

POETRY BY THE PAGE

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NOTES

Looking at less than average Poussins
the other day at the Fogg
reminded me of two portraits I had seen
there years before: an Ingres
and a Delacroix confronting each other
in a corner, striking me in
poetic irony.

Today it was all
more direct. Ribera's «Saint Jerome» in
ecstatic self-denial in the corner
by a Gentileschi (whose famous sister lost
her virginity to art) and a
Ghirlandiao (who only lost his fame
to history and whim) his «Mainardi Madonna»
tenderly concerned, a handsome
Christ Child on her lap, a little tense
perhaps about the clamshell
arch too tightly fitted above her head;

and in another room Jacob
Ruisdael's stormy landscapes:
Arcadian melancholy not stiff and disguised
like the Poussin but raw and right
there, honest Dutch Romanticism. Delacroix
would approve, I suspect,
and so would Ingres. They were both
romantics in search of that ideal
elsewhere. So am I
wandering through
galleries from time to
time, sharing jokes with Franz Hals
or returning the calm gaze of an
Antonazza Romano, making notes
and passing by.