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## Grief Encounter: The Language of Mourning in *Fin-de-Siècle* Sculpture

For Nick Burton and Sally Ledger

Consider the lover of art sunk deep in contemplation who circles restlessly around a sculpture. What would he not do to transform his sight into touch, to make his *seeing* into a form of *touching* that feels in the dark? ... he shifts from place to place: his eye becomes his hand and the ray of light his finger, or rather, his soul has a finger that is yet finer than his hand or the ray of light. With his soul he seeks to *grasp* the image that arose from the arm and the soul of the artist. Now he has it! The illusion has worked; the sculpture lives and his soul *feels* that it lives. His soul speaks to it, not as if his soul sees, but as if it touches, as if it feels.<sup>1</sup>

Johann Gottfried Herder's *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream*, first published in 1778 under the title *Plastik*, makes a crucial intervention in the history of aesthetics. Where Lessing, in *Laocoön* (1766), had distinguished between the arts on the basis of the spatial or temporal arrangement of their constitutive semiotic elements, Herder's analysis of the differences between the arts turns, as his modern editor Jason Gaiger notes, on 'their specific modes of "address"'.<sup>2</sup> As an art of relief and depth, Herder argues, sculpture demands haptic engagement; 'for what are properties of bodies', he rhetorically asks, 'if not relations to our own body, to our sense of touch?' Playing on the etymological roots of the word 'concept' (*Begriff*), he proposes: 'The more we are able to take hold of a body as a body, rather than staring at it or dreaming of it, the more vital is our feeling for the object, or, as it is expressed in the word itself, our

*concept of the thing'.<sup>3</sup>* As the invocation of Pygmalion's creative dream in Herder's subtitle implies, the ability to grasp a sculptural form can bring it to life: 'the sculpture lives and his soul *feels* that it lives'.<sup>4</sup>

The imaginative hold of the idea of Pygmalion's life-giving touch on post-Enlightenment sculptural aesthetics speaks of 'anxieties of animation' that, as David J. Getsy has argued, run through the history of sculpture and its reception, and find particularly imaginative expression in late-nineteenth-century writing about sculpture.<sup>5</sup> Walter Pater, for example, drawing attention in 1873 to the materiality of sculpture as its 'special limitation', observes the 'hard presentment of mere form which tries vainly to compete with the reality of nature itself', against which 'all noble sculpture is constantly struggling; each great system of sculpture resisting it in its own way, etherealising, spiritualising, relieving its hardness, its heaviness and death'.<sup>6</sup> The formal challenges of animating the ostensibly dead matter of sculpture are especially testing in the limit case of memorial statuary, whose very subject is death. As Getsy notes, 'The corpse has proven to be an important subject matter for sculptors attempting to deal with their art's supposed lifelessness'.<sup>7</sup>

The corpse is also, I suggest, an important subject matter for 'the lover of art sunk deep in contemplation who circles restlessly around a sculpture', particularly one who has recently been touched by death. Here Herder's foundational theorisation of our embodied, tactile, imaginative, *feeling* experience of sculpture suggests ways of thinking about sculpture as a medium of mourning and a vehicle for feeling 'in the dark'. His essay provides a conceptual framework and historical grounding for my own experiment in synaesthesia as embodied practice, one that reaches back to late nineteenth-century art writing and sculpture to frame and comprehend a modern encounter. But, I argue, contrary to the promise of animation offered by the

Pygmalion myth, the memorial sculpture is poignantly resistant to the possibility of coming to life, however vital the feelings of the contemplative lover. Engaging with Herder, and inscribing my encounters with sculptures by Auguste Rodin and Edward Onslow Ford within a *fin-de-siècle* tradition of feeling, this essay proposes an anti-Pygmalion counter-myth for the origins of sculpture as a medium of mourning.

I

My methodological models in what follows are those late nineteenth-century critics, such as Pater and Vernon Lee, whose avowedly emotional and subjective style of criticism provides a privileged point of access to sculptural aesthetics, but the particular trigger for this experimental project was a sculptural encounter at the Rodin Exhibition at the Royal Academy in late 2006. I had experienced a bereavement in the summer, and I was only then venturing back out into the world. This had seemed like something I could do, and I went with a good friend. I had visited the Musée Rodin in Paris many times and I loved his work; the RA exhibition was tremendous. But by the time we reached *The Burghers of Calais* I had to walk out; like George Eliot before the *Sistine Madonna*, it ‘made my heart swell too much for me to remain comfortably’.<sup>8</sup> Why was this? What was it about these sculpted human forms that spoke so unexpectedly and so deeply to my grief?<sup>9</sup>

Writing about Rodin in 1903, Rainer Maria Rilke described one of the figures in this group, Pierre de Wissant, as the man with the ‘vague gesture’, ‘the man “passing through life”’ (Gustave Geffroy called him ‘Le Passant’) [Fig. 1]:

As he advances he turns back, not to the town, not to the weeping people, nor to those accompanying him. He turns back to himself. His right arm is raised in an uncertain curve; his hand opens in the air and lets something go, somewhat in the way in which we set free a bird. He is taking leave of all uncertainty, of all happiness still unrealized, of the suffering which will now wait in vain, of men living somewhere whom he might have met, of all that days to come might have brought with them, and he takes leave also of that death which he had thought to be far away, gentle and silent, which he thought to meet after many, many days.

'This figure', Rilke concludes, 'if placed by itself in some old shady garden, would make a monument for all who have died young'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, all the figures in Rodin's tragic assemblage are men 'setting out on their grievous journey' towards death.<sup>11</sup>

But it wasn't just the subject, or the gesture of '*le passant*' that was my undoing. It was more a physical feeling of the shared corporeality of the sculptural object (scaled only slightly larger than life, and placed, as Rodin wished, at ground level, to encourage identification and solidarity); an intimate, erotic encounter, intensified by loss and grief, and by my sense of the imprint of the sculptor's touch, of his hands moulding and animating the original clay, so that the skin, as the young Rilke observes, 'bore the precious trace of what it meant to live at any time'.<sup>12</sup> The tactile knowledge inscribed in the sculptural surface was a palpable point of mediation between physical presence, absence, and mourning.

Rilke was 27 when, in 1902, he became Rodin's private secretary in Paris. His words are part of an extended essay on the sculptor, and I begin with them because they highlight some of the themes I wish to explore here. This is a passage that unsettles

the boundaries between public and private memorialisation. The figure of 'le passant' is one of the burghers of Calais, a constituent figure in a prominent public memorial to a group of historical individuals. The sculpture was a civic commission to commemorate a heroic act of martyrdom in the Hundred Years' War when six of the town's leading citizens conceded to Edward III's demand that they abase themselves, walk to the gates of the city with nooses around their necks, and surrender its keys to him, before facing execution.<sup>13</sup> But the statue of de Wissant is also read by Rilke as a representative 'monument for all who have died young', imaginatively removed to a place of more private grief, 'a dim old garden'.<sup>14</sup> I am interested in how public monuments can bring forth a highly personal response, how they can take us from the historical to the representative, and from there to the individuality of our own loss. Rilke's writing is an example of how Rodin's sculpture was mediated and re-made by language, seen through a poet's eye, and my own focus is on the critical and imaginative interplay of word and image. Finally, and most importantly, Rilke explores the feeling of sculpture, in every sense; not least, how the feelings of the spectator are tugged by the 'precious trace' of the sculptor that seemingly remains tangible in the material object s/he created.

Roland Barthes writes about the way art can mediate absence and mourning through the physicality of the medium, and its means of claiming presence and anchoring through bodily coordinates. He memorably finds in the *photograph* a paradoxical conjunction of the 'here' and the 'then'. He distinguishes it from the monument, which memorialises the dead and makes Death immortal. But there is something in the way that Rilke and other writers at the turn of the century conjure and *feel* the sculptor's animating touch that recalls Barthes' intuition of the indexicality of the photograph

(the way it ‘always carries its referent with itself’), its physical connection with the viewer (whereby ‘a sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze’), and its curious ability to signify at once life and death.<sup>15</sup> In our own century Getsy has described Rodin’s ‘passion for the sculptural skin, indexical trace, and expressive surface’.<sup>16</sup> And he identifies the erotics of Rodin’s art in a way that resonates with my own reaction to the exhibition. Rodin’s sculpture has long been identified with sexual desire. ‘The principle of Rodin’s work is sex’, wrote Arthur Symons in 1900.<sup>17</sup> The sculptor himself described art as ‘only a kind of love’: ‘Desire! Desire! What a formidable stimulant!’<sup>18</sup> But, taking his cue from Léon Daudet’s image of Rodin ‘kneading, with a thumb indefatigable, his ardent memories’, and the earlier critic’s insight that ‘to create, it takes two’, Getsy’s interest is not so much in Rodin’s erotic subject matter as in the way that the sexual saturates his sculptural practice<sup>19</sup>. Was it this aspect of his work, and its cumulative effect over several rooms, to which I was unconsciously responding that day at the Royal Academy? Does it, in fact, take three?

We find a lexicon of tactility in Rilke’s response to Rodin – ‘the language of this art was the body’ – that evokes and substantiates Herder’s paean to tactile knowledge as the defining feature of sculpture. Herder’s elaboration of our haptic experience of sculpture as an art of relief, of space and depth, resurfaces in late-nineteenth-century writing about sculpture as critics and practitioners pay new attention to the physical materiality of the sculptural medium and to the engagement between viewer and artefact.<sup>20</sup> This is a notable feature, for example, of Edmund Gosse’s series of articles on what he dubs the New Sculpture, as practised by British sculptors such as Leighton, Hamo Thornycroft and Edward Onslow Ford in the 1880s and 1890s. Of Frederic Leighton’s *The Sluggard*, for instance, Gosse writes ‘one felt the thumb-

touch in this splendid study of a powerful lad yawning and stretching'.<sup>21</sup> It is the pressure of the artist's hands, manipulating the clay, giving life to the form as it is understood at the very moment of its becoming, that arrests the critic's imagination, touches the viewer, makes itself felt.

At the same time as Gosse was writing about the tactility of the New Sculpture, Bernard Berenson was formulating his signature theory about the tactile imagination with reference to *painting*.<sup>22</sup> There was evidently a sculptural dimension to Berenson's theory, which, as Ernst Gombrich points out in *Art and Illusion*, was indebted to a book written by his friend, the German sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand.<sup>23</sup> Hildebrand's *Das Problem der Form in der Bildenden Kunst* was published in 1893 when both men were living in Florence, and Berenson's copy in the library at Villa I Tatti is heavily annotated.<sup>24</sup> It is tempting to speculate about other sculptural influences too. Berenson, whose first language was German and who was conversant with German Romanticism, was likely to have been familiar with Lessing's *Laocoön* and Herder's *Plastik*, and their articulation of the physical encounter with sculpture may also have fed into his bold new analytic method for painting. However, crucial to Herder's thesis is his fundamental differentiation between the three-dimensional aesthetic of sculpture and the flat medium of painting, a distinction observed and recapitulated by later philosophers of aesthetics. Merleau-Ponty, for example, is sceptical about tactile values in painting: 'Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself ... thanks to it we do not need a "muscular sense" in order to possess the voluminosity of the world'.<sup>25</sup>

Touch has altogether more purchase, and complexity, in writing about sculpture, a medium that has been associated with tactility since the Renaissance.<sup>26</sup> As Herder observes, sculpture ‘forms *shapes in depth*’: ‘The sculptor of Hercules, *Apollonius Nestorides*, felt the conqueror of giants, felt his breast, his flanks, his arms, his entire body’, and so does the lover of art who stands before it.

Pity the lover who gazes upon his beloved from a distance as if she were an image on a surface and for whom this suffices. Pity the sculptor of an Apollo or Hercules who has never embraced the body of an Apollo, who has never touched, even in a dream, the breast or the back of a Hercules. Truly from *nothing*, there can arise only *nothing*: the ray of light, touching nothing, can never become the warm, creative hand.<sup>27</sup>

In late nineteenth-century critical writing such as Rilke’s and Gosse’s, the ‘warm, creative hand’ of the sculptor, both thumb touch and finger touch, are imaginatively invoked in relation to the three-dimensional physical materiality of the sculptural medium, whether clay, marble, or bronze. Furthermore, the tactile response of the viewer seems to connect directly with the shaping hand of the sculptor – even to the extent of disavowing the collaborative processes of sculptural practice and the mediating technologies of mechanical reproduction. It is striking, for example, that when in both the 1860s and the 1880s libel suits were brought by sculptors accused of over-dependence on the work of artisans or so-called ‘ghost sculptors’, the public defences of sculptural practice that ensued explained the collective studio processes, but nonetheless stressed the pre-eminence of the artist’s individual hand.<sup>28</sup>

In 1864 the American sculptor Harriet Hosmer responded forcefully to allegations that her statue *Zenobia* was not really her own work but was produced by her Italian artisan studio assistants. In an article titled ‘The Process of Sculpture’, she starts by correcting ‘the false, but very general impression, that the artist, beginning with the crude block, and guided by his imagination only, hews out his statue with his own hands’. ‘This disclosure’, she writes, ‘I am aware, will shock the many, who often ingeniously discover traces of the sculptor’s hand where they do not exist’, but it is the skilled workmen who ‘translate the original thought of the sculptor, written in clay, into the language of marble’.<sup>29</sup> Hosmer nevertheless powerfully asserts the distinctive creative genius of the sculptor who models the original clay and finishes the work – a point reinforced by promotional photographs that emphasise the hands-on nature of her art.<sup>30</sup> This is manual work.

The notion of the distinctive hand of the sculptor was likewise reaffirmed – rather ironically – as a consequence of the libel suit brought in 1882 by the sculptor Richard Belt against his former partner, Charles Bennett Lawes. Lawes had published an article questioning the authorship of Belt’s work (including his design of his memorial statue to Byron, in Park Lane). As Gosse observed twelve years later, the trial put to rest the ‘picturesque and absurd tradition of the “ghost,” the unseen Italian who entered the studio at night when the foppish and incompetent pseudo-artist had shown his clients into the street, and now carried on the real work’. Gosse says the trial made clear to the general public that ‘the sculptor does not dash with poetic frenzy on a mass of marble and cut out the limbs of his statue as if he were slicing cheese’. But equally, he points out, ‘it was very clearly propounded, and rubbed by a

hundred newspapers into the stupidity of the ordinary citizen, that it was not the case that all sculpture was done by somebody else, that all sculpture presented exactly the same features and might have been done by one man or a firm of men, and that there was recognised among artists an individuality of touch'.<sup>31</sup>

It is this 'individuality of touch' that late-nineteenth-century critics reach for when writing about contemporary sculpture, whether the 'precious trace' of Rodin's indefatigably kneading thumb, the virile 'thumb-thrust' of Leighton or the 'warm creative hand' imagined generically by Herder. It is frequently invoked in writing about Onslow Ford, for example, who was associated with the New Sculpture and was inevitably compared with his controversial French contemporary.<sup>32</sup> The sculptor's shaping hand is the focal point of John McLure Hamilton's 1893 portrait of Onslow Ford [Fig. 2]. And it is a defining presence in Frank Rinder's obituary of Onslow Ford published in the *Art Journal* following his death eight years later. Rinder's own extended account of the sculptor's touch moves from the literal to the metaphorical, and from the man to his work. It encapsulates the triangulated tactile exchange between maker, object and viewer that underlies Rilke's response to Rodin and Gosse's to Leighton. Rinder reproduces in the magazine the very piece that Onslow Ford was working on at the time of his death [Fig. 3]. It is a piece called *Snow Drift*, capturing a moment, poised between life and death, when the corpse is not yet cold, the sculptor's touch is still warm.

When I saw it in the studio the clay was still soft, the hand-marks of the artist were still, so to say, impermanent. What more aptly than this 'Snow Drift' could symbolise "thoughts hardly to be packed into a narrow act," the "all I

could ever be,” of a life which closed before the fiftieth milestone had been reached.<sup>33</sup>

Rinder is quoting from Robert Browning’s poem ‘Rabbi Ben Ezra’, in which God figures as a potter at his wheel and mortal man as His clay – particularly apposite at a time when a new emphasis on modelling in clay had revitalised Britain’s art schools.<sup>34</sup> ‘Ay, note that Potter’s wheel’, writes Browning, ‘That metaphor!’

Time’s wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance  
Of plastic circumstance,  
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldest fain arrest.<sup>35</sup>

The sculpture, Rinder tells us:

is a figure born of snow flakes ... An inscrutable fate has cast this personification of snow drift – numbed, but surely with breath still issuing from the parted lips – upon some lone shore ... There is no need to dwell on the pathos of this ‘Snow Drift,’ wrought – it is practically finished – as it was during the last weeks of Onslow Ford’s life. So, almost unawares, did the peace of death come to freeze into an eternal calm his efforts here, the efforts of one whose sympathies, like sun-lit snow-flakes, had gladdened the hearts of many, caused them to step forward with uplifted instead of with downcast eyes.<sup>36</sup>

'Look not thou down but up!' the Rabbi exhorts his listener in Browning's poem, echoed here.<sup>37</sup> Hovering ambiguously between freezing and melting, snow and sun, breathing and stillness, wind and calm, *Snow Drift* seems to epitomise not only the recently deceased artist whose work has not yet hardened into permanence, but sculpture itself, and in particular the effigy, poised on the lone shore between life and death.

## II

By the time of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1902, *Snow Drift* had been translated from soft clay into marble. In this form the figure of the naked corpse recalls an earlier work by Onslow Ford: the *Shelley Memorial*, housed in University College, Oxford, the poet's alma mater (before he was sent down for atheism) [Fig. 4]. The Memorial commemorates Shelley's death by drowning in 1822 - he was not yet 30 – after his sailing boat, the *Don Juan*, sank in a storm on the Gulf of Spezia. It represents the drowned poet on the Italian shore where his body washed up. The work captures the tragically premature death of this most romantic of Romantic poets in its naturalistic rendition of the young man's lifeless body (modelled by the sculptor's son). Onslow Ford had originally been commissioned by the poet's daughter-in-law Lady Shelley to produce the work for the Protestant Cemetery in Rome where the poet's ashes are interred. But the descendants of his friend Edward John Trelawny, who is buried in the neighbouring plot, deemed it to be of too large a scale, so the memorial was presented instead to University College and it was unveiled in 1893.

The sculpture attracted considerable critical attention in the art press of the day. One critic who wrote a number of articles in the 1890s on Onslow Ford's work was Marion

Hepworth Dixon, sister of the New Woman novelist and journalist Ella Hepworth Dixon. For Dixon, this too is a sculpture that invokes the hands of the artist, and it provokes from her a tactile response: she wrote, ‘the eye which could see and recreate for us the dead Shelley on the stormy shores of Viareggio, was surely one that could look lovingly on the face of death, the hand which portrayed the impassioned poet, one that could caress even marble’.<sup>38</sup> Dixon celebrated Onslow Ford’s work, and above all his poetic realism, in a number of articles in the 1890s. ‘Here is one to whom actuality is everything’, she declared.<sup>39</sup> ‘His art, a very grave and tender art, … is … the apotheosis of what we call naturalism’.<sup>40</sup> Yet she finds in his realism ‘a charm which is largely a spiritual one’.

Dixon wrote of the huge challenge of memorialising Shelley, the ‘great word-painter’ who left his followers ‘somehow inarticulate’, and is, moreover, already ‘enshrined in our imaginations’. ‘He is already an abstraction for us’, she declared in 1892. One of the ways in which Onslow Ford meets the challenge in this ‘daring’ enterprise is, she says, by being direct and ‘outspoken’: ‘The poet is represented as he was found on the storm-washed shore of Viareggio, lifeless, nude, cold, but still beautiful, inexpressibly beautiful, in death. A branch, which is a wreath, and yet is not a wreath, of laurels, encircles the poet’s head …’ Effigies conventionally play with such ambiguities – the funeral shroud that is like a blanket, the sarcophagus that is like a bed, the death that is like sleep – but the branch that is like a laurel wreath, that once adorned the poet’s brow, crowns a body that is unmistakeably a corpse. This is that poetic realism that she so admires in Onslow Ford’s work. ‘In no other way’, she continues, ‘would we have had the passionate poet, the passionate lover of the sea represented but in just this wise – locked in the sea’s embrace, white as the wild surf

which engulfed him'.<sup>41</sup> The drowned man, engulfed by the sea, and the foaming waves themselves, have been reconstituted, reunified and realised as and in stone. The shoreline upon which the poet rests is a liminal space that signifies at once the threshold of ocean and land and of life and death.

As Rinder's obituary of Onslow Ford compellingly suggests, the sculptural figure as a form shares some disquietingly common characteristics with the corpse. Both have a dynamic quality that Rinder captures in his prose. They each personify a mysterious, intriguing moment of transition. The Pygmalion myth, so beloved by artists, that tells of the statue coming miraculously to life, offers a potent counter-narrative to that of the corpse from whom life is draining. But an alternative founding myth of sculpture associates the origins of this art form with loss. Victor Stoichita discusses Pliny's use of the story of a woman's impulse to draw the outline of her lost lover in these terms. According to Pliny,

modelling portraits from clay was first invented by Butades, a potter of Sicyon, at Corinth. He did this owing to his daughter, who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by the lamp. Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposure to fire with the rest of his pottery; and it is said that this likeness was preserved in the Shrine of the Nymphs.<sup>42</sup>

As Stoichita observes, 'The shadow helps the young woman capture (*circumscripsit*) the image of her departing lover by creating a replacement', and this 'highlights a

metaphysical quality of the image whose origins should be sought in the interruption of an erotic relationship, in a separation, in the departure of the model, hence the representation becomes a substitute, a surrogate'.<sup>43</sup> The sculptural effigy in particular resonates with this foundational myth. It is, indeed, the most corpse-like of sculptural forms. Like the corpse, it is a simulacrum, an empty vessel that renders absence and loss painfully present through its verisimilitude. It is like, but is not, the person who was just there; it bears the still warm and tangible memory of the life that once animated the body but is disappearing before our very eyes. The theatricality of the Shelley Memorial's *mise en scène*, even after its modification in the 1930s, reinforces the impression that this is a live encounter with death; that we are witnessing a passing.<sup>44</sup>

The elemental journey of Shelley's body had, by the time of the monument's creation, become legendary. The poet was drowned, taken by the underworld of the sea; then his corpse was cremated, given up to the air through the action of fire; then his remains were buried, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, returning the composite matter of his body to the earth. In his lyrical exploration of mortality and memorialisation, *The Dominion of the Dead*, Robert Pogue Harrison observes: 'Human bodies, when they perish, share in this organic afterlife of the dead. They are "rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / with rocks, and stones, and trees," to speak with Wordsworth'.<sup>45</sup> But, as this familiar quotation itself demonstrates, he writes, 'human culture, unlike nature, institutes a living memory, and not just a mineral retention, of the dead'.<sup>46</sup> And so Shelley's gravestone in the Protestant Cemetery is inscribed: *Cor cordium* ('heart of hearts'), followed by a quotation from

Shakespeare's *Tempest* that memorialises the poet's elemental transformation, the 'sea-change' he underwent:

Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.<sup>47</sup>

One of the ways in which human culture memorialises the dead is by the marking of a grave at the site where the body is embraced by the earth. The sculptural ways in which we mark our end prompt thoughts about the ground as a ceremonial site of origins and of ends. The grave becomes part of the sedimentary fabric between earth and sky, marking a material, and indeed an elemental, threshold. But the manner of Shelley's death and interment complicates this story. For a start, the poet's heart, the 'cor cordium' of his gravestone, did not, so the story goes, actually form part of the cremated remains buried in the Protestant Cemetery. Snatched from the flames by his friend Edward Trelawny, it was kept by the poet's widow Mary Shelley wrapped in the manuscript of *Adonais*, Shelley's elegy to Keats written the year before upon his friend's death. The precious relic was not buried until 1889, with the son who survived him, Sir Percy Florence Shelley. Furthermore, as the inscription also underlines, Shelley suffered a sea change: his body swallowed by the waves before being taken into the earth. Swinburne concludes his sonnet to Shelley, entitled 'Cor Cordium', with an image of 'the nursing earth' and 'the sepulchral sea'.<sup>48</sup>

Harrison explores our compulsion to ground our experiences of sorrow and loss and memory when he writes that '[h]uman beings need an earthly foundation for their perspectives' because '[i]n its solidity and stability the earth is inscribable; we can

build upon its ground, while the sea offers no such foothold for human worldhood'. He contrasts the earth as a human habitus with the sea, which is, he says, 'dumb to human petition. It defies any and all humanization', because of what he calls 'its passion for erasure':

Erasure does not mean disappearance only; it means that the site of disappearance remains unmarkable. There are no gravestones on the sea. History and memory ground themselves on inscription, but this element is uninscribable. It closes over rather than keeps the place of its dead, while its unbounded grave remains humanly unmarked.<sup>49</sup>

And what of those who are left behind? Tennyson invokes the mother praying for her sailor son, in *In Memoriam*: 'while thy head is bow'd, / His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud / Drops in his vast and wandering grave'.<sup>50</sup> And he writes about his own feelings as he waits for his friend Arthur Hallam's body to be brought back from Vienna where he had died, praying that his beloved friend's lifeless body will make it safely home to land for a proper burial; that the ship's 'dark freight, a vanish'd life' will not be consigned forever to what Matthew Arnold so memorably called '[t]he unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea'?<sup>51</sup>

O to us,  
 The fools of habit, sweeter seems  
 To rest beneath the clover sod,  
 That takes the sunshine and the rains,  
 Or where the kneeling hamlet drains  
 The chalice of the grapes of God;

Than if with thee the roaring wells  
 Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine;  
 And hands so often clasp'd in mine,  
 Should toss with tangle and with shells.<sup>52</sup>

For the survivors of the drowned there is a particular imperative to create an inscribable site that will enact the rescue and memorialisation of the dead. As Harrison points out, ‘the words on Keats’s grave in the Protestant cemetery of Rome – “here lies one whose name was writ in water” – were not written in water but on a headstone that continues to hold the place of its reference’ – just as Shelley’s sea change was materially inscribed on his own nearby.<sup>53</sup> The Shelley Memorial didn’t end up marking his grave, in the same burial ground as Keats, as originally intended. Nevertheless Keats is very present in Onslow Ford’s monument to Shelley, who is said to have been carrying a volume of his friend’s poetry when he drowned. They are corporeally as well as mythologically entwined, just as Shelley’s heart was enveloped in his own elegy to Keats. Onslow Ford conjures something of their intertwined fate by incorporating into the bronze base of the monument a stanza from *Adonais*. These are lines that resonate with Shelley’s vitalist belief in the spiritual power that energises and unifies the natural world, a power that claims that elemental domain for human culture:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
 His voice in all her music, from the moan  
 Of thunder, to the song of night’s sweet bird;  
 He is a presence to be felt and known

In darkness and in light.<sup>54</sup>

Shelley himself is memorialised, and his name is writ, in stone, not in water. The abstraction that Shelley had become even by the time of the monument's creation has found physical embodiment in Onslow Ford's corporeally realised monument. Sculpted marble audaciously supervenes upon the poet's bodily dissolution in water and fire. The engraved lines from his own elegy on poetry and death institute a living memory that is materially realised. Our relationship to this brilliantly transformative rendition of Shelley's corpse is both visceral and spiritual, physical and metaphysical. The monument signifies at once mortality – the poet's and our own – and transcendence. For it is an intensified, dynamic site of convergence, of past, present and future – Romanticism, re-imagined at the *fin*, and experienced by us as surviving loved ones today.

### III

One of the striking things about the Shelley Memorial, and something that is evident from the way people wrote about it, and still respond to it, is that it breaks down traditional distinctions between public and private commemoration of the dead; between the monument to a public figure, which is not about mourning, and the private marking, paid for by their families, of the loss of a loved one. I don't just mean that Onslow Ford's monument to the poet was commissioned by his daughter-in-law, and intended to mark his grave, yet was executed three-quarters of a century after his death and is, in the event, a statue on a grand scale on display in an academic institution. I'm suggesting also that, like other sculptural works from this period, it provokes a highly personal response in the viewer – in this viewer, at least – and

thoughts about the affective experience of looking at such an art work: about how we bring to a public monument our own private experiences of loss, as well as our reading of Shelley's poetry, our knowledge of the mythologisation of his life and death; about how we respond with our bodies – with our hearts, with tears, perhaps – across space and time.

I am not the first to ponder such questions, of course. The nineteenth century provides its own examples, in fiction and poetry, of such affective encounters. Dorothea Brooke's exposure to the sensuousness of ancient statuary in the Vatican sculpture galleries is a pivotal narrative moment in *Middlemarch*, for instance, and a collision with the 'wingèd beast from Nineveh' being hoisted into the British Museum provides the arresting opening of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'The Burden of Nineveh'.<sup>55</sup> Later in the century some writers attempted properly to comprehend and theorise such corporeal and affective visual experiences. For the writer and aesthetician Vernon Lee, the capacity of words to remediate an individual's highly personal emotional and physiological responses to art, the articulation in particular of a language of sculpture, became an urgent project that she explored, in collaboration with her beloved friend Clementina (Kit) Anstruther-Thomson, over a decade and a half at the turn of the century. They conducted an extended empirical investigation into the aesthetics of empathy, beginning with an article on 'Beauty and Ugliness' published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1897. Of particular interest for my own topic are the women's observations on the embodied emotional response to the plastic arts, found in their gallery notes, and in Lee's theoretical expositions of what was variously called anthropomorphic or psychological or physiological aesthetics.

Here they argue that figurative sculpture especially lends itself to their project, ‘as the statue has the same general shape as ourselves’. Lee wrote:

Of course all form which we recognize as human awakens or can awaken the various orders of feeling which are awakened by human beings: sympathetic, voluptuous, painful, etc., because the act of such recognition means a reference of them to memory impressions which must be more or less saturated with the human feelings elicited in contemplating the human realities of which these impressions (images) are the residue. But this emotion is evoked just in proportion as we refer the artistic form to the human reality, i.e. in proportion as we dwell little on the work of art and much on the memory impression.<sup>56</sup>

Lee draws a distinction between art, which prioritises form, and literature, which appeals to such memory impressions, and has a ‘moral power’ different from that of visual art. ‘The more a statue makes us look at it’, she argues, ‘the more it holds us by *its* reality’, and ‘the less *moral* (or immoral) feelings we shall have’. For ‘these are got largely by substituting the *word* for the *form*’. ‘If men have been in love with statues’, she notes briskly, ‘it is because they have substituted for them the flesh and blood of their memory’.<sup>57</sup>

Was this the root of the experience I had with the Rodin figure? Ambushed as I was by the flesh and blood of memory, did I abandon the aesthetic of disinterest and detachment in which I had been trained, and fail to look at it as a *work of sculpture* with sufficient attention? ‘One of the ways of coming in contact with art’, Lee writes,

'is, evidently, to bring one's troubles, doubts, one's fluctuating sea or ruffled puddle of distress, and live this life subdued and chastened by that of art'.<sup>58</sup> Was this where I came adrift at the Rodin exhibition?

'Normally', says Lee, 'when we look at a picture or statue, we *think* the subject, and *feel* the form, and express the first in rich and varied language intelligible to every one, while we only indicate the *effect of the other on us* in vague terms not much more than translations of gestures and cries, 'I love!' 'I'd rather never see it again', etc.'<sup>59</sup>

Or, in my case, 'Sorry, I can't bear this. I have to leave now'.

Lee declared that 'the work of art requires for its enjoyment to be met half-way by the active collaboration of the beholder', for '[t]he work of art is the joint product, the point of intersection of the process of the attention of the artist who makes it ... and of the process of attention of those who look at it'.<sup>60</sup> Proceeding from that premise, she embarked on a '*study of what took place in myself in the presence of various statues, what associations of ideas, what feelings were awakened, and how I reacted psychologically both towards the visual form of the statue and towards the thing which the statue represented or the emotion it expressed*'.<sup>61</sup> One of the most interesting chapters of *Beauty and Ugliness* is entitled 'Aesthetic Responsiveness: Its Variations and Accompaniments. Extracts from Vernon Lee's Gallery Diaries, 1901-4'. It is based on her view that 'The total impression of a work of art is, I think, the sum of a series of acts of attention'.<sup>62</sup> As Lynda Nead has argued, 'the writing that came out of this ecstasy of self-observation remains some of the most

extraordinary art criticism of the period'. Lee's recording of her own kinaesthetic responses to art represents an earnest attempt to understand 'the velocities of looking', to discover how spectators are, quite literally, 'moved', psychologically and physically mobilized, by apparently static artefacts.<sup>63</sup> The statues she experimented with were, in the main, classical or Renaissance examples around her in Rome and Florence, but her aesthetic is embedded in turn-of-the-century psychological and art historical theory. She was a neighbour of the Berensons, and an important figure in both Anglo-American and European intellectual circles in Florence. Her experience is contemporaneous with the *fin-de-siècle* sculpture and writing we have been looking at, and it is relevant to the questions I am posing.

Mary Berenson records in her journal a 'heated debate' on the subject of Hildebrand's *Problem der Form* that took place over dinner at Lee's house one evening in November 1895, at which Lee protested 'violently . . . that a statue should be not composed like a bas-relief, or a series of bas-reliefs, & said that to her the great artistic quality of a statue was that it compelled you to walk around it'.<sup>64</sup> Both Mary and Bernard apparently dissented from this view, and indeed Lee herself was to modify her original position in *Beauty and Ugliness and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* in 1912, explaining that she now walked around statues of the 'pre-Lysippian (Hildebrand) type . . . to find the points of view; but once . . . found, I stop'.<sup>65</sup> Yet even in this qualified form it is a vignette that irresistibly brings to mind Herder's art lover, circling restlessly around a sculpture until 'he has it'.

Lee's interest in the dialectical velocities of looking also recalls the emerging preoccupations of another art historian who spent time in Florence in the late nineteenth century, Aby Warburg. Kathleen M Gough has recently written about

Warburg's development of what he called the 'Pathos Formula', a theory that he conceptualised around the moving figure of the 'Nympha' in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*.<sup>66</sup> Working on Botticelli's paintings in 1893, Warburg became interested in their movement, which he identified particularly in the fluttering of the hair and the dresses of the nymphs – 'accessory forms in motion', as he called them.<sup>67</sup> According to Gough,

For Warburg, pictorial allegories depicted in Italian Renaissance painting had haptic qualities. If we could come to understand where they were moving to, how they touched us, and how they were a part of our own movement, we might better come to understand ourselves. Warburg suggested this possibility when he sought to animate the figures on the same plane as himself, as the spectator. When the figure steps out of the picture frame and starts to inhabit the world, he posited that the spectator can now 'believe in forward movement' because he 'moves his eyes'.<sup>68</sup>

Gough concludes, 'on the most profound of analogical levels, Warburg understood that the Nympha was not just a part of *him*, but that he was a part of *her*'.<sup>69</sup>

Warburg may not have known Lee in Florence, but the parallels with her contemporaneous endeavour to affirm and articulate the embodied empathetic connection between viewer and aesthetic object are intriguing.<sup>70</sup> Warburg's reflections on the Nympha as 'Pathos Formula' in his essays on Botticelli (1893) and the *Intermedi* of 1589 (1895) restore agency and animation to the artwork and emphasise specifically, as Gough notes, the figure of the woman, and female dress, a topical subject in the era of the New Woman.<sup>71</sup> Lee likewise asserts the agency of

the artwork and of the female observer, particularly in her writing on sculpture, playfully invoking the *topos* of reversibility of woman as spectacle and spectator. She too attends to the role played by dress in aesthetic encounter, though in a way that reflects her own taste for tailored, rather than aesthetically fluttering, Botticellian New Woman fashion. In general ‘Women’, says Lee, ‘do better in a gallery, are more tolerable than men, because skirts and hats make them in a slight degree architectural: and because the *action* of their gait is dissimulated. A “well-hung” skirt is one which substitutes a more agreeable movement to the real one of their legs’.<sup>72</sup>

I dressed with care, selecting as architectural a mode as possible from my wardrobe, on the day I decided to go and look at a memorial sculpture with proper attentiveness. I walked over to St John’s Wood, with as agreeable movement of my legs as I could muster, to view Andrea Carlo Lucchesi’s memorial to Onslow Ford, who, as noted, died nine years after he made the Shelley Memorial [Fig. 5]. Here now was his own memorialisation. In her gallery notes, Vernon Lee says her outings to look at artworks were accompanied by an internal musical soundtrack that became increasingly insistent. For Lee it was Mozart or Beethoven, but the tune I had playing in my head was (appropriately enough for my physiological aesthetic experiment) ‘Something in the Way She Moves’, doubtless because the memorial is just along from Abbey Road Studios and the famous crossing.

The memorial to Onslow Ford pays tribute to its subject’s interest in the creative collaboration of the arts. Lucchesi, who was himself a member of the Art Workers Guild established in 1884 to promote the unity of the arts, incorporates a wreathed bust of Ford, bearing an inscription from *Hamlet*: ‘To thine own self be true’, and this

is one of several references the monument makes to Ford's interests in poetry and theatre.<sup>73</sup> (Ford's statue of *Irving as Hamlet* (1883) was one of his defining works.) The main figure at the front of the monument is a mourning woman seated in a melancholy pose with her lyre resting against her body. This is a reference to Ford's statue of the *Muse of Poetry* in Canterbury, which was sponsored by, amongst others, Tennyson and Irving, and unveiled by Irving in 1891 [Fig. 6]. *The Muse of Poetry* had itself been commissioned as a long-overdue public memorial to the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe, who was born and educated in Canterbury. Onslow Ford's choice of an allegorical treatment of his subject was presumably due to there being no surviving likeness of the playwright at the time. I have often passed this statue, and my recognition of this reference seemed suddenly to connect me to the Onslow Ford Memorial in my London neighbourhood in a more personal way. In particular it makes a connection between the memorial to Onslow Ford and Canterbury, which was the site of my own loss. The bronze figure of the muse bending over her broken lyre, lamenting the death of Adonais, on the base of the Shelley Memorial also appears to refer to the *Muse of Poetry*, as well as to Shelley himself, 'for whom / The lyrist liberty made life a lyre' (as Swinburne wrote in 'Cor Cordium'). Onslow Ford's sculptural reference to the Marlowe memorial invokes another rebel poet, also an atheist, who had 300 years earlier, like Shelley, died at 29, and adds allegorical power to his naturalistic commemoration of the Romantic poet. Lucchesi alludes to both figures and both poetic memorials in his monument to Onslow Ford. His sculpture connects me, via the Canterbury *Muse of Poetry*, in a new and more personal way to the Shelley Memorial too.

Lee was exercised, as we have seen, by the question of whether one should view sculpture in the round, or observe it from the intended prime perspective, concluding in 1912, 'I do not think even the most four-square statues intended us to take root before them', and that for a sense of its 'cubic thoroughness' we should regard a statue from all angles.<sup>74</sup> Walking around the Onslow Ford Memorial, and in particular the statue of the Muse, I become ever more aware of the impact on me of the lyre from its different angles. The image of the Muse with her lyre has of course been a common trope in both poetry and tomb sculpture since classical antiquity. Its particular force here, as in the Shelley Memorial, derives from the contrast between the standing woman of the Canterbury statue, singing and playing with her instrument held aloft, and the woman sunk in grief, her lyre leaning against her body, the strings no longer plucked signifying the stopped life, the silenced music. Like the trope of the sword at rest, or the empty helmet and gauntlet in sepulchral monuments to soldiers, the lyre that is not being played becomes a void that speaks of absence. We are left only with air, ironically recalling the Aeolian harp, played by the wind to which the Romantic poets compared themselves. 'Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an *Aeolian* lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody', declared Shelley in 'A Defence of Poetry'.<sup>75</sup> In 'Ode to the West Wind', he petitions the wind to 'Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is'.<sup>76</sup> But when a lyre is discarded, it comes to symbolise mortality and flux. In his poem 'Mutability', Shelley compares human lives to 'forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings / Give various response to each varying blast, / To whose frail frame no second motion brings / One mood or modulation like the last'.<sup>77</sup> The

language of mourning is reduced, this monument seems to say, to the sound of the wind in the void.

By the kind of human association, or ‘memory impression’, to which Lee refers, this image of the poet/artist as an instrument upon which the wind plays led me to think of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s beautiful poem ‘A Musical Instrument’. This poem has very personal associations for me. I had chosen it to be read at the funeral service that had taken place in the summer of 2006, before my aborted visit to the Rodin exhibition. It symbolized my loss. It describes how ‘the great god Pan’ ‘tore out a reed’ from the river to make his pipe.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,

(How tall it stood in the river!)

Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,

Steadily from the outside ring,

And notched the poor dry empty thing

In holes, as he sate by the river.

The hollowed-out reed of the poem and the lyre of the sculptures seem to have a family relation. Shaped for the touch of the musician, they make sweet, death-defying music:

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!

Piercing sweet by the river!

Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!

The sun on the hill forgot to die,  
 And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly  
 Came back to dream on the river.<sup>78</sup>

And yet they are instruments of death too, through their figurative association with the mortality of the poet/artist. Barrett Browning regrets, as she notes in a letter to a friend, ‘the loss of the sweet unconscious cool privacy among the “reeds” that a poet must suffer, and she ends her poem:

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,  
 To laugh as he sits by the river,  
 Making a poet out of a man:  
 The true gods sigh for the cost and pain, —  
 For the reed which grows nevermore again  
 As a reed with the reeds in the river.<sup>79</sup>

#### IV

The figure of ‘The Great God Pan’ in Frederic Leighton’s illustration of the poem, published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in July 1860, recalls the half-man/half-beast sculptures of Ancient Greece [Fig. 7]. It wasn’t until 1877, though, that the painter turned his own hand to sculpture and ‘gave the start-word to the New Sculpture in England’, in Gosse’s phrase, with his *Athlete Strangling a Python*.<sup>80</sup> This is a work that very evidently models itself on classical sculpture, in particular the *Laocoön*, but by the end of the century the emphasis on form in modern sculpture seemed to some critics to be giving way to the expression of feeling. In a review of the Paris

Salons of June 1898 for the *Nation*, the art critic Elizabeth Robins Pennell wrote about Rodin's highly controversial statue of Balzac, which had been met with baffled incomprehension by a public unused to such apparent disregard for form and finish. Pennell acknowledges that 'the inchoate expression he has given to his conception of Balzac is deliberate', and concludes: 'To escape from the lifeless, the soulless learning of the schools, the master sculptor now seeks to animate his marble or clay with an intensity of emotion or passion that could best find voice in music or in verse. The form counts for little; it is the feeling that must transfigure it' – the feeling, that is, that the sculptor invests in the sculpture, and the feeling, along with the acts of attention and memory, that we spectators bring to it.<sup>81</sup>

Conversely, it is perhaps no coincidence that it was sculpture that gave psychologists and aestheticians in the 1890s a language for defining how we exist in and relate to the world. If the sculpture gallery gave Vernon Lee a theatre for her performative exploration of the body, for William James in *Principles of Psychology* (published in 1890) sculpture served as a figure for the inner life. Struggling to capture the quality of consciousness (an attempt that seemed doomed, 'like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks'), James invokes the analogy of 'a snowflake crystal caught in the warm hand' that 'is no longer a crystal but a drop', recalling for me Onslow Ford's hauntingly ephemeral *Snow Drift*.<sup>82</sup> Intriguingly, James reaches to sculpture for a metaphor of the mind:

We see that the mind is at every stage a theatre of simultaneous possibilities.

Consciousness consists in the selection of some, and the suppression of the rest. The mind, in short, works on the data it receives very much as a sculptor works on his block of stone. In a sense the statue stood there from eternity.

But there were a thousand different ones beside it, and the sculptor alone is to thank for having extricated this one from the rest. Other sculptors, other statues from the same stone! Other minds, other worlds... My world is but one in a million alike embedded, alike real to those who may abstract them.<sup>83</sup>

For James, each of us sculpts his or her inner world from a pre-existing, inchoate reality – what he calls ‘the black and jointless, continually swirling atoms of *world-stuff*.<sup>84</sup>

His is a Cartesian view of the ‘self’ that modern psychology sometimes contests. Some new neuropsychology holds that there *is* no mind. It is not ‘we’ who determine our actions; consciousness is, rather, a biological function of the brain, and so, equally, is our aesthetic response to art.<sup>85</sup> Such neurological theories of aesthetic experience were explored with particular energy in *fin-de-siècle* Germany, where less poetic scientists than James, such as Theodor Lipps and Karl Groos, conducted their early experiments into psychological aesthetics. Vernon Lee was well-versed in their research, and referenced it in her own writing, but carefully distinguished it from her own research practice, declaring ‘My aesthetics will always be those of the gallery and studio, not of the laboratory’.<sup>86</sup>

Interestingly, the aesthetics of the gallery has also been the subject of modern scientific experimentation in the investigation of ‘Stendhal’s Syndrome’, named in 1989 by an Italian psychiatrist at the Santa Maria Nuova hospital in Florence who was often called upon to treat tourists swooning over the city’s art. The condition is so called because its symptoms recall those described by the French Romantic writer Stendhal during a visit to Florence in 1817, when he felt utterly overwhelmed by the

experience of looking intensely at the old masters in Santa Croce. ‘I was already in a kind of ecstasy’, he wrote, ‘by the idea of being in Florence, and the proximity of the great men whose tombs I had just seen’:

Absorbed in contemplating sublime beauty, I saw it close-up — I touched it, so to speak. I had reached that point of emotion where the heavenly sensations of the fine arts meet passionate feeling. As I emerged from Santa Croce, I had palpitations (what they call an attack of the nerves in Berlin); the life went out of me, and I walked in fear of falling.<sup>87</sup>

We have, it seems, an enduring fascination with the kinaesthetic and emotional experience of art. In the summer of 2010, scientific researchers set up an experiment to measure visitors' physiological reactions as they looked at the frescoes that decorate the interior of Florence's Palazzo Medici Riccardi. In a high-tech version of Vernon Lee's experiments of a hundred years previously that seemed like a homage to her project, they monitored the heartbeat, blood pressure and rate of breathing of the participants, who were afterwards asked to write about their experience, and describe how they felt physically and emotionally.<sup>88</sup>

This experiment is aligned with Vernon Lee's at the turn of the previous century in its emphasis on measuring the spectator's psycho-physiological response to the art object. But both required the experience of looking to be explored and written about. The visual image, and intense private feelings about public works of art, need to be understood, translated into words, and articulated in the process of memorialisation. Personal feeling translated into public memory, the passage of images into words and words into images, of private feeling into public discourse, is part of the post-

romantic process of the education and understanding of the feelings. This is the generative impulse behind the experiences, artworks and themes in this essay. I began with my need to write my way into understanding why Rodin's sculpture so distressingly triggered my feelings of grief. The ekphrastic impulse seems especially erotic and poignant when applied to figurative sculpture. Naomi Segal has written of Rilke's 'caressive' application of language to sculptural objects, not only in his critical essay on Rodin, but also in his contemporaneous collection of poems, *Neue Gedichte*, mostly written in Paris between 1903 and 1907.<sup>89</sup> The poet's words embrace the represented human form, she argues, like the surface or 'skin' of the sculpture that, 'by representing the principle of containment ... echoes our experience of being held or not being held, being complete or not being complete'.<sup>90</sup> Rilke understood this principle of containment. Writing of *The Burghers of Calais*, he observed that Rodin 'had also intensified the relationship of the atmosphere to his statue, so that it surrounded the interdependent planes more vividly, as it were, more passionately'. Beauty, he wrote, 'comes from the feeling of equilibrium, of balance between all these living surfaces'.<sup>91</sup> But what if we ourselves are in a state of disequilibrium? Recalling Herder, Merleau-Ponty writes of the body as '*sensible for itself*', as having the capacity to 'bring us to the things themselves, which are themselves not flat beings but beings in depth, ... open to him alone that, if it be possible, would coexist with them in the same world'.<sup>92</sup> But doesn't this, especially in the presence of three-dimensional figurative sculpture, mean that our feelings of shared humanity are unbearably intensified; that our embodied desire to co-exist in the same world with these 'beings in depth' confronts us, most cruelly, with the absence of the body we love, giving rise to our experience of 'not being held ... not being complete'?

Modern critical writing on sculpture, like Getsy's or Alex Potts', attends explicitly to the corporeal and affective nature of the encounter between spectator and art object. Potts, for example, urges 'a critical rethinking of sculptural norms that engages seriously with the more vividly embodied physical and perceptual responses activated by viewing three-dimensional work'.<sup>93</sup> This is something that, as we have seen, first Herder and then *fin-de-siècle* writers and sculptors anticipated and understood. They developed a synaesthetic metaphorical language that enacts the phenomenological interconnectedness of things. Words, images, sounds come together in Onslow Ford's statuary, in William James' psychology, and in Vernon's Lee's kinaesthetic journals on sculpture as they do in Rilke's ekphrastic poetry and prose. His poem on Music, 'You heart-space / grown out beyond us', conjures the 'breath of statues. Perhaps even / silence of pictures'. Music is 'language where / languages end'.<sup>94</sup> In 'the time of the sayable', Rilke fears that 'More than ever / Things we might experience are falling away, / for what forcefully take their place are acts without symbol'.

Constrained between hammers, the heart  
lives on, like our tongue  
pent between teeth, but for all that  
still the glad speaker of praise.<sup>95</sup>

Metaphor can persuade, can compel belief, as in the case of religious faith, where mere words fail. The sculptor working with hammers and heart, with teeth and tongue, is an image that invokes the entanglement of feelings and the experiential

world that must be restored to the ‘sayable’ if we are even to begin to understand how the language of sculpture speaks to the unquiet heart.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion’s Creative Dream*, ed. and trans. Jason Gaiger (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Jason Gaiger, introduction to *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion’s Creative Dream*, by Johann Gottfried Herder (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), especially 17.

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<sup>3</sup> Herder, *Sculpture*, 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> The Pygmalion myth has been well studied by Kenneth Gross, Essaka Joshua, Mary Sheriff, George Hersey, and Victor Stoichita, among others. See Herder, *Sculpture*, 103-4n1, for discussions of Pygmalion and sculpture as an empiricist rebuttal against Descartes and the separation of soul and body.

<sup>5</sup> David J. Getsy, 'Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performativity, and Passive Resistance', *Criticism* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 1-20.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 37. For further discussion, see Lene Østermark-Johansen, 'Caught between Gautier and Baudelaire: Walter Pater and the Death of Sculpture', *Yearbook of English Studies* 40, no. 1-2 (2010): 180-95; and Lene Østermark-Johansen, *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Getsy, 'Acts of Stillness', 5.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon S. Haight, ed., *The George Eliot Letters*, 9 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954-78), 2:471.

<sup>9</sup> See James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rodin and Other Prose Pieces*, with an introduction by William Tucker (London: Quartet Books, 1986), 37.

<sup>11</sup> Rilke, *Rodin*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Catherine Lampert in her introduction to *Rodin* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006) 15. Rilke is captivated by 'the language of the hands' in Rodin's work: 'instinctively one looks for the two hands from which this world has

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come forth ... one longs to behold these hands ...One asks about the owner of these hands' (Rilke, *Rodin*, 27, 3).

<sup>13</sup> Commissioned in 1884, the sculptural group was completed by Rodin in 1889.

The first of twelve casts of the group of six figures, cast in 1895, still stands in Calais.

<sup>14</sup> See Alex Potts on the ways in which the location of sculpture is always 'both a private and a public affair'. *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 21ff.; and Naomi Segal's observation that Rodin often chose to display his works 'in a garden, that most private of public (or public of private) spaces'. 'Words, Bodies and Stone: An Inaugural Lecture', *Journal of Romance Studies* 6, no. 3 (2006): 17n4.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Fontana, 1984), 5, 81. Though note Rilke's emphasis on the autonomy of Rodin's sculpture, and his axiom that 'the work of art should end within itself ... A sculpture, which shares the same atmosphere with the viewer, must be better at "looking away"'. Rilke, *Rodin*, 73.

<sup>16</sup> David J. Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877-1905* (New Haven and London, 2004), 155.

<sup>17</sup> 'Le principe de l'oeuvre de Rodin est le sex.' Arthur Symons, 'Les dessins de Rodin', *La Plume* 268 (1900): 383. Quoted in David J. Getsy, *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>18</sup> From Paul Gsell, 'Drawings by Rodin', in *Twelve Aquarelles by Auguste Rodin*, trans. Ronald Davis (Geneva and Paris: Georg Editions, 1920), 11-12. Quoted in Getsy, *Rodin*, 9.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘pétrissant, d’un pouce infatigable, ses ardents souvenirs … Pour créer, il faut être deux’. Léon Daudet, ‘La nouvelle orientation de la critique’, *L’Action française*, December 15, 1938. Quoted in Getsy, *Rodin*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘The Rodin-Book: First Part’ (1902-3), in *Where Silence Reigns: Selected Prose*, trans. G. Craig Houston (New York: New Directions, 1978) 6. Quoted in Getsy, *Rodin*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Edmund Gosse, ‘The New Sculpture 3’, *Art Journal* (September 1894): 277-82.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), see especially 62-64.

<sup>23</sup> Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon, 1960), 16.

<sup>24</sup> Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das problem der Form in der Bildenden Kunst* (Strasbourg, 1893); translated by Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden as *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1907). For an excellent discussion of the influences on Berenson’s theory, see Alison Brown, ‘Bernard Berenson and “Tactile Values” in Florence’, in *Bernard Berenson: Formation and Heritage*, eds. Joseph Connors and Louis A. Waldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> From *Eye and Mind*, in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen A. Johnson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993) 121-60.

<sup>26</sup> See Peter Dent, ed., *Sculpture and Touch* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Herder, *Sculpture*, 44, 41-42.

<sup>28</sup> On the relationship of the hand of the artist to reproductive manual labour and the mechanical hand, see introduction to Luisa Calè and Patrizia Di Bello, eds.,

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(Hounds Mills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 1-21, 9-10 especially.

<sup>29</sup> Harriet Hosmer, ‘The Process of Sculpture’, *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1864): 734-37.

<sup>30</sup> See Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 101-41, for an illuminating discussion of Hosmer.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund Gosse, ‘The New Sculpture 2’, *Art Journal* (July 1894): 199-203.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Marion Hepworth Dixon, ‘Onslow Ford, R.A.’, *Art Journal* (October 1898): 294-96. Onslow Ford did not personally like Rodin’s sculpture. See M.H. Spielmann’s obituary of Onslow Ford, in which he reports, “No – I can see nothing in them at all,” he declared to me recently, at the end of a protracted discussion; and Rodin, alone among the leading sculptors now living, remained curiously taboo to our generous-minded artist to the end.’ ‘E. Onslow Ford, R.A.: In Memoriam’, *Magazine of Art* (January 1902): 181-84.

<sup>33</sup> Frank Rinder, ‘Edward Onslow Ford, R.A.’, *Art Journal* (February 1902): 59-62.

<sup>34</sup> As Susan Beattie argues, in *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983) 9-36 especially.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Rabbi Ben Ezra’, in *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*, ed. Ian Jack (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) 811-18, lines 151-52, 162-65.

<sup>36</sup> Rinder, ‘Edward Onslow Ford’, 60.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Browning, ‘Rabbi Ben Ezra’, 817, line 175.

<sup>38</sup> Dixon, ‘Onslow Ford, R.A.’, *Art Journal* (October 1898): 294-96.

<sup>39</sup> Marion Hepworth Dixon, ‘Onslow Ford, A.R.A.’, *Magazine of Art* (January 1892): 325-30.

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<sup>40</sup> Dixon, 'Onslow Ford, R.A.', *Art Journal* (October 1898): 294-96.

<sup>41</sup> Dixon, 'Onslow Ford, A.R.A.', *Magazine of Art* (January 1892): 325-30.

<sup>42</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, xxxv, 43. Quoted in Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 11.

<sup>43</sup> Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 15.

<sup>44</sup> See Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 119-41, for an excellent discussion of the *Shelley Memorial*.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 2.

<sup>46</sup> Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.2.400-402. References are to act, scene, and line.

<sup>48</sup> *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, vol. 2 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904) 171.

<sup>49</sup> Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, 4-12.

<sup>50</sup> Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, 6, in *In Memoriam, Maud and Other Poems*, ed. John D. Jump (London: J. M. Dent, 1995), 78, lines 14-16.

<sup>51</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'To Marguerite – Continued', in *Selected Poems*, ed. Timothy Peltason (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 37, line 24.

<sup>52</sup> Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, 10, in *In Memoriam, Maud and Other Poems*, lines 8, 11-20.

<sup>53</sup> Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> 'Adonais', in *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, eds. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 529-45, lines 370-74.

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<sup>55</sup> ‘The Burden of Nineveh’, in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Poems & Translations, 1850-1870, Together with the Prose Story ‘Hand and Soul’* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 12-17, lines 1-10.

<sup>56</sup> Vernon Lee and C. Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness, and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* (London: John Lane, the Bodley Head; New York: John Lane Company, 1912) 218, 265-66.

<sup>57</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 266.

<sup>58</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 347.

<sup>59</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 271-72.

<sup>60</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 274.

<sup>61</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 253.

<sup>62</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 261-62.

<sup>63</sup> Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film C.1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007) 37.

<sup>64</sup> Mary Berenson, journal, 1895–96, BMBP, 36 (29 November 1895, a passage titled ‘Vernon on Aesthetics’). Quoted in Brown, ‘Bernard Berenson and “Tactile Values” in Florence’.

<sup>65</sup> Brown notes that Lee’s views were repeated in the article ‘Beauty and Ugliness’, as it appeared in the *Contemporary Review* (October-November 1897), 35 and 38n, but were revised when it was republished in 1912. See Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 219 and 219n.

<sup>66</sup> Kathleen M. Gough, ‘Between the Image and Anthropology: Theatrical Lessons from Aby Warburg’s “Nympha”’, *TDR: The Drama Review* 56, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 114-130. Gombrich explains Warburg’s conceptualization of the ‘Pathos Formula’ thus: ‘He saw that the borrowings of Renaissance artists from classical sculpture were not

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haphazard. They occurred whenever a painter felt in need of a particularly expressive image of movement or gesture, of what Warburg came to call *Pathosformel*. His insistence that *quattrocento* artists, who had previously been regarded as the champions of pure observation, so frequently took recourse to a borrowed formula made a great impression'. *Art and Illusion*, 20.

<sup>67</sup> Aby Warburg, 'Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*: An Examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Italian Early Renaissance (1893)', in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt, with an introduction by Kurt W. Forster (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute for the Research of Arts and Humanities, 1999) 89–156. Quoted Gough, 'Between the Image and Anthropology', 120.

<sup>68</sup> Gough, 'Between the Image and Anthropology', 122.

<sup>69</sup> Gough, 'Between the Image and Anthropology', 122.

<sup>70</sup> Warburg did know Berenson, whom he disliked. See Caroline Elam, 'Herbert Horne's Botticelli', in *Botticelli Reimagined*, eds. Mark Evans and Stefan Weppelmann (London: V & A Publishing, 2016) 94-101. See also Gerhard Wolf, 'Warburg's Botticelli and Botticelli's Nymph' in the same volume, 102-105.

<sup>71</sup> Aby Warburg, 'Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*', 89-156; and 'The Theatrical Costumes for the *Intermedi* of 1589: Bernardo Buontalenti's Designs and the Ledger of Emilio de' Cavalieri (1895)', in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, 349–401. Gough, 'Between the Image and Anthropology', 122-25.

<sup>72</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 260.

<sup>73</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.3.78. References are to act, scene, and line.

<sup>74</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, 264n63.

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<sup>75</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translation and Fragments*, ed. Mary Shelley (London: Moxon, 1840) 1-57.

<sup>76</sup> 'Ode to the West Wind', in *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, 412-14, line 57.

<sup>77</sup> 'Mutability', in *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works*, 112, lines 5-8.

<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'A Musical Instrument', in *Selected Poems*, ed. Margaret Forster (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988) 325-27, lines 7, 19-24, 30-36.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Adolphus Trollope, *What I Remember*, 2 vols (London: R. Bentley, 1887) 2:175-79; E. B. Browning, 'A Musical Instrument', lines 37-42.

<sup>80</sup> Edmund Gosse, 'The New Sculpture 1', *Art Journal* (May 1894): 138-42.

<sup>81</sup> N.N. (Elizabeth Robins Pennell), 'The Paris Salons', *The Nation*, June 30, 1898.

<sup>82</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1908) 1:244.

<sup>83</sup> James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1:288. James' analogy recalls other examples where artistic practices are used as metaphors for understanding the workings of the inner mind. The original theatrical analogy comes from David Hume, picking up on Locke's metaphor of the mind as a camera obscura in which pictures are hung without any connection to each other. Hazlitt also uses the metaphor of the mind as a picture gallery in his essay on the pleasures of painting. See Luisa Calè, 'A Gallery in the Mind? Hazlitt, Spenser, and the Old Masters', *Tate Papers* 24 (2015).

<sup>84</sup> James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1:288.

<sup>85</sup> See the special issue on 'Art and the Brain' of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies: Controversies in Science & the Humanities* 6 (June/July 1999), particularly

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the critical forum around the lead article by psychologists V.S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein, 15-75.

<sup>86</sup> Lee and Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, viii. See Carolyn Burdett, “The subjective inside us can turn into the objective outside”: Vernon Lee’s ‘Psychological Aesthetics’, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 12 (June 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Iain Bamforth, *A Doctor’s Dictionary: Writings on Culture and Medicine* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2015). See the chapter on ‘Vertigo’ for an excellent discussion of Stendhal’s Syndrome. See also Iain Bamford, ‘Stendhal’s Syndrome’, *British Journal of General Practice* 60, no. 581 (December 2010): 945-46.

<sup>88</sup> Nick Squires, ‘Scientists investigate Stendhal Syndrome – fainting caused by great art’, *Telegraph*, 28 July, 2010.

<sup>89</sup> Naomi Segal, ‘Words, Bodies and Stone’, 13. David Getsy writes about “Caressability” and the Formulation of Modernist Sculpture in Britain’ as the conclusion to *Body Doubles*, 181-87.

<sup>90</sup> Segal, ‘Words, Bodies and Stone’, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Rilke, *Rodin*, 38-39, 14.

<sup>92</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) 135-36.

<sup>93</sup> Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000) 5.

<sup>94</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘To Music’, in *Selected Poems*, with parallel German text, trans. Susan Ranson and Marielle Sutherland, ed. Robert Vilain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 123, lines 7-8, 1-3.

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<sup>95</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, 'The Ninth Elegy' (*Duino Elegies*), in *Selected Poems*, 171-73, lines 42-51.