



*Zadání cizojazyčného textu:*

Michelangelo's Harsh Music

Author(s): Helen Osterman Borowitz

Source: Art Journal, Spring, 1970, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Spring, 1970), pp. 318-325

In his late seventies Michelangelo wrote to Vasari, "You will surely say I am old and crazy to want to produce sonnets, but since many say I am in my second childhood, I wanted to act the part." This half-humorous excuse reveals the artist's compelling need to express himself in poetry as well as in the visual arts. Michelangelo's first efforts at writing poetry took place in 1503, fifty years before the letter to Vasari. Condivi, his pupil and biographer, described the origin of his writing: "It was some time since he had worked at that art [sculpture], having given himself up to the study of poets and authors in the vulgar tongue and writing sonnets for his own pleasure." Thus he started writing at a time when he was not busy with a project in sculpture, perhaps because the need for a creative outlet was too strong to remain unfulfilled. His intense study of the poets led to an active participation in the making of his own poems. It was the beginning of a life-long habit which intensified at times, particularly during the period from 1544 to 1546 when he and his secretary Riccio worked together on the poems with the intention of publishing them. But even in his old age after Riccio's death when he no longer cared about publication, the writing of poetry continued.

Poetry was a parallel creative outlet for Michelangelo. Many of his poems were found on the backs of drawings, suggesting that he frequently turned his thoughts back and forth between the visual arts and poetic expression. Though he lacked in his poetic work the background, training and native skill which he brought to the visual arts, he expressed in his poems many of the ideas that were found in his visual masterpieces. Anthony Blunt has charted the course of Michelangelo's artistic development through an understanding of his ideas as expressed in his poetry. His discussion has been concerned primarily with philosophical and religious content. Robert J. Clements has analysed the thematic analogies between the poetry and the figurative works. Though in general Clements has stressed parallels of content, he has also indicated parallels of style.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the analogies between the two streams of Michelangelo's creative works, the visual and the literary, not in terms of content but rather in terms of form. Most comparisons between the poet and the artist have been limited to analogies between the poems and Michelangelo's work as a sculptor or a painter. This article will attempt to consider architecture as an additional source of stylistic analogies.

Critics have complained of the obscurity of Michelangelo's poetry. The very qualities that made for obscurity in his literary works - his unpolished language, his irregularities in meter, and his difficult syntax - are paralleled in his artistic style. Contrast and paradox, which are used to structure his poems, are echoed as formal devices in his visual expression. His predilection for grotesque in poetic imagery is a recurring motif in painting, sculpture, and architectural detail. Finally numerous poetic fragments recall the problem, obvious even to his contemporaries, of his many unfinished artistic projects.

[...] Roughness is a quality found in both the figurative work and the poetry. One of the reasons given for the general lack of interest in Michelangelo's poetry is his rude and unpleasing language.

[...] In a pastoral poem (Girardi, 67), he expressed his nostalgia for the rustic life in the "rough-hewn measure" of the shepherd's "harsh music." This appreciation of roughness and simplicity as opposed to the elegant style is exemplified in the same poem as Truth whom he saw as naked and lonely in contrast to Falsehood who is adorned. Perhaps he sought to evoke in his use of the vernacular forms his own "harsh music."

Just as he failed to smooth out the popular elements of his speech in his poetry, so he let the rough-hewn stone show in parts of his sculpture. In his *David*, though a figure of idealized beauty, the suggestion of a connection with rougher elements of nature is preserved in the unfinished stone on the top of the head. The tie with the quarry from which the block was taken is suggested by this small rough-hewn portion. The quality of roughness which persists throughout his work, from the *Battle of the Centaurs* to the allegorical figures in the Medici Chapel was perhaps not simply due to inadequate time to finish them completely, but rather to his feeling for the rough-hewn stone, a recurrent image in the poetry. The texture of the poetry and of the chisel-marked stone is not unlike the blunt cross-hatched lines in the drawings. The short cross-hatched strokes of the pen evoke the musculature in a direct substantial way. Michelangelo's lack of interest in the elegant can be traced as well to his late figure style. From the young idealized body of *David* and the Sistine Ceiling figures he became progressively interested in depicting a massive hulking type, as seen in the *Last Judgment* and the Pauline Chapel frescoes, where the huge arms and shoulders give almost a simian appearance to the figures. In Girardi 166 he talks of the "mortal heavy body of man." This weight of earthly flesh lined with creases is part of the massive figure style of the later works, a kind of lumbering distortion. [...]

*(Shrnutí: 0 až 10 bodů)*

*Otázky k textu:*

1. Jaké by mohly být, podle textu, Michelangelovy důvody pro hrubost v uměleckém díle? (0 až 5 bodů)
2. S jakými podobnými a souvisejícími myšlenkami jste se již někdy setkali? (0 až 5 bodů)
3. Vyjmenujte pět knih z beletrie nebo humanitní vzdělanosti a pět filmů libovolného žánru, které jsou pro Vás významné (odpověď na tuto otázku sama nebude bodovaná, ale pomůže nám porozumět Vaším odpovědím na předchozí otázky).