of the stationary scene to develop the story implied by the picture.

The dynamism that Heffernan sees in ekphrasis makes it a contentious phenomenon. On a small scale, the very ekphrastic story arises in response to the static image whose fixed composition contrasts with the temporality of the verbal medium into which it enters: “From Homer’s time to our own, ekphrastic literature reveals again and again this narrative response to pictorial stasis, this storytelling impulse that language by its very nature seems to release and stimulate.”<sup>43</sup> It is as if the static image, when transported into the text, was caught, carried away and “diluted” in the current of the time-driven narration whose gradual unfolding in time best corresponds with the temporality of language.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> Heffernan explains the required representational character of artworks which when described become ekphrases using the negative example of Hart Crane’s *The Bridge*. Even though the Brooklyn Bridge on which Crane focuses may be considered a work of art and construed as a symbol of many things, since it was not created to represent anything, its depiction will not make the poem ekphrastic (4).

<sup>41</sup> STEINER, *The Colors of Rhetoric*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> W. STEINER, *Pictures of Romance: Form against Context in Painting and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 13-14.

<sup>43</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 5.



Despite the attempts of language to “domesticate” the alien static image in language through the operation of the narrative impulse in ekphrastic passages, ekphrasis cannot be fully integrated with the framing narrative (in epic poems with which Heffernan’s study of ekphrasis begins). The contentious nature of ekphrasis considered on a larger scale is caused by the fact that ekphrastic passages spring from frozen visual scenes, which makes them fully compliant with Gerard Genette’s definition of description as the depiction of object or people in stasis.<sup>44</sup> Following the precepts of Genette’s narratology (which directs Heffernan’s thinking about ekphrasis), ekphrasis as description ranks below narration understood as the depiction of objects and people in movement and viewed as the driving force of a story.<sup>45</sup> Description, in turn, even if not concerned with the representation of visual artworks, is treated as a hindrance to the temporal progression of narration in Genette’s “rigorously stratified scheme.”<sup>46</sup> Considering the fact that as a verbal imitation of a fixed artistic image eternally destined to stillness ekphrasis not only complies with Genette’s understanding of description (depiction of objects or people *in stasis*) but is an embodiment of the definitional postulates, it becomes a still more decelerating and thus more alien element to the progress of narration. Functions within the narrative being dealt this way, description, and with it ekphrasis, end up as a mere auxiliary of narrative, “*ancilla narrationis*, the ever-necessary, ever-submissive, never emancipated slave.”<sup>47</sup>

Following C. S. Baldwin, Heffernan observes, however, that ekphrasis is capable of frustrating the narrative movement.<sup>48</sup> If ekphrasis from its inferior position of a mere supplement can disturb the dominant narrative structure, “it is anything but submissive.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, Heffernan sees ekphrasis as “the unruly antagonist of narrative, the ornamental digression that refuses to be merely ornamental.”<sup>50</sup> Whether viewed from the inside of the ekphrastic passage where the static image is stretched into a story or from the outside where, though in the form of a story, it is treated as a static description in contrast with the overall temporal structure of the narrative, ekphrasis

<sup>44</sup> G. GENETTE, *Figures II: Essais* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> G. GENETTE, *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 134.

<sup>48</sup> C.S. BALDWIN, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p. 19, qtd. in HEFFERNAN, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

emerges from Heffernan's study as deeply paragonal.<sup>51</sup> This fractious nature of ekphrasis is fostered by the inherent conflict which permeates ekphrasis, "a contest between rival modes of representation: between the driving force of the narrating word and the stubborn resistance of the fixed image."<sup>52</sup> Heffernan sees this contentious or paragonal character of ekphrasis as the factor which made it attractive and kept it alive throughout the centuries.

Tamar Yacobi makes Heffernan's revolutionary observation that ekphrasis is inherently related to narrative the main focus of her study. Unlike Heffernan, however, Yacobi promotes the idea of a smooth collaboration between the ekphrastic piece and the framing narrative. She endeavours to reduce the paragonal pressure built up by Heffernan between time-propelled narration and descriptions of immobile artworks so that the visual works of art can sneak into the stream of events not only without disturbing it but boosting its progress. Thus she brings into discussion a peculiar form of ekphrasis, called "the ekphrastic model," explained as an evocation in language of a common pictorial model in the visual arts, e.g. a Madonna with a child, a Turner seascape, an adoration of the Magi. The word "evocation" implies that instead of describing its visual source in detail, the ekphrastic model alludes to it briefly. Apart from its non-descriptive nature, the ekphrastic model is also characterised by a general reference to a multiple visual source (an artistic model recurring in many works rather than a unique artwork) sharing the same distinguishing feature (topos, theme, style, traditional figure, the name of the artist, characteristic detail, posture or scene). Consequently, Yacobi defines ekphrasis broadly as "the literary evocation of spatial art."<sup>53</sup> The chief advantages of the ekphrastic model in collaborating with the narrative, as Yacobi presents them, are the following: evocability (non-descriptive character), accessibility (modelled versus unique reference) and manoeuvrability or assimilability (ability to co-operate with various elements of the narrative).

Yacobi's sceptical attitude towards the representational potential of language makes her opt for the evocability of the ekphrastic model as a way of inserting a picture into a text. Working on short stories by Isak Dinesen, Yacobi shares Dinesen's opinion that it is impossible to reproduce a painting

<sup>51</sup> *Paragone* (contest) – a tendency in the Renaissance to view various occupations, ideas, arts and philosophies as competitive. See HEFFERNAN, p. 1, note 1; HAGSTRUM, pp. 66-67.

<sup>52</sup> HEFFERNAN, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> T. YACOBI, "Pictorial Models and Narrative Ekphrasis," *Poetics Today* 16.4 (1995), p. 600.

or statue in words. Any attempt to do so would be futile. An extended and detailed depiction could bore the reader and, more importantly, distract him from the main course of the action, impeding the development of the plot and reducing the narrative pace. This, however, does not mean a total resignation from attempts to transport the visual arts into narrative texts. According to Yacobi, the depariclarised allusion of the ekphrastic model offers a halfway solution. It has the power to evoke in the reader's mind or, in other words, retrieve from his memory a stereotyped image or pictorial cliché through a brief presentation of some distinctive feature of the figure or scene. The visual composition is thus present in the consciousness of the reader without being substantially materialised in words. In this way, Yacobi can cunningly achieve her aim of introducing the visual arts into the text so that they can interact with the narrative but, shrunk to their minimal representative form, do not hamper the forward movement of the action.

Apart from being a smooth way of submerging the image in the flow of narration, the ekphrastic model also ensures the reader's awareness of the cross-reference between the visual and verbal arts and his familiarity with the alluded image. Yacobi claims that references to individual artworks, frequently highly specific and sophisticated, put ekphrasis in danger of being missed by a non-expert reader. His failure to recognise an interart allusion means the end of ekphrasis and makes his understanding of a given text seriously altered or at least impoverished. The risk can be eliminated, however, with the universality and wide appeal of the ekphrastic model. Yacobi's depariclarised allusion refers not to an individual artwork but to a group of works characteristic of an author or linked by the same popular thematic element. Therefore, the chances that the reader will be acquainted with the general referent of the ekphrastic model are much higher than in the case of the unique reference of descriptive ekphrases. Common and collective images invoked by the ekphrastic model are thus fully available for the reading public.

The evocability and accessibility of the ekphrastic model are related issues: without the general reference to a visual commonplace easily identified by the reader, the reduction of form in the ekphrastic model with a simultaneous retention of its communicative potential would not be possible. Equipped with both – its concise form and immediately recognised visual source – the ekphrastic model proves useful for the temporal development of the story in which it is embedded, but not only. It has already been said that the onward progressing action can easily slide over the curtailed form of Yacobi's concise allusion without being suspended by an extensive presen-

tation of the image. This fluent insertion of the image into the text does not mean, however, that it can pass unnoticed and be regarded as irrelevant for the logical integrity of the story. Conversely, the reader's assumed familiarity with the image alluded to ensures instantaneous identification of the scene and its being immediately related to the problems of the narrative. What I refer to as the contribution to "the logical integrity of the story" or "the problems of the narrative" is called by Yacobi the manoeuvrability or assimilability of the ekphrastic model and manifests itself in the ability of the concise allusion to augment plot dynamics, sharpen delineation of characters or modify the perspective from which a situation is shown.

The idea of the ekphrastic model is a vital part of the discussion of the pro-narrativity of ekphrasis and will re-appear throughout this study. It is therefore necessary to decide how Yacobi's non-descriptive ekphrasis will be referred to in the future debate. For the sake of clarity, I will thus abandon Yacobi's three-part scale of evaluating the compatibility of the ekphrastic model with the narrative as well as her obscure terminology (evocability, accesibility, manoeuvrability or assimilability) and instead judge the usefulness of the ekphrastic model for the narrative from the perspective of its contribution to the temporal and logical aspects of the story. Therefore, I will once again explain that the ekphrastic model is harmonious with the temporal progress of the narrative because it is allusive rather than descriptive and thereby undisturbing for the flow of events. It also proves constructive for the logical integrity of the story since it is capable of relating to *any* element of the narrative (plot, characterisation, perspective, setting, theme, mode, symbolism etc.) and boosting its functionality. It must be noted, however, that the temporal and logical categories are in some cases overlapping rather than disjunctive and the distinction between the compact form of the ekphrastic model (corresponding with the temporal progress of the narrative) and the content of Yacobi's generalised allusion (contributing to the logical aspect of the narrative) is not always so rigid. When the message the ekphrastic model communicates to the reader is directed at empowering the plot of the novel and accelerating the novel's action, the ekphrastic model must be recognised as contributing not only to the logical aspect of the novel but also to its temporal dimension.

Those two features – non-descriptiveness (evocability) and departicularised reference (accessibility) – combined in the ekphrastic model set it in clear opposition to traditional descriptive ekphrasis abiding by the rule of mimetic (detailed and accurate) representation of unique art objects. The op-

position between the ekphrastic model and descriptive ekphrasis in terms of form and content implies the superiority of Yacobi's compressed allusion over the extended form of ekphrasis in collaborating with the narrative on both temporal and logical level. Firstly, while the compressed form of the ekphrastic model makes it easily integrated with the story and its unfolding in time, the substantial body of extensive ekphrasis hinders the temporal progression of the action. And secondly, extended ekphrasis has to gradually make the reader acquainted with a painted scene through its careful description, and rely on his ability to recognise the significance of the image and relate it to the narrative. Unlike descriptive ekphrasis, the ekphrastic model communicates its visual source to the reader briefly and effectively by referring to a pictorial cliché. Assuming the reader's familiarity with the most prominent elements of the composition of the pictorial commonplace, the image can be immediately used to augment the logical unity of the narrative by giving an impetus to the workings of its mechanisms (plot, characterisation or perspective etc.).

Yacobi's pro-narrative enthusiasm is not shared by everyone and the notion of the ekphrastic model provokes voices of protest. Claus Clüver, for instance, strongly disapproves of Yacobi's drastic tactics of reducing ekphrasis to just the name of the artist or a mention of a pictorial motif. Such quantitative simplification and eradication of the descriptive dimension of ekphrasis deprives it of its *enargeitic* energy. Itself a rhetorical figure denoting the use of words "to yield so vivid a description that they ... place the represented object before the reader's (hearer's) inner eye,"<sup>54</sup> *enargeia* is perceived by Clüver as an integral element of ekphrasis and its ultimate aim. He claims that "ekphrasis is etymologically and traditionally the very name of enargeitic description."<sup>55</sup> Clüver's investigation into the history of the term indeed substantiates his argument (and corrects Hagstrum's misunderstanding of ekphrasis as a form of *prosopopeia*). The results of his enquiry are the following:

'*Phrazein*' refers to a particular use of speech and means 'to show, to make known or explicit,' and '*ekphrazein*' is an intensive version of the verb meaning 'to show very clearly, to make completely clear.' *Ekphrasis* is a term used in Antiquity almost exclusively in rhetoric, and as such translated into Latin as 'descriptio.'<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> KRIEGER, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> C. CLÜVER, "Quotation, Enargeia, and the Functions of Ekphrasis," *Pictures into Words*, p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

In the face of the historical and linguistic evidence, Clüver proposes to re-define ekphrasis to preserve its descriptive body and save it from Yacobi's reductive practices. Following Yacobi, who treats ekphrasis as an allusion – a short quotation from a different text – Clüver locates his discussion within the field of intertextuality (understood broadly as an exchange not only between verbal texts but any other sign systems). He makes the observation, however, that “quotation” is a very broad term and, apart from allusion, it is possible to distinguish within it a sub-category called “re-writing” – “the re-presentation of texts by reformulation.”<sup>57</sup> Since re-writing is again used to cover all kinds of sign-systems and ekphrasis concerns only the verbal reproduction of visual artworks, Clüver concentrates on a particular aspect of re-writing – verbalisation, defined as “a form of verbal re-presentation that consists of more than a name or a title.”<sup>58</sup> Identifying ekphrasis with verbalisation is for Clüver a good way of shielding verbal depictions of artworks from such drastic slashing as Yacobi's. His final explanation of ekphrasis shows it as “the verbalisation of real or fictitious texts composed in a non-verbal sign system.”<sup>59</sup>

While Clüver uses the field of intertextuality to refute Yacobi's and prove his rival standpoint on ekphrasis, Valerie Robillard perceives intertextual studies as the only available help for systematising and reconciling the contradictory views on ekphrasis. Robillard argues that intertextuality provides a framework within which it is possible to side *all* the diverse approaches to ekphrasis concerning the size and content of ekphrastic fragments, shatter their paragonal aura and make them compatible. Her method of capturing the whole of ekphrasis differs significantly from Clüver's, which is focused on finding the most accurate definition of the term. Robillard argues that it is impossible to propound one explanation of ekphrasis which would cover the multitude of examples that pertain to be called “ekphrastic.” From the nominal treatment of the presence of the visual arts in the text and seeking an answer to the unsettling question “What is ekphrasis?” Robillard moves thus towards an adjectival approach. To represent her standpoint on ekphrasis, she proposes a two-part model showing the manner and degree to which the transfer between the arts may be classified as “ekphrastic.” The first part of the model is called the Scalar Model whereas the second is labelled the Differential Model and while the former is designed to measure the way and intensity of the vis-

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

ual intertext's presence within the verbal text, the latter is designed "to help differentiate the strong and explicitly marked ekphrastic texts from those that signal more nebulous relationships with their pictorial source(s)."<sup>60</sup> Since the Differential Model plays a crucial role in the subsequent discussion, I will present it in detail.

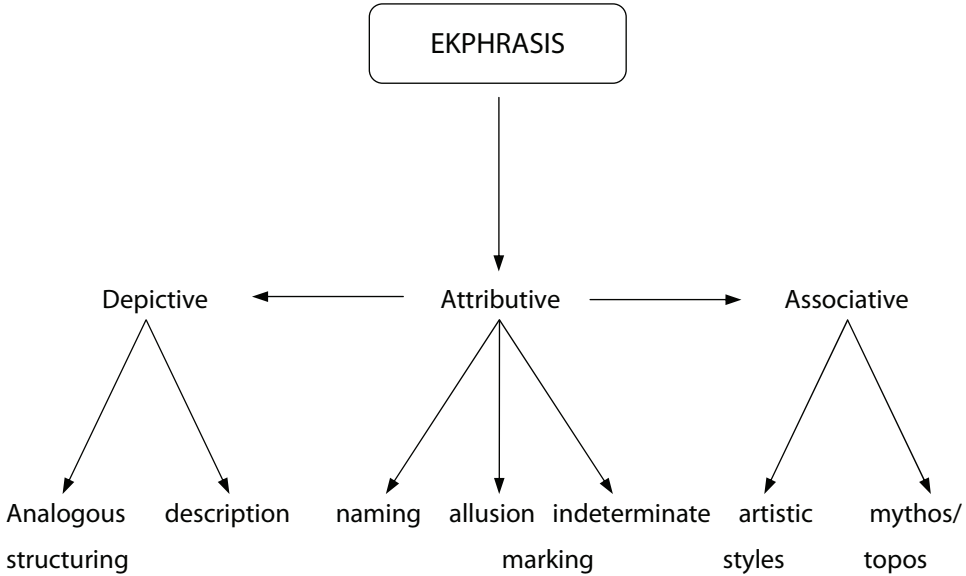


Table 1. The Differential Model.

Robillard's typology should be read from left to right to follow the "the depreciating strength of ekphrastic relationships."<sup>61</sup> The Depictive category includes texts which provide a substantial verbal representation of their pictorial pretexts and thus meet the requirement of vivid enargetic description.

Placed in the middle of Robillard's scheme, the Attributive class involves less manifest types of marking the presence of the visual intertext: naming (direct reference to an individual artwork in the title or in the body of the text), allusion (more general reference to painter, style or genre) and indeterminate marking (an advanced reference to some peculiarity of the visual work requiring additional knowledge).

<sup>60</sup> V. ROBILLARD, "In Pursuit of Ekphrasis (An Intertextual Approach)," *Pictures into Words*, p. 60.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.



The final Associative variety of ekphrastic relations accounts for poems with the least specific connection with the visual arts. They mention and discuss general ideas associated with the plastic arts, such as structural elements, prevailing themes as well as theoretical issues (space vs. time).

Arbitrating not between what ekphrasis is and what it is not but between what is more and what is less ekphrastic, Robillard finally settles the discussion on the size and substance of ekphrastic passages. Robillard's two-part model can be called cumulative and harmonious as it gathers under different labels all the often conflicting views on ekphrasis discussed above. How the unification is possible can be best demonstrated with the aid of the Differential Model. Both Krieger and Clüver, who advocate the energetic character of ekphrasis, would side with the Depictive category. Even though Clüver finds the first part of Heffernan's definition of ekphrasis (the verbal representation) too imprecise and liberal since it accepts the title of an artwork as its representation, Heffernan's exploitation of the descriptive details of the static scene in the process of narrativising ekphrasis would also make him fall into the Depictive category. As we leave the division of depictive ekphrastic relations and move towards the far-right prong of Robillard's scheme, it becomes totally Yacobi-oriented. In the Attributive category we encounter Yacobi's postulates of a brief mention of the author's name and allusion to the characteristics of his/her style (e.g. a Turner seascape) to finally reach the ultimate achievement of her ekphrastic model, which ideally fits the Associative category and comprises texts referring to a general motif, theme or style within the visual arts.

Apart from showing the range of possibilities for the size and substance of ekphrastic pieces, reconciling the most prominent and often conflicting views on ekphrasis and finally tracing the process of gradual expansion of ekphrasis in relation to pictorialism, Robillard's Differential Model can serve yet another function. Although Robillard does not address the problem of the pro-narrativity of ekphrasis in her study, it can be explained with the aid of her Differential Model.

Read from left to right Robillard's scheme shows a gradual loosening of ekphrastic relationships between the text and its visual source. In other words, it traces the evolution of ekphrastic thought from Clüver's insistence on substantial description of the referred image (Depictive category) to Yacobi's resignation from a detailed representation in favour of a brief allusion to a recurring motif in the visual arts in the form of the ekphrastic model (Associative category). Since the main reason for the introduction of

the ekphrastic model into studies of ekphrasis by Tamar Yacobi was to demonstrate that ekphrasis can successfully merge and collaborate with narrative, the diagram, gradually approaching Yacobi's deparicularised allusion, can be seen as tracing the pro-narrative tendency of ekphrastic theories. It proceeds from Clüver's descriptive ekphrasis, whose detailed rendering of the source image distracts the reader from following the steady advancement of the plot. Then, it moves to the naming of individual images or brief allusions to painters, styles or genres of painting. Though small in size and easily fused with the temporal progression of the action, these succinct forms of reference may be too specific and therefore missed by the reader (indeterminate marking), being thus utterly useless for the narrative. Finally, Robillard's scheme presents the Associative category of ekphrastic relations which is convergent with Yacobi's idea of the ekphrastic model. It covers those instances of referring to the visual arts which, instead of describing a particular artwork, briefly evoke prevailing motifs in the visual arts. Such a smooth insertion of the image into the text secures an uninterrupted progress of the narrative in time while its popularity and immediately recognised reference automatically connects it with those elements of the narrative to which it may contribute (characterisation, plot, perspective etc.), thus ensuring the logical coherence of the story.

Robillard's Differential Model used to show the pro-narrative tendency in ekphrastic theories uncovers some polarities that ekphrasis entails. It is interesting to note, however, that Robillard's Differential Model as an illustration of the pro-narrativity of ekphrasis can be curved so that its opposite poles, occupied respectively by Clüver's descriptive ekphrasis and Yacobi's ekphrastic model, come together. This encircling of Robillard's Differential Model is a symbolical representation of the argument that the ekphrastic model and descriptive ekphrasis should be recognised as equally apt at collaborating with the narrative in which they are embedded; that descriptive ekphrasis is capable of matching the ekphrastic model in collaborating with the narrative on both the temporal and the logical level. This encircling is a response to the pro-narrative evolution of ekphrastic theories, which inevitably leads to the elimination of the traditional descriptive dimension of ekphrasis.

In order to dethrone the idea of ekphrasis as the other or counterforce to the progress of the narrative, Tamar Yacobi polarises studies of ekphrasis and tips the scales in favour of the ekphrastic model, set in opposition to traditional descriptive ekphrasis. I will try to show, however, that from the standpoint of the functioning of ekphrasis in a narrative text the ekphrastic

model and descriptive ekphrasis seem to be related and are equally compatible with the main narrative. In order to discover the common ground between these two types of ekphrasis and, by doing so, justify the encircling of Robillard's model of the pro-narrativity of ekphrasis, it is necessary to take a closer look at the implicit logic of Tamar Yacobi's ekphrastic model which makes her compact allusion so agreeable towards the narrative.

Defining ekphrasis as the "literary *evocation* of spatial art"<sup>62</sup> (italics mine) Yacobi disposes of the enargetic i.e. descriptive dimension of ekphrasis. Yet, apart from chasing the pictorial away from the text, she, paradoxically, eliminates the visual or imaginable element from the scene alluded to. Arguing for the accessibility of the ekphrastic model, Yacobi states that

if the reader has not viewed one particular artistic image of Laocoön, or Diana, the Adoration, then he has viewed another. And even if he has encountered none, or no longer recalls any with confidence, the chances are that his repertoire of mental schemata includes the appropriate *topoi* for the discourse to activate in the process of reading.<sup>63</sup>

This quotation suggests that Yacobi's reductive approach to ekphrasis and its enargetic energy do not stop at the laconic implication of an image through a title or thematic element but are far more advanced. The fact that Yacobi accepts such an extreme possibility that even if the reader has never seen the image the ekphrastic model strives to evoke, he is still able to respond to it and make use of it for the benefit of the narrative suggests that the ekphrastic model can dispose of the image altogether. A closer look at the examples that Yacobi studies (or just mentions, even in the quotation) and which are supposed to best illustrate the workings of her ekphrastic model show how the negligence of the image is possible.

The majority of cases Yacobi examines concern figures which are not originally visual compositions, e.g. St Peter, the figure of Joseph, or Laocoön. They are all characters taken from special literary sources – the Bible and mythology – of exceptional wide appeal and cultural value. The narrative contexts through which the figures are introduced to the reader (first the reader then the viewer) equip them with a set of characteristics or link with a particular problem by which they are recognised within Christian culture and classical tradition (Joseph – the paragon of the family father, St Peter – the

<sup>62</sup> YACOBI, p. 600.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 629.

question of loyalty). Yacobi herself writes that model-images epitomise “re-current cultural objects and/or themes.”<sup>64</sup> The cultural labelling of those literary figures guarantees the reader’s familiarity with the concepts particular images carry with themselves and ensures their immediate evocation whenever a character or scene is referred to. Consequently, even though in the examples that Yacobi studies the ekphrastic model most often signals that it is a reference to the visual arts (“he saw them as a classic group, two maidenly Laocoöns”<sup>65</sup>), since it identifies its visual source through a mere mention of the name of the figure or scene without specifying any aesthetic values of the image alluded to, it first of all activates a literary context and its cultural conceptualisation (the “topoi” of which Yacobi speaks in the quotation above do not necessarily mean motifs from the visual arts, but from literature). The ideas or problems the literary figure or scene commonly triggers are sufficient for the reader unfamiliar with the visual image required by the ekphrastic model to relate Yacobi’s concise allusion to the puzzles of the text. Eventually, artistic representations of figures or scenes named by the ekphrastic model become only secondary realisations of popular literary and cultural themes with which the reader is well-acquainted and this, in turn, makes their visualisations redundant.

Right at the onset of the article in which she argues for the ekphrastic model and its narrative potential Yacobi expresses her interest in a three-stage exchange – literature/visual arts/literature – in ekphrasis:

The traffic between visual art and literature has always featured the allusive (mimetic, thematic, quotation-like) relations between works in the different media. The one work’s representation of the world then becomes the other’s representation, a mimesis in the second degree. Thus the reworking of biblical and mythological tales, details, moments, and themes (e.g., the Crucifixion or the birth of Venus) in the spatial arts. Conversely, we have ekphrasis, where the temporal art of literature alludes to paintings, statues, urns or, again, their traditional themes... .<sup>66</sup>

A closer analysis of the ekphrastic model, which reveals the dispensability of the image, turns Yacobi’s three-stage approach to ekphrasis into a two-stage one since it eliminates the visual element (or consigns it to a merely secondary position). Though detached from the pictorial and the visual, the

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 641.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 638.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 600.

way the ekphrastic model enters and interacts with the narrative can be easily demonstrated with the following *visual* diagram:

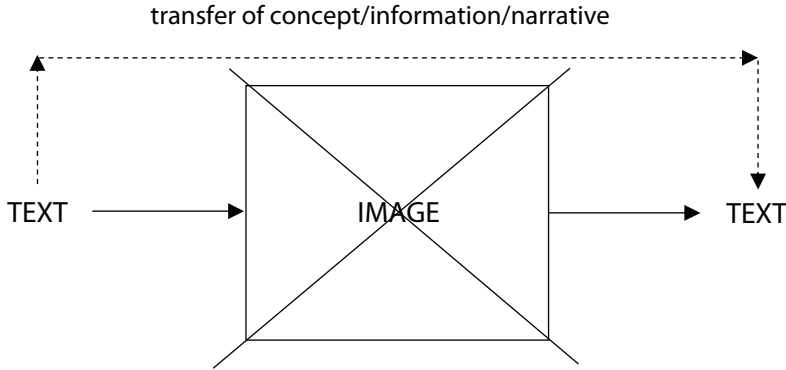


Table 2. The conceptual mechanism behind the ekphrastic model.

Ultimately, Yacobi's departicularised allusion turns out to be a thoroughly conceptual venture, which assures its perfect blend and effective co-operation with the narrative. It is thus rightly ascribed to the right end of Robillard's Differential Model as an extreme case of ekphrasis in which the verbalised version of the image is eliminated while the visualised one relegated to a secondary position in relation to the conceptual material the ekphrastic model primarily evokes or requires.

Yacobi's analysis of the ekphrastic "market" shows the ekphrastic model as unjustly ignored and discriminated. However, as regards the contribution to the narrative it is the traditional descriptive form of ekphrasis that seems to be seriously handicapped. Such an atmosphere of disparity, opposition and paragone between descriptive ekphrasis and the ekphrastic model would not be necessary if it were noticed that, though loaded with visual detail, descriptive ekphrasis can work in a very similar fashion and be as successful in collaborating with the narrative as the ekphrastic model.

Studying the possible functions that ekphrastic segments can perform in a literary work, Hans Lund observes that a meticulous scrutiny of the pictorial quality of an image is not the primary aim of the verbal representation of pictures. The fundamental function of the body of the descriptive ekphrasis is to concretise an abstraction.<sup>67</sup> The idea of making an abstraction concrete

<sup>67</sup> H. LUND, *Text as Picture: Studies in the Literary Transformations of Pictures*, trans. Kacke Götrick (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), pp. 40-44.

runs back to T. S. Eliot's concept of the objective correlative. It was recognised as related to picture-transforming texts by George Kurman in his article "Ecphrasis in Epic Poetry": "Defined as an external equivalent to an inner emotional reality, an objective entity that expresses a subjective state, the notion of the objective correlative would seem also applicable to ecphrasis."<sup>68</sup> A closer look at the possible functions of ekphrastic depictions in literary texts leads Lund to a conclusion that

the abstraction behind the manifest concreteness in literary texts as well as in visual textures may have different degree of semantic complexity. Some signs – sign meaning both the work as a whole and an isolated element in this work – invite a kind of denotative deciphering, whereas other signs are what in Germany is called "*bedeutungsschwanger*", i. e. they are always expanding into new meanings.<sup>69</sup>

In order to make the process of concretising an abstract idea by an ekphrastic depiction clear and demonstrate how the concretisation may work as a sign illuminating the main narrative, I will quote one of the examples that Hans Lund evokes from Feodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*. Hans Holbein's starkly realistic painting *Christ in the Tomb* hanging above the door in Rogozhin's house plays an important role in the novel

as a focal point for contrasting values: humanity as opposed to divinity in the Christ figure; worldliness as opposes to spirituality; damnation as opposed to salvation; compassion as opposed to contempt. The picture captures the contrasts Mysjkin-Rogosjin. Both are influenced by the picture, both are strengthened in their contrasting attitudes to life.<sup>70</sup>

Lund's example shows that apart from transporting into the text an object of visual aesthetic pleasure (which makes it fully compliant with Clüver's requirements for descriptiveness in ekphrasis), the extended form of ekphrasis is, like the ekphrastic model, a carrier of ideas which can smoothly correspond with the problems of the narrative and aid the workings of its particular elements. This ability to enhance the workings of various components of the narrative makes descriptive ekphrasis equal the ekphrastic model in its capacity for collaborating with the logical aspect of the narrative. Further-

<sup>68</sup> KURMAN, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> LUND, pp. 41-42.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

more, the overlapping of the temporal and logical dimensions of the narrative – if contributing to the advancement of the plot, an ekphrastic description reinforces both aspects (temporal and logical) of the narrative – allows descriptive ekphrasis (despite its descriptive body and its retarding effect) to challenge the ekphrastic model also in its capability of co-operating with the narrative on the temporal level.

The fact, however, that the ekphrastic model and descriptive ekphrasis employ the same method of bringing concepts into the text so that they are integrated with the narrative and enhance its temporal progress as well as logical coherence does not mean that there is no difference between those two forms of ekphrasis and that the complexity of the latter could be reduced to the convenient incisiveness of the former. In order to understand fully the significance of extended ekphrasis and its special contribution to narrative, it is necessary to consider its interpretative aspect.

The ekphrastic verbal image is never a neutral transformation of a work of spatial art but results from its individual reception by the viewer – the author of the ekphrasis. The recontextualising in order to serve new purposes that Yacobi speaks about in the context of the ekphrastic model<sup>71</sup> is thus even more visible in the case of descriptive ekphrasis whose detailed representation of a visual artwork shows how the image is distorted by or adapted to the new literary environment. It uncovers the series of decisions the viewer makes as he transplants the image to the narrative ground and which are dictated by the very nature of the verbal medium. While the beholder is free to study a painting in the order determined by his own choice and preference, the reader is confined by text's requirements of linear progression, logical sequence and cohesion.<sup>72</sup> The unconstrained scanning of a picture must be thus adjusted in ekphrasis to the restrictions of the text. To do so, the viewer selects the most expressive details and the most prominent characters, establishes relations between them, explains their intentions and hypothesises about future actions. In this way, cornered by the textual discipline, the viewer makes choices which, in turn, reveal his attitudes, opinions and interpretative preferences. Eventually, what he sees in the picture determines the way he is seen. Genette notes this interrelation in the case of description in general and writes that apart from suspending the flow of events in the narrative, descriptions are

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<sup>71</sup> YACOBI, "The Ekphrastic Model: Forms and Functions", p. 23

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed study of the differences in perception between text and image see Wendy STEINER, *The Colors of Rhetoric*, p. 36.



used to “justify the psychology of the characters, of which they are at once the sign, the cause, and the effect.”<sup>73</sup> Speaking strictly about ekphrasis, Grant stresses the fact that ekphrasis “involves some revelation in the psychology of the beholding eye”<sup>74</sup> and Lawrence Starzyk in his article “Browning and the Ekphrastic Encounter” attempts to show “how the beholder becomes, through projection, the object of the gaze.”<sup>75</sup> Ultimately, turning once again to Lund’s reasoning, the reconstructed image becomes an objective correlative or concretisation of the interpreter’s state of mind.

The pro-narrative tendency within ekphrastic theories has evolved by moving away from description and towards the compressed form of the ekphrastic model. However, with the discovery of the conceptual mechanism that underlies the workings of both the ekphrastic model and descriptive ekphrasis in the narrative (rather than visual qualities they primarily bring concepts into the text) and enables their correspondence with and contribution to the temporal and logical aspect of the narrative, the extended form of ekphrasis can, after a long banishment, become subsumed under the category “pro-narrative ekphrasis.” Moreover, descriptive ekphrasis emerges as not only equal with Yacobi’s concise allusion in its capacity for illuminating the main narrative but in some respects superior to it. Deprived of its descriptive body, the ekphrastic model will never be able to say as much about the viewer as traditional ekphrasis which, apart from capturing the image, reveals the way it is received by the beholder – the author of the ekphrasis.

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<sup>73</sup> GENETTE, *Figures of Literary Discourse*, p. 135.

<sup>74</sup> G. F. SCOTT, “The Rhetoric of Dilation: Ekphrasis and Ideology,” *Word & Image* 7.4 (1991), p. 301.

<sup>75</sup> L. STARZYK, “Browning and the Ekphrastic Encounter,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38.4 (1998), p. 691.

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## SPOTKANIE Z EKFRAZĄ

## Streszczenie

Ekfrazja jest starożytnym terminem retorycznym, używanym na określenie opisu dzieł plastycznych, ozdobnych waz, urn, dekoracyjnych tkanin, ale przede wszystkim malarstwa i rzeźby. Celem tego artykułu jest prześledzenie obecności ekfrazji we współczesnych badaniach literackich. Pojawienie się pojęcia ekfrazji w badaniach literackich łączy się z publikacją artykułu Leo Spitzera „The ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ or Content vs. Metagrammar” (1962), gdzie ekfrazja definiowana jest jako „poetycki opis malarstwa lub rzeźby.” Liczne przykłady opisów ekfrastycznych w prozie nie tylko XX wieku sprawiły, że również ekfrazja, jako element prozy literackiej, stała się przedmiotem rozważań badawczych. Można nawet wyodrębnić coś, co w tym artykule nazywam „tendencją pronarracyjną” w ewolucji badań nad ekfrazą. Tendencja ta przejawia się wzrostem zainteresowania ekfrazą we współczesnej prozie narracyjnej (głównie – powieści). Artykuł ukazuje rozwój tendencji pro-narracyjnej w badaniach nad ekfrazą, a także polemizuje z jej niedawnymi osiągnięciami, zwłaszcza ze stanowiskiem Tamar Yacobi. Yacobi uważa, że w utworze narracyjnym najbardziej odpowiednia jest krótka ekfrazja nieopisowa, nazwana przez nią „modelem ekfrastycznym”. Refleksja teoretyczna przedstawiona w artykule ma za zadanie dowieść, że tradycyjna ekfrazja opisowa może konkurować z modelem ekfrastycznym, czyli znakomicie współpracować z utworem narracyjnym.

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**Słowa kluczowe:** ekfrazja, model ekfrastyczny, tendencja pronarracyjna, ekfrazja pronarracyjna.

**Key words:** ekphrasis, ekphrastic model, pro-narrative tendency, pro-narrative ekphrasis,.