

net of nuance in which they lie. Most of the exemplary sentences quoted later are translations. The original languages might not have greatly obscured the meaning of these sentences, but, in any event, what they gain in English is indispensable.

2. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (Pantheon, 1973).
3. W. K. Wimsatt uses the phrase "infinite gas" in his book *The Verbal Icon*. The idea of iconicity is implicit in the discussion above, especially in the passage on Luther.
4. Stanley Cavell refers to this quotation in his very brilliant essay on *King Lear*, collected in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, 1969).
5. The quotation is from "After a Death," by Tomas Tranströmer, included in *Friends, You Drank Some Darkness: Three Swedish Poets*, trans. Robert Bly (Beacon Press, 1975). The stanza from which the quotation comes is:

*It is still beautiful to feel the heart beat
but often the shadow seems more real than the body.
The samurai looks insignificant
beside his armour of black dragon scales.*

The poem is much more complicated than my comment above suggests. It is about the effect of death in life or on life.

6. "The Self and the Other," trans. Willard R. Trask, in *The Dehumanization of Art* by José Ortega y Gasset (Princeton, 1968). Ortega does not say the following: "The idea of Otherness is made into a noun that feels more concrete, 'the Other.'" This noun is made to feel yet more concrete by identifying it with another noun, "the Animal." Passing back through degrees of concretion we return to the idea of Otherness, which is anything that is not anything else, or, most particularly, anything not the self. "The Animal," then, is the most interesting concretion of the life of the not-self, the living not-selfness which is "the Other." To be all this and conscious, but not to know it is all this, not even to know it is conscious, is the agony of the animal. (But animals dream. Dogs twitch, whine, and snarl in their sleep, as if they were running and fighting in an inner wilderness. This means they have an inner life? They are subjects or selves, perhaps even capable of meditation, like us? No; the way animals dream is the way we make sentences these days.)

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the horns of mooses

MICHELANGELO'S HORNED MOSES sits in a niche in a shadowy church. You can see the statue well enough despite the shadows, but the light isn't ideal for taking photographs. Nevertheless, camera people show up all year round, pushing through the crowd to get closer to the statue, as if it were a celebrity, the real Moses, rather than chiseled stone. It would be easier and cheaper for them to step into the shop a few yards away where you can buy inexpensive, professional pictures of Moses, made in good light. But they must take their own pictures of the majestic prophet looming large in the shadowy niche. One imagines that it gives them a sense of personal connection to the statue, so they shove through the enraptured crowd, which stands gazing in every season, and they press to the rail, focus cameras, and shoot. Some say it is the most photographed statue in Italy.

Camera people also collect in the Sistine Chapel, where you are specifically requested not to take pictures. But you hear continuous clicking. Taking these pictures not only strives for a personal connection, it is a kind of high thievery, albeit only psychological,

but it must be particularly thrilling where it's not allowed. A clerical figure wanders amid the dense babbling crowd in the chapel, asking politely that people be quiet and not take pictures. They wait, these culture paparazzi, till he passes, and then the clicking begins again. The cameras sound like locusts eating the frescoed walls and ceiling, ravenous, never satiated. When the tourists lower their cameras, you sometimes see their desirous eyes tortured by a blood suspicion that others have something they want, even if they don't know what it is. Barbarians who overran Rome had such eyes.

The camera people who go after Michelangelo may be seeking a brush with celebrity, or more simply, reassurance that they have had an experience; but in the case of the Moses, where photographs are allowed, there may be additional motivations for their rapacity. Other statues, even some by Michelangelo, don't draw as many excited cameras, and Donatello's subtle, exquisite works inspire no comparable desire to take pictures. You can sit all day before his superb Magdalena, who stands in the Museo del Duomo in Florence, and nobody will click at her (even if both Moses and the Magdalena are remarkable for what the sculptors do with hair).

To photograph a work of art is to make images of an image. It is a way of honoring and trivializing it at once. Perhaps the horned Moses is too dramatic, too interesting, or too much to see all at once with the naked eye, and taking photos relieves you of the need to see things, let alone remember them. You see the heavy arms of Moses and the large hands, one touching his belly, the other his hair. You see the man's posture, erect and tense, and how his body faces you squarely while the head is turned to its left, the eyes cut left, glaring, angry. You see the curve of the mouth, how it suggests disgust and disapproval. And perhaps you wonder, since

Moses sees something terrible, why he doesn't confront it fully and directly. Does the glance to the left mean it is a distraction from more serious matters? What exactly does he see?

Moses remains self-possessed though taken aback, watching. Meanwhile, hair flows sensuously from his head all the way down his front. It makes the statue seem to exist in time, in the imperfect tense. I mean, the effect is temporal because, while Moses looks at the terrible thing to his left, hair flows through the fingers of his right hand. In effect, he was just sitting there when suddenly . . .

The body is powerful and male; the abundance and luxuriousness of his hair is female. It is mainly the hair of his beard, but it is not realistic. Being so lusciously fluent, it speaks for his passionate inner life. He seems almost to fondle his hair, which is a kind of action that has no intended goal, no necessary end. In essence, it is a gesture that remains essentially vague, incomplete. This is consistent with the story the statue illustrates. Moses is appalled by the behavior of the Israelites and will not complete the delivery of the commandments this time.

Though there are other portrayals of Moses with horns, Michelangelo's use of them is startling. The left one tilts oddly and looks damaged, and is, perhaps, a bit smaller than the right horn. They aren't new horns but old and damaged, animalistic, appropriate to a pagan satyr or a devil. Strange in the man who is carrying the tablets of the law dictated by God.

Michelangelo takes the horns from Jerome's mistranslation of a biblical passage. Where it says that rays of light issued from Moses' face, Jerome wrote horns, from which comes the belief that Jews have horns. Michelangelo was aware of the mistranslation but chose to put horns on Moses anyway, perhaps to suggest, in a sensational metaphor, how the Israelites betrayed Moses while he was on

Mount Sinai talking to God. Moses the prophet wears also the disreputable, ragged ears of the cuckold. The betrayal occurs when the Israelites collect their gold jewelry and make it into the image of a bull calf, which they proceed to worship as if it were the god who saved them from slavery in Egypt. The bull calf is an idol, or an image, exactly the thing against which God's injunction stands:

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

The words are plain, neither gnomic nor metaphorical. They don't invite interpretation. Michelangelo's horned Moses is about the critical moment when the sin of image making, or idol worship, is thrust upon the prophet's attention, and it has an obvious ironic personal relevance to Michelangelo, an image maker. He is as disobedient as the Israelites, and more so because of the more conscious sin.

As an image of Moses carrying the commandments, the statue is not ambiguous. Each commandment is quite definite, telling us how to live. Thou shall do this and not do that. They are resolutions, not suggestions. They are final. But nothing in the statue is final. It is alive with unresolved conflict. Mainly the conflict is between unruly life and God's commandments. But even apart from its religious significance, the statue is peculiar, sexually ambiguous in its hair, so free of proscriptions in its luxurious pour. A man who has such female hair and unconsciously likes to feel its flow, likes to fondle it, conflicts in feeling with the body's solidity and its powerful arms and its expression of angry and uncompro-mising disapproval.

The statue without horns would be less fascinating, less dramatic, less blatantly an image, and the conflict it represents less sharp or pointed, less like horns. The horns draw us in, scandalous in their dereliction, neither new nor newly acquired. In the camera's clicking and whirring and incessant taking, it may seem that the biblical idea of betrayal is built into our condition, its giddy essence. If the animalish, pagan, demonic horns weren't there, camera people would feel less compelled to capture the mystery of the statue's indeterminate being. In some sense, however, the horned Moses can't be photographed. It can't even be seen, except from this or that angle. So you find yourself moving to the right and then to the left, or you try to get closer, or you step away from it for a different view. It cannot be held in mind, either, all at once.

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