

The Complete Poems of Michelangelo, Trans. by Joseph Tusiani (London: Peter Owen, 1960).

Tell Me, O Soul Sonnet by Michelangelo

Tell me, O soul, what file
Abrades your strength and makes it less each day?
When, freed at last from all this weary clay,
Will you return to heaven, and resume
Your innocent first smile,
After the peril of the earth, the gloom?
Being so close to the tomb,
In these remaining years
I may change outwardly, but not within,
For stronger, in weak flesh, becomes my sin.
O Love, you must be told
That I envy the dead,
And my soul is afraid
Of me, dismayed and trembling. O my Lord,
Give me, in my last hours,
Your pardoning arms! Oh steal me from myself,
And make me one of those who please you, Lord!



Michelangelo, *The Rondanini Pietà*, 1555-64. Michelangelo began working on this when he was 80 years old and worked on it up until just days before his death at age 89. Upon beginning the work, he wrote, "I am carving another Pietà; God grant I may finish it. How different from my first in St. Peter's a lifetime ago when I was just 21. Beauty was my idol then. Faith alone must guide me now, as I face the day of judgment."



Michelangelo: *Pietà (Deposition)*, 1540-55. "In his very last years the aging artist returned to his first love, sculpture, executing the *Pietà*, or *Deposition* (c. 1550; Cathedral, Florence) that he intended to have placed on his own tomb. The omnipresent power of death is revealed in this marble, unfinished and partially mutilated by Michelangelo in a fit of depression. The aged and resigned features of the figure of Nicodemus supporting the dead Christ constitute a self-portrait—the picture of an old and tired believer who willingly accepts the inevitability of his own death and the possibility of his soul's salvation as he contemplates the features of the dead Christ. In this, his most intimate statue, Michelangelo manifests his deeply moral philosophy, his poetic expression, and the universality of his imagery; he identifies the divine source of that spark of creativity that sculpted him into one of the greatest of all artistic geniuses."

<http://www.island-of-freedom.com/MICHEL.HTM>