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## “Hard Realism”: The Thanatic Corporeality of Edward Onslow Ford’s *Shelley Memorial*

Some have skeletons in their closets; Oxford has a corpse. Since its unveiling in 1893, Edward Onslow Ford’s memorial to the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley has been a disconcerting presence at University College (figs. 71, 77–81). Often met with derision, the *Shelley Memorial* has suffered perennial undergraduate pranks, vandalism, and recurring attempts to bury – or at least move – this uneasy and awkward body. In art-historical accounts of the period, the work has been quietly passed over despite its importance to late Victorian sculpture and criticism.<sup>1</sup> All of this squeamishness, however, is precisely the point. Almost a century before the corpse would be explored by sculptors like Paul Thek, Robert Gober, or Marc Quinn Edward Onslow Ford brought the viewer face to face with thanatic corporeality.

Ford used the commission for the *Shelley Memorial* to formulate a polemical contribution to the on-going debates about the propriety and potential of sculptural verisimilitude. He employed the corpse as the embodiment of realism itself and made the figure of Shelley its poetic allegory. In this work he posited a highly self-conscious and self-reflexive articulation of verisimilitude and its overlap with the materiality of the sculptural object.

Despite the fact that he would become one of the pillars of the sculptural renaissance in the 1880s and 1890s, Ford had little of the formal training in sculpture from which his colleagues benefited. As Marion Spielmann put it, “in the art in which he has excelled [Ford] is practically self-taught.”<sup>2</sup> Born in 1852, he was sent at an early age from England to Antwerp and subsequently to Munich to study painting. In Munich his teacher Michal Wagnmüller encouraged him to pursue sculpture. Having returned to London in 1874, Ford exhibited at the Royal Academy for the first time in 1875, submitting a bust of his wife.

Without the full formal education in structure, figural conventions, and composition upon which many of his Academy-trained contemporaries drew, Ford focused instead on closely observed and rendered surface detail. He was therefore most successful in portraiture and first achieved acclaim in 1883 with an uncommissioned seated portrait of the actor Henry Irving. Only a year later did he exhibit a large-scale imaginative or “ideal” sculpture for the first time: his statue of *Limus*, the personification of the funeral dirge (fig. 72). The translation of Ford’s detailed portrait style to the genre of ideal sculpture, however, resulted in a work that adhered more faithfully to the idiosyncrasies of his model’s body than was accept-

70 Edward Onslow Ford, *Snowdrift* (detail), 1901 (completed posthumously 1902), marble, 32 cm. h., 90 cm. l.; National Museums Liverpool (Lady Lever Art Gallery); photo: David Getsy.



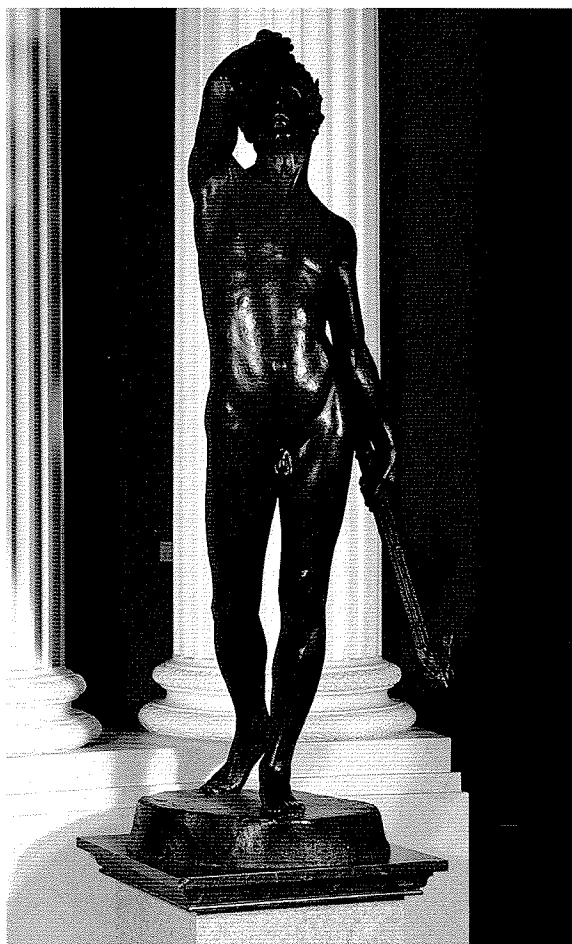
able at that time. Rather than conventionalize the body in the traditional manner, Ford chose to retain the bulkiness of his model's hips and the exaggerations created by his striding pose. The statue was denigrated by Edmund Gosse for being "too purely a *portrait* of the body of some particular model." He continued:

imperfections are slavishly reproduced rather than finer forms selected. This is the result of the neglect of style, and the pursuit of realism without imagination. Mr. Onslow Ford is technically so clever [. . .] that we believe he will see, from the comparative failure of his figure this year, that more is needed than mere portraiture of the body.<sup>3</sup>

While *Linus* was largely deemed a failure because it infected the genre of the ideal nude with "realism" and portraiture, other naturalistically treated yet sufficiently ideal works in the same exhibition received high praise. These included Gilbert's *Icarus* (1884, fig. 42), Thornycroft's *Mower* (1884, fig. 36), and even Auguste Rodin's *L'Âge d'airain* (1876), all of which were considered more noble than Ford's *Linus*. Throughout the rest of his career, charges of the lack

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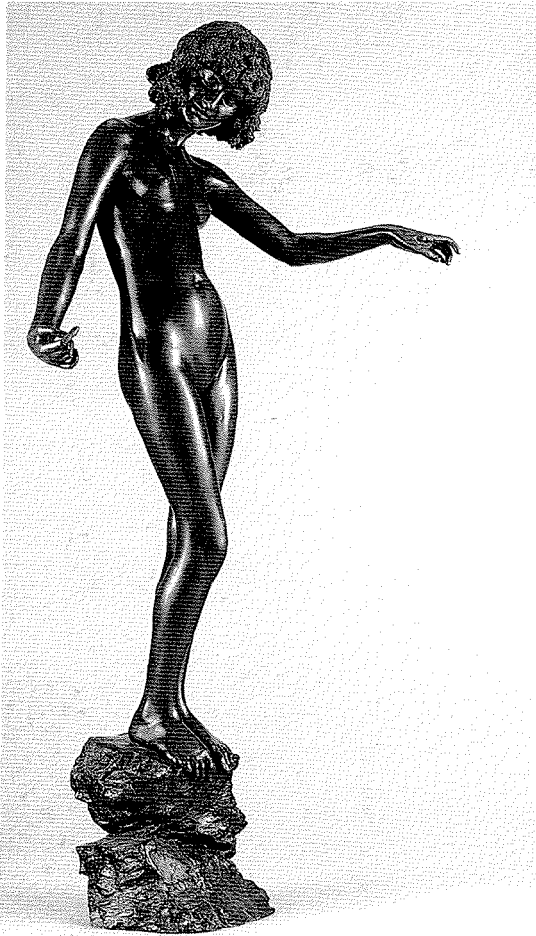
71 (*facing page*) Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial*, 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, Oxford; reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.



72 Edward Onslow Ford, *Linus*, 1884, bronze, life-size; National Museums Liverpool (Lady Lever Art Gallery).

of sufficient ideality, “body portraiture,” and “realism without imagination” continued to be deployed by critics averse to the sculptor’s treatment of the nude.

After *Linus*, Ford retreated from the life-size male nude format. He instead embarked upon a series of half-size statuettes of female nudes in which he steadily deepened his commitment to verisimilar and individualized renderings of the body. His first creation of this kind, *Folly* (1886), was purchased for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest and put Ford at the forefront of British sculpture (figs. 73 and 74). A young girl with tousled hair (to which Ford gave texture and made more life-like by using the imprint of actual animal hair) beckons the viewer toward the edge of the cliff on which she precariously yet unselfconsciously perches. Her feet are disproportionately large and cling tightly to the rock’s edge. In part because of her unusual pose, her hips appear blocky, her belly swells slightly, and her buttocks create a protruding profile on side views. This treatment breaks the flowing lines expected of the traditional female nude, especially when *Folly* is looked at in profile. With both its bodily particularity and obvious incitement of the viewer, *Folly* broke with the decorum and



73 Edward Onslow Ford, *Folly*, 1886, bronze, 88.7 cm. h., various collections; photo: courtesy Prudence Cumming Associates, London.

74 Edward Onslow Ford, *Folly* (detail), 1886, 88.7 cm. h., various collections; photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

conventions expected of the female nude in sculpture. One sympathetic critic would later recall:

That this small statue, brimful as it is of originality and *verve*, and more particularly of that quality we call modernity, that this work defied well-nigh every classic convention, we need hardly re-state here. The very *abandon* of the poise [*sic*], the daring realism of the lower extremities (to mention only one detail commented upon by adverse critics) was enough to proclaim “Folly” a child of artistic revolt.<sup>4</sup>

Again, “realism” was invoked as the primary issue in evaluating Ford’s style. Ford merely attended to the exigencies of the pose he chose for his female nude. It should be re-emphasized, however, that the “realistic” details that critics considered novel and remarkable were, themselves, equally conventional and no more objectively “true” than the formulaic

renderings of the body Ford had abandoned. Like all "realisms," they were derived from and articulated in distinction to customary representational idioms and stylistic dispositions.

Despite the frequency with which the term "realism" was employed to call attention to such variations, it remained ill-defined and slippery (see also chapters 3 and 5). At times it was used interchangeably with "naturalism," but more often "realism" brought with it pejorative connotations. Whereas "naturalism" referred to the convincing illusionism of the sculptor's rendering of the body, "realism" functioned in the discourse of late Victorian sculpture as a comparative intimation of an immoderate attention to the distinctiveness of the body and the bodily. "Realist" sculptures lacked sufficient generalization and displayed incidental particularities associated with individual, rather than ideal, bodies. Such sculptures, consequently, were seen to draw attention to the quotidian circumstances of actual naked bodies and, more specifically, to the literal body of the model (who was often considered *a priori* morally suspect).<sup>5</sup> For the genre of imaginative and "ideal" sculpture with its allegories and mythological characters, stylistic "realism" was considered an excess of verisimilitude and implied a too-faithful transcription of the mundane into the sculptural object. This should not be conflated with the more common usage of the term derived from French Realist practices (exemplified in the work of Gustave Courbet) in which style and (often working-class) subject matter were often deployed in consort for social or political critique.<sup>6</sup>

Ford retained mythological and imaginative subject matter, making his attention to bodily particularity seem all the more jarring and inappropriate. For commentators on his allegorical female nudes, the use of the term "realist" most often implied that the statues exhibited a dearth of ideality and were, by extension, morally dubious.<sup>7</sup> In short, the aspirations to beauty and ideality assumed of imaginative sculpture were seen to be undermined by Ford's "slavish" reproductions of bodily detail. As one of the reviewers summarized the problems in 1886:

All art, even the most ideal in style and aim, must unquestionably, to be living and sound, be based on the closest study of nature in every aspect; but the highest truth is not necessarily attained by a reproduction of the accidental imperfections of individuals, but rather by a selection which shall take all that is expressive and essential, and cast aside or simplify the rest. Sculpture, essentially an art of compromise, can only proceed on such a basis, for in closer competition with nature, in attempted emulation of its forms, its textures and colours, it can only succeed in producing the monstrous and the untrue.<sup>8</sup>

Confronting one of Ford's sculptures made this issue unavoidable. Ford increasingly became identified with the issue of realism's role in imaginative sculpture, and the critical evaluations of his work were, as a result, far more consistently contentious than those received by his fellow sculptors. Those sympathetic to his style often referred to its "fidelity." The word "realism," if used, was qualified with such antecedents as "noble" to insulate Ford's work from charges of impropriety. Marion Spielmann's label "poetic realism," conjoining two terms customarily considered antagonistic in sculpture,<sup>9</sup> is perhaps the most appropriate for Ford.

Throughout his career, this dual emphasis on bodily distinctiveness and evocative imagery proved to be the core element of Ford's reputation and artistic identity. While there were other sculptors who were criticized for stylistic realism during the rapid transformations in sculptural style of the 1880s, Ford emerged by the end of the decade as the major proponent

of “poetic realism” in British sculpture. He would continue to explore the dynamic potential of the tension between the actual and the symbolic with a sophistication not pursued by his contemporaries. That he self-consciously took on this role was attested to in the portrait by his son, Wolfram (fig. 75).<sup>10</sup> The portrait not only includes the *Shelley Memorial* and the *Singer* (1889) in the background, but shows Ford holding the exemplar of Northern European symbolic naturalism – Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* (1434, National Gallery, London). In its style and with this reference, Wolfram’s painting fashioned his father in allegiance to the Pre-Raphaelites, who also took the van Eyck as a precedent for their work. Like them, Ford explored the symbolic potential of the accurate and unconventionalized rendering of the material world.

By giving his father this attribute, Wolfram was making a statement about the need to defend the exploration of poetic realism against its detractors. Just a year after the success of *Folly*, Gosse announced, “The time has passed when it was desirable in any way to nurse the reputation of Mr. Onslow Ford.” He went on to savage the life-size *Peace* (fig. 76), saying it was

wanting in the highest element of all such work – distinction. The feet and ankles of this “Peace” are so thick and clumsy as to be positively grotesque; and the face, beautifully executed, is just the stupid, vacant face of the professional sitter. [. . .] If the sculptors, in a false pursuit of realism, persist in refusing to select their types or inform their creation with imaginative nobility, we shall beg them to supply us with simple casts from the living model.<sup>11</sup>

Gosse could see nothing more than the body of the professional model in the work. While extreme, his response was a characteristic reaction to the way in which Ford called attention to the nude body and its vulnerability. The contrast between the girl’s body and the discarded breastplate at her feet created an internal dynamic between statue and base in which the body’s nudity became emphasized and invested. When he exhibited the life-size bronze cast in 1890, he was again accused of “willful affectation and false realism [. . .] in deliberately choosing for reproduction a defective and ill-proportioned model.”<sup>12</sup> The implication was that Ford had attempted to make the viewer self-conscious about looking not just at an ideal sculpture but at a particular body as well.

Claude Phillips, who gradually replaced Gosse as the leading authority on sculpture in the 1890s, would pursue this theme to become the most vocal of Ford’s critics. Phillips frequently singled him out as exemplary of the ignoble practice of sculptural realism. His comments on the life-size *Echo* (1895) are typical:

while his ethereal and genuinely poetic conception lifts us above mere earthly things, the meagre and too much individualised forms of his nymph – no true immortal, but a suffering being like ourselves – somewhat rudely bring us back again to reality. What may be called the *religion of the individual model* is here carried too far.<sup>13</sup>

Like Gosse’s chastising allusion to “body portraiture” of a decade before, the phrase “religion of the individual model” was a thinly veiled accusation that Ford was displacing idealism with realism.



75 Wolfram Onslow Ford, *Edward Onslow Ford, R.A.*, ?1899, oil on canvas; untraced; photo: Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.





Nevertheless, Ford found many ardent supporters, especially among his fellow artists. By 1887, even those who criticized him considered Ford “one of the four or five leading English sculptors of the day.”<sup>14</sup> Highly regarded as one of the foremost portraitists of the late Victorian era, he sculpted over one hundred and fifty different portrait busts and reliefs; among his subjects were Queen Victoria, General Gordon, Thomas Henry Huxley, W. E. Gladstone, Herbert Spencer, John Everett Millais, and John Ruskin.<sup>15</sup> Even as late as 1933, Eric Underwood noted that “as a portraitist Ford had few equals.”<sup>16</sup> Ford was elected to the Royal Academy in 1888 and elevated to full Academician in 1895. Queen Victoria offered him a knighthood, but he declined, preferring to be known as just “Onslow Ford.”<sup>17</sup> Significantly, he was one of the few late Victorian sculptors to be memorialized with a public monument of his own after his early death in 1901 (J. W. Simpson, architect, and Andrea Lucchesi, sculptor, *Onslow Ford Memorial*, 1903, St John’s Wood, London). The motto below Ford’s portrait reads: “To thine own self be true,” attesting both to Ford’s individualism and to his pursuit of the veristic

In the press, Ford’s most assiduous defender was the largely undervalued Marian [MacMahon] Hepworth Dixon, who wrote three substantial articles on him between 1892 and 1900.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it is in Dixon’s writing that one most clearly senses the urgent need to justify and explain Ford’s position as the proponent of poetic realism. Of *Folly*, she argued:

The problem of whether Onslow Ford should be reckoned among the Realists or the Idealists is a moot point. [. . .] On the side of imaginative sculpture we have but to glance at the artist’s figure called “Folly,” with its bewitching flower-like grace of torso, with its bony, strenuous stalk-like legs, and we shall say here, at any rate, is an uncompromising Realist. Here is one to whom actuality is everything.<sup>19</sup>

Dixon became especially concerned with fighting the charges leveled by Phillips and others that realism in sculpture necessarily entailed the loss of ideality, symbolism, and beauty. In contrast, she argued in support of Ford’s “actuality” and his “loving fidelity” to nature.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, she felt the need to distance his work from the “ruthless, remorseless fidelity of a sculptor like Rodin” and from the French sculptor’s conflicted reputation in Britain.<sup>21</sup> It is clear from Ford’s early works such as the *Portrait of an Irish Peasant Woman* (1881) and *Linus*, that he was influenced by Rodin’s example. After the nonplussed critical reaction to *Linus* in 1884, however, fewer such affinities can be found between the two sculptors’ work. Dixon voiced this distinction and summarized Ford’s position:

Ford’s fidelity is made of different stuff. In his realism there is no sort of pose – there is no sort of attitudinizing. If he approaches truth, it is with no dogmatizing tongue, no flourish or parade of new methods. [. . .] His art, a very grave and tender art, [is . . .] *the apotheosis of what we call naturalism*. In his work nature’s realities may be given us, nay, are given us, shorn of petty subterfuge.<sup>22</sup>

She characterized Ford’s work as an earnest and reverent exploration of the poetic potential of the material world, contrasting it with Rodin’s often ostentatious stylistic and technical posturing. “For in all Mr. Onslow Ford’s realism,” she would later reiterate, “there is a charm which is largely a spiritual one.”<sup>23</sup>

76 Edward Onslow Ford, *Peace*, 1887 (cast 1890), bronze, life-size; National Museums Liverpool (Walker Art Gallery).

Ford's other advocates also felt the need to put his pursuit of particularity and verisimilitude in a positive light. Walter Armstrong, for example, argued that Ford's mimetic technique had reached such a high degree of refinement that problems with the sculptures could no longer be blamed on the artist. Drawing on the insidious trope of the uncontainable female body, he tried to persuade his readers that the models and their physiology were the culprits. He found that the model for *Peace* (fig. 76),

to which Mr. Ford's principles compelled a complete fidelity, was not so pleasing in shape as the girl who sat for *Folly*. She was a little square and boyish in her contours, a defect, if it be one, for which his next figure cannot be blamed. The fact was, the sculptor tells me, that his model grew from a child into a little woman while the work was in progress, so that it unites some of the characteristics of either age.<sup>24</sup>

Like Ford's detractors, Armstrong had difficulty in telling where the model's body stopped and the sculpture began. For him, the statue was equated with the literal body to a limited extent. For that reason, he maintained that Ford could be criticized only for being too successful in his chosen style of sculptural realism. Dixon derided those "surface critics [who] quarrel with the sculptor's models,"<sup>25</sup> but her arguments also evidenced the continual struggle to discriminate between the preciously rendered sculptural object and the veraciously represented body.

Armstrong attempted to praise such an interpenetration of material object and representational image when he wrote of *Folly*, "Technically, the work is exquisite. The figure is not realistic, but real."<sup>26</sup> By "real," Armstrong did not mean that he was fooled into thinking that the under-life-size sculpture had, like Pygmalion's Galatea, become living flesh. Rather, he attempted to capture the symbiosis of materiality and representation afforded by Ford's sensuous sculptural realism. Dixon would later concur, saying "There was *actuality* in that little statue."<sup>27</sup> "Actuality" is a useful term for Ford's work, as it conveys both his concern with fidelity to bodily particularity and the resulting physicality of the sculptural body which seems, as Armstrong said, "not realistic, but real."

The issues of realism, allegorical embodiment, and corporeality find their clearest formulation and defense in Ford's creation of a polemical statement of sculpture theory with the *Shelley Memorial*, albeit a non-textual one (figs. 71, 77–82). Ford here dramatized the "actuality" admired by Dixon and Armstrong and put the realistically rendered body into the service of commemoration and the poetic. Taking the limit case of the corpse – at once the most fundamentally realist subject and the ultimate sign of bodily materiality – he delineated the potency of the sculptural object to evoke corporeality, though here in the extreme. Using the circumstances of the Shelley commission, he established realism and materiality not as the ends of sculptural inspiration – as Phillips and others would have it – but the roots of it. In order to do this he relied upon the corporeal fusion between figure and object that was a central problematic for the New Sculpture, providing its most paradigmatic manifestation.

It is not clear exactly when Lady Jane Shelley approached Ford about the memorial to her father-in-law. Although she had never met the poet, she had been a tireless advocate for him since her marriage to his and Mary Shelley's son Percy Florence in 1848.<sup>28</sup> Shelley's reputation

had always been controversial. After being drowned in 1822 off the shores of Viareggio, however, he and his life story became ripe for myth-making, resulting in numerous fraudulent accounts. Polygamy, atheism, sodomy, his tempestuous life and death were among the many threads woven into the corpus of Shelley legends, not least including inaccuracies and exaggerations about his political and moral views. Specifically, his unconventional attitudes and political activism on the issues of marriage, vegetarianism, and religion disturbed many Victorians. Indeed, it was his involvement in the publication and distribution of an atheist tract that had caused his expulsion from University College, Oxford, in 1811.

Lady Shelley's crusade to ensure Shelley's respectability and place in history took many forms. In the early 1850s, before commissioning the memorial from Ford, she asked Henry Weekes to sculpt a memorial to the poet for St. Peter's Church in Bournemouth, a copy of which formed the centerpiece of her personal shrine.<sup>29</sup> By the late 1880s, however, she required a more ambitious and more public commemoration. In 1892 the centenary of Shelley's birth initiated a widespread re-evaluation that continued, in all its manifestations, to focus on his reputation as politically engaged activist or, alternatively, as effete artist.<sup>30</sup> Some, such as George Bernard Shaw, sought to recuperate Shelley's political message for the socialist movement. For her part, Lady Shelley led the efforts to whitewash his radicalism and to capitalize on the popularity of Shelley and the Shelley myth.

Lady Shelley initially intended Ford's work for the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, where Shelley's ashes are interred. The memorial, she hoped, would replace the simple stone slab that now marks the site, but protests from the descendants of Edward Trelawny prohibited any incursion onto his neighboring grave.<sup>31</sup> Having investigated other possible locations, she eventually offered Ford's cenotaph to University College, Oxford, where Shelley had briefly been an undergraduate, and agreed to subsidize the construction of an architectural enclosure for it.<sup>32</sup> After some negotiations about the nature of the building and the site of the work, it was agreed to build a new structure designed by the architect Basil Champneys in collaboration with Ford. The original plan had been for an open, temple-like structure, but for financial and planning reasons Oxford decided upon an enclosed, domed building. Placing the memorial in Oxford served Lady Shelley's quest for respectability: she wanted to ensure that the prodigal Shelley had gained acceptance and been welcomed back. The irony was not lost on *The Times*: "Surely, no stranger revenge has ever been brought about by the whirligig of time. The college which expelled Shelley living honours him dead."<sup>33</sup>

Beyond the suspect politics Lady Shelley hoped to sanitize, and despite his popular appeal, Shelley's reputation as a poet was far from secure. In a widely repeated denunciation, Matthew Arnold described Shelley as "a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing. And in poetry, no less than in life he is 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'."<sup>34</sup> Shelley drew heavily upon the natural world for his inspiration and imagery, seeing in each element of nature the manifestation of a spiritual force. John Addington Symonds explained Shelley's vitalism as the belief that "everywhere, in all things, in plants and beasts and men and earth and sky, eternally abides a genius and a spirit, whose particular epiphanies constitute one moving whole, a stream a life."<sup>35</sup> In imbuing nature with this vital force, Shelley was at times free and inconsistent with his employment of figures and tropes in his attempt to convey his imaginative

ideal. “Shelley’s best verse, prophetically inspired, is iridescent, like the clouds of sunrise, with all the glory which its form could possibly bear,” claimed Edward Carpenter, pointing to the tensions between Shelley’s recombined natural imagery and the poetic rules he bent.<sup>36</sup> Although Shelley’s cultivation of contradictions within his invested employment of natural imagery was later characterized as his greatest strength (most notably by Paul de Man<sup>37</sup>), for some Victorians it seemed like a symptom of an insecure grasp on reality.

By the late 1880s, the moves to depoliticize and recuperate Shelley’s official reputation relied heavily on the perceived rift between poetry and reality in his work. The political implications of his work were suppressed by some in favor of poetic escapism. The “general dreamy, unearthly quality of [Shelley’s] verse” became an antidote to the hectic materialist world of modernity. In 1892 G. W. Alger speculated: “This [centenary] year will show more conclusively than any other the estimate which is put upon the most spiritual of our poets. Will it show that in our realism we are dead to the breath of spirit?”<sup>38</sup>

Prophetically, Ford attempted to answer that question. The deep contradictions between poetry and reality upon which the image of Shelley was built provided the sculptor with an opportunity like no other. He would take the most unreal of poets and ground him in reality without losing poetry. Within the limits imposed by Lady Shelley’s depoliticizing zeal, Ford built upon and inverted Shelley’s perceived alienation from the material world, creating a work that defended the poetic and affective power of the sculptural object.

From the very start, it was clear that Ford had an ideological plan of his own above and beyond that of Lady Shelley. The memorial was far too big for the crowded Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Even if Trelawny’s descendants had not objected, there would have been inadequate space for Ford’s ambitious monument. Once plans for the grandiose domed temple had been replaced with the present rotunda, Ford was already urging the Fellows of University College to guarantee that the monument had ample room – far more than the Protestant Cemetery would have ever allowed.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, Ford made every effort to have the work seen. A preview article in *The Athenaeum* appeared in March 1892, well in advance of the Royal Academy exhibition, priming interest and raising expectations.<sup>40</sup> At that event, he exhibited the full-size plaster original that had been colored to capture the effect of the final marble and bronze object. Afterwards, he continued to put forth the *Shelley Memorial* as his signature work. For Isadore Spielmann’s exhibition in Brussels in 1897, Ford offered to send the full-size plaster over the Channel at his own cost and risk.<sup>41</sup> As his contribution to the Paris Exhibition of 1901, he included the *Shelley Memorial*, leading to his appointment as Foreign Corresponding Member of the Institute of France.<sup>42</sup>

Ford put a great deal of thought into the structure of the memorial. An innovator in polychromy and mixed material sculpture, he employed four different colors of marble in addition to the bronze, to which he added his distinctive deep green patina and, at one point, gilding. The plinth proper, atop the rectangular black marble base, is in a deep maroon marble. With the mourning muse’s slightly overhanging left foot, hand extended toward the depths and downcast eyes, the entire effect of the receding steps suggests the seashore itself. The flat and semi-reflective base further adds to this connection by creating a dark and murky mirrored surface. Rumor has it that mischievous Oxford undergraduates made this



77 Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial*, 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, Oxford; reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

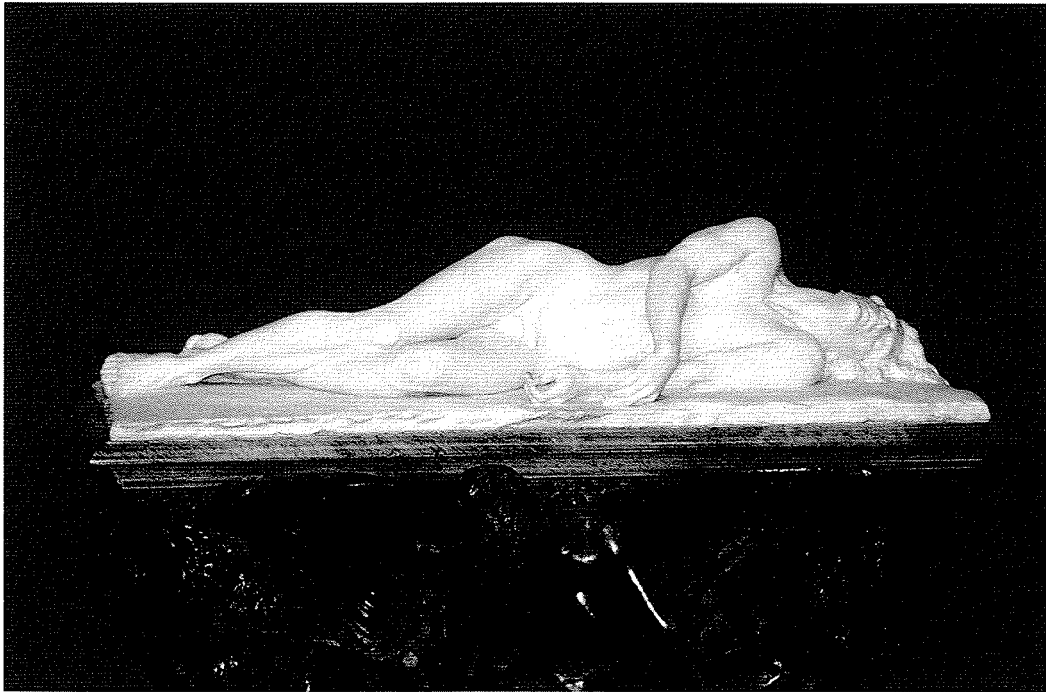
allusion a reality when they flooded the recessed chamber, allowing the muse to immerse her toe in actual water.

Perched on the maroon lower level, two bronze winged lions flank the muse while supporting a pale green slab of Irish marble (fig. 77). Back to back, the lions hold up the effigy of Shelley with the aid of a small, tangled fruit tree emerging from behind the muse's back. A sprig of gilded vegetation originally formed a makeshift wreath over the poet's brow. The white marble sculpture of his naked corpse on a rough rectangular base sits on the sea-green slab. As with Ford's earlier works, the body is particularized. (He used his son Wolfram as the model for the figure.<sup>43</sup>) The jutting right hip, the sagging flesh of the lower back, the swelling abdomen and splayed genitalia all evidence Ford's attention to accurate depictions of the human anatomy. The body lies unceremoniously on its side, as if the waves have just receded to abandon it on the desolate shore where it would soon be found (figs. 78 and 79).



78 Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial* (detail), 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, Oxford; reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

In its final destination in Oxford, the domed space designed by Champneys and Ford created a dramatic and theatrical *mise-en-scène* for this marble corpse. Originally, the memorial was locked behind metal gates and not visible from the surrounding passageway. Once let inside, the viewer descended into an octagonal space, where she or he would be confronted with Shelley's effigy beneath a sky-lit dome painted like a starry sky and ringed with extracts from his poetry.<sup>44</sup> This elaborate staging and its restricted access helped to transport the viewer to the shores of Viareggio, experiencing the quiet after the fatal storm. Since its installation, the space has undergone a series of changes and subsequent restorations. The most important of these was in 1933–34, when two of the arches were opened up and the gates moved to allow easier, frontal visual access to the memorial.<sup>45</sup> While this was efficient and economical, the overall intensity of the theatrical encounter with the death scene was lost.



79 Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial* (detail), 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, Oxford; reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: David Getsy.

In the memorial itself, the impact of the effigy is further amplified through the cumulative hierarchy of materials, colors, and levels of sculptural actuality. Whereas the fanciful winged lions, fruit-laden tree and muse are, in the tradition of allegorical sculpture, symbolic, Shelley himself is not symbolized but presented in a different material as a lifeless corpse. This is not a portrait with its implications of intellectual life, but a rendering of a dead body. The white marble of the effigy approximates colorless, dead flesh and departs strongly from the deep, dark tones of the lower levels. It is cold, pale, and motionless. As *The Athenaeum* noted, in the final version the lions “contrast expressively with the *purified realism* of the statue they support” – a statue which, he correctly pinpointed, is “quite naked” (fig. 78).<sup>46</sup>

Though there is a long tradition of the effigy in sepulchral sculpture in which the body is presented asleep or peacefully at rest, Ford instead offered Shelley's corpse. The complete nudity of the body as it lies on its side, with crossed legs, parted lips, tossed-back head, awkward shoulders and arms, breaks fundamentally with the conventions of the format (figs. 78–80). Customarily, figurative sculpture has been concerned with locating self-possession and subjectivity in the human body (even if asleep). By contrast, the sculptural depiction of a toppled, lifeless body in disarray creates the potential for confrontational shock (as in Jean-Baptiste Stouf's *Abel expirant*, 1785, Louvre, Paris, or Alberto Giacometti's *Femme egorgée*, 1932, Guggenheim, Venice). Ford explored this potential of the corpse as a means to

heighten the violent and dramatic death of the poet and to emphasize the incidental momentariness of its placement on the plinth. The theatricality of the Oxford installation and Ford's uncharacteristic use of marble both contribute to the impression that this body has just been washed up on the seashore: it is not in traditional, eternal slumber; it is dead flesh.

In art-historical terms, the corpse is the logical conclusion of realism.<sup>47</sup> The paintings of the dead Christ by Caravaggio or Manet, for example, remind us that one of the most forceful subject matters for realism is death. Precedents for depicting the corpse in sculpture can be found in the tradition of the *en transi*, sculptures of the *pietà*, and the representation of the murdered Abel. More immediately for Ford, there were monuments by French sculptors such as François Rude (*Godefroy Cavaignac*, 1847, Montmartre, Paris), Aimé Millet (*Alphonse Baudin*, 1851, Montmartre, Paris), René de Saint-Marceaux (*Abbé Miroy*, 1872, Cimetière du Nord, Rheims), and Aimé-Jules Dalou (*Victor Noir*, 1890, Père-Lachaise, Paris). It is likely that Ford was aware of some, if not all, of these and other well-known examples of the representation of death including Auguste Clésinger's *Femme piquée par un serpent* (1847, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and Henry Wallis's *Death of Chatterton* (1856, Tate, London).<sup>48</sup> In addition, moralizing images of drowned women such as George Frederick Watts's *Found Drowned* (c.1848–50, Watts Gallery) and James Bertrand's *Mort de Virginie* (1869, illustrated in the *Magazine of Art*, 11, 1888) had also taken up parallel themes, though clearly very different in aim from memorial sculpture. Monuments such as the *Noir* and *Baudin* dramatically displayed the death of their subject as a political message, rooting the memorial in a specific historical moment.

Ford's *Shelley*, however, eschewed politics and instead deployed a range of strategies in order to make the encounter with the dead, nude body eternally present. “[A]udacious, unconventional and astounding,”<sup>49</sup> it was virtually unique in Britain in its treatment of the effigy, differing radically from contemporary sepulchral monuments such as Alfred Gilbert's *Clarence Memorial*, begun in 1892 (fig. 63) or Hamo Thornycroft's *Stanley Memorial* of 1884–97. The difference between these memorials and Ford's *Shelley* is that between the dead body on display in the funeral parlor and a bagged cadaver in the morgue. The corpse is anathema to sculpture. For centuries, sculptors have resisted the immotility of sculpture in order to imbue their works with life. The most biting criticism of figurative sculpture has been to call it cold and lifeless. Sculptors have used such methods as *contrapposto*, naturalism, facial expression, and implied movement in order to convince the viewer that these blocks of stone or chunks of bronze are not material objects but living, breathing things. “Inertia,” as the sculpture critic Agnes Rindge once wrote, “is death.”<sup>50</sup> Walter Pater's discussion of sculptural representation in *The Renaissance* provides this view in Victorian terms:

[The] limitation [of sculpture] results from the material, and other necessary conditions, of all sculptured work, and consists in the tendency of such work to a *hard realism*, a one-sided presentment of mere form, that solid material frame which only motion can relieve, a thing of heavy shadows, and an individuality of expression pushed to caricature. Against this tendency to the hard presentment of mere form trying vainly to compete with the reality of nature itself, all noble sculpture constantly struggles; each great system of sculpture resisting, it in its own way, etherealising, spiritualising, relieving, *its stiffness, its heaviness, and death*.<sup>51</sup>





80 Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial* (detail), 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, Oxford; reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

Instead of resisting this thanatic pull of figurative sculpture towards the corpse, Ford embraced the “hard realism” of sculpture that Pater warned against. He did not attempt to alleviate or mask the “stiffness” or “heaviness” of either the sculptural object or of the corpse it represents. The dead body he presented, like its material substrate, will be for ever still and silent. Shelley is, as Spielmann put it, “so obviously dead.”<sup>52</sup> Ford inverted the tradition whereby sculptors struggled to make their works “life-like” by effacing the obdurate materiality of the sculptural object: he presented the sculptural corpse as the most credible and life-like depiction of a human body possible in sculpture. This memorial does not aim to represent either life or Shelley’s achievements. Instead, it confronts the viewer with deliberately pale, cold, and lifeless matter.

In sculpting this corpse, Ford was not the slavish replicator of fact that his detractors would have one believe, but (to repeat from *The Athenaeum*) a master of “purified realism.”<sup>53</sup> Because the poet had died almost seventy years before the monument was begun and because there were few adequate visual records of his likeness, Ford had little first-hand evidence on



which to base his work. As might be expected, he also took liberties with the by-then legendary description of Shelley's death, discovery, quarantine, and cremation on the shores of Viareggio. Shelley's body, according to the account given by Trelawny, reached an advanced state of decomposition in the weeks it was tossed at sea, making identification of the remains possible only by the surviving possessions and tattered clothes.<sup>54</sup> In Ford's memorial, it is completely nude, displaying no physical decay (fig. 80). For it to be recognizable as Shelley's dead body and to function as a memorial effigy, the corpse's bodily integrity had to be reconstituted. Ford chose to reunite and re-member the nude corpse as unviolated and whole. He provided a portrait of Shelley the man in his nakedness, fragility, and mortality.

The dramatic architectural setting and rendering of the body led viewers to recall the scene of Shelley's death as they were confronted with his dead body. The effigy's reiteration, in its pale coolness, of the immotility and lifelessness of the corpse is made strikingly evident through the contrast between the dark colours of the lower layers and the white marble.

81 (*facing page*) Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial*, 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, Oxford; reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.



82 Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial* (detail), 1892, marble and bronze, life-size; University College, Oxford University, reproduced by kind permission of The Masters and Fellows of University College, Oxford; photo: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

Juxtaposed with the artificiality of the dark bronze muse arrested in mid-action, the corpse seems all the more actual in its cold stillness (figs. 81 and 82). Ford even changed the material of the muse at the last minute to highlight this contrast.<sup>55</sup> The dynamic interplay of figurative denotation and materiality in the effigy served to emphasize the corporeal presence of the sculptural body as well as differentiate the *Shelley Memorial* from French precedents such as Millet's *Baudin* or Dalou's *Noir*.

In addition, Ford dramatized the presence of the effigy as material corpse by inverting the traditional relationship between sculpture and base. Conventionally, the base of a sculpture provides a mediation to the material world and is used as a transitional device separating sculpture from everyday objects. This can most clearly be seen in the case of Constantin Brancusi, whose roughly hewn wood bases evoke materiality, making the polished ovoids that sit upon them seem all the more immaterial and ethereal. Despite the range of colors and materials, the lower levels of the *Shelley Memorial* are largely symbolic and allegorical. Ford

pushed the internal tension between the imaginary content of the base and the real presence of the effigy to an extreme. An equation of ascendance and transcendence is central to the logic of much Western figural sculpture and is exemplified in such works as the *en transi* or Rodin's *Balzac* where the highest levels of the sculpture correlate to the highest ideals the sculptor wished to convey. Without dispensing with this structure altogether (as Carl Andre would in his rethinking of Brancusi), Ford throws an obstacle in the viewer's path by asserting materiality and mortality where one expects to find escape from those very facts.

The reconsideration of the relationship between symbolization and materiality in the *Shelley Memorial* was not lost on critics, who looked upon the "naked, dead" Shelley with discomfort. For instance, one critic wrote:

The poet is represented, quite naked, dead, as if cast upon the shore drowned, and the treatment is distinctly naturalesque, simply indicative of death and the accident associated with the poet's end on earth. [. . .] no attempt is made to embody the idea of immortality.<sup>56</sup>

The most sustained criticism of Ford, however, came again from Claude Phillips. The *Shelley Memorial* encapsulated the excesses of sculptural realism against which Phillips repeatedly warned. In 1892 over a third of his review of the year in sculpture was devoted to an argument against Ford's emphasis on realism and materiality in that work.

The bronze base [. . .] is fanciful and charming in its pictorial detail rather than reposeful and monumental. And then it is hardly in accord with the naked corpse of the poet which it upholds. This is an admirably modelled figure, disposed in lines of a cunning elegance. It represents the body of Shelley as it may have appeared after the fatal catastrophe of the Gulf of Spezzia, with traces of the death-struggle still stamped on the contracted brows so strangely and inappropriately overshadowed with golden laurels. Here is none of the august repose, the eternal peace of death, but, on the contrary, the perpetuation through the ages of a fleeting moment of agony just passed.<sup>57</sup>

Ford's realist agenda and deployment of sculptural materiality appeared to Phillips as nothing more than mere journalism and materialism. This depiction of a corpse, in his view, was at odds with the idealism expected of commemorative sculpture. Phillips wanted not to be reminded of the facts of death – the limits of the flesh – but rather desired a resplendent depiction of Shelley in life eternal. One sees this most clearly in his distaste for the "golden laurels" that Ford "inappropriately" placed over Shelley's marble head. Until it was removed for conservation reasons in 1929, Shelley's marble effigy sported a gilt bronze branch on the poet's brow that alluded to the traditional honorific laurel wreath (this original arrangement can be seen in the photograph of the preliminary plaster model, fig. 83). Like the corpse, it was realistically treated. Some commentators even called it seaweed, metonymically voicing a confusion or anxiety caused by the tensions within the poetic realism of the memorial itself. For Dixon, it was "a wreath, and yet is not a wreath."<sup>58</sup> Despite their ambivalent status, the golden laurels were intended to signal Shelley's transcendence to exemplarity and immortality – that is, the aim of the public memorial. For Phillips, however, the wreath effected the conjunction of mutually exclusive polarities – the allegorical, symbolic figure and the literalist, realistic corpse:

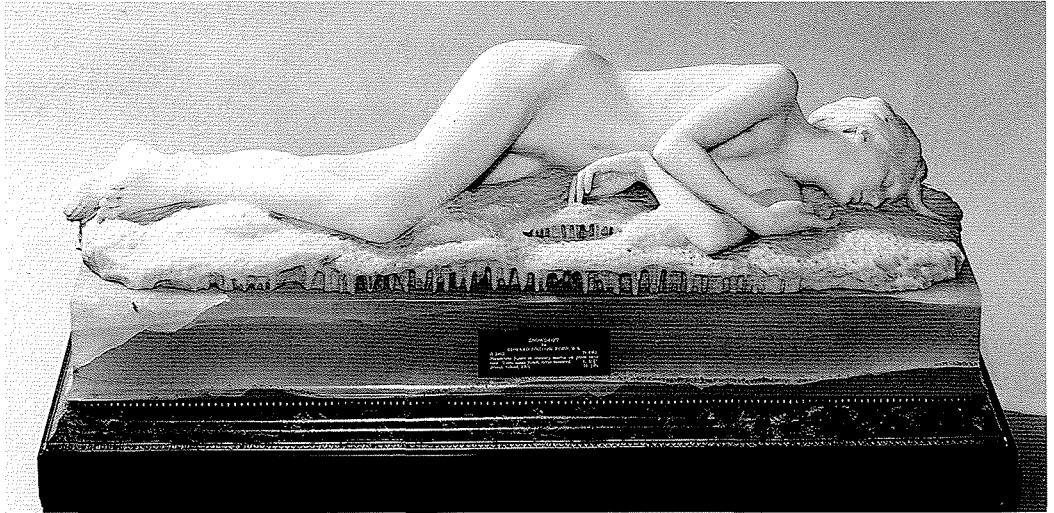


83 Edward Onslow Ford, *Shelley Memorial*, 1892, painted plaster (preliminary version, destroyed); presentation photograph in Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

is this *drowned man, this poor wave-tossed corpse*, the most fitting crown of a monument intended to glorify the divine singer who has wrapped a rainbow-hued web of ethereal beauty round even the most tragic subjects of his song?<sup>59</sup>

Though Phillips understood the sculptor's polemics better than any other reviewer, his own loyalty to conventional formats conflicted with Ford's active play with materiality and with the expectations of the Shelley myth.

The debate about the realism of Ford's earlier nudes evolved with the *Shelley Memorial* into a fusion between the figuration of death and inert sculptural materiality. The representation of the poet's dead body became identified completely with the cold, lifeless marble from which it was sculpted. Image and object interpenetrated each other in a dynamic interplay. The legendary status of Shelley and the myths and facts of his life, death, and reputation provided Ford with an unprecedented opportunity to conjoin the poetic and the realistic. He embodied this conjunction through the thanatic corporeality of the sculptural effigy, invest-



84 Edward Onslow Ford, *Snowdrift*, 1901 (completed posthumously 1902), marble, 32 cm. h., 90 cm. l.; National Museums Liverpool (Lady Lever Art Gallery).

ing its inert materiality with evocative force. To reinforce his aim, Ford incorporated into the bronze base of the monument a stanza of *Adonais*, Shelley's own commentary on death and poetry.

After Shelley's death, his identification with the figure of Adonais became commonplace.<sup>60</sup> Drawing on the analogy between Shelley and Adonais was an effective way for Ford to fulfill Lady Shelley's myth-making ambition, but it also allowed him to co-opt Shelley's own words in the service of polemicism. The passage that surrounds the base of the memorial immediately established the parallel between the poet and his poetry. It is from stanza forty-two:

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>61</sup>

Ford, however, chose to omit the words with which that last line continues, though they are forcefully asserted by implication in the memorial itself: "He is a presence to be felt and known / In darkness and in light, *from herb and stone.*" Ford had made the ideal of Shelley present *from stone*. He demonstrated that materiality and corporeality determined concerns about sculptural realism and that they could, in the right hands, be made evocative and poetic. As Dixon would repeatedly argue, Ford's assertion of the corporeal and literal presence of the sculptural body realistically rendered did not involve a loss of the meaningful, the affective, or the evocative. For her, Shelley's effigy was "lifeless, nude, cold, but still beautiful, inexpressibly beautiful in death."<sup>62</sup> Ford's defense of his realist style against such critics as Phillips was conducted through the poetic presentation of that which they abhorred the most – the literal body.

Ford fashioned the *Shelley Memorial*, to paraphrase Dixon, as the apotheosis of sculptural actuality. He presented Shelley as the embodied allegory for poetic realism itself: the symbolic figuration of the re-presentation of the natural, material world as the instantiation of affect, beauty, or emotion. A perceived dichotomy between the transcendent and the mundane prejudiced some viewers and critics against poetic realism, for whom it appeared an oxymoron. With the *Shelley Memorial*, Ford countered that prejudice and argued that beauty, imagination, and affect could exist alongside actuality, materiality, and naturalistic fidelity. For contemporary viewers, the experience of the memorial was heightened by the corporeal presence of the effigy. The encounter with Shelley's corpse is all the more immediate, direct, and potent for Ford's employment of the thanatic pull of the sculptural body towards Pater's "hard realism" with its "stiffness, its heaviness, and death."

Such polemics were made possible by the specific conditions of the commission and its subject. The *Shelley Memorial* occupies a singular place in Ford's oeuvre as his most ambitious art-theoretical intervention. In Ford's next sepulchral monument – to the admittedly more respectable Benjamin Jowett – there is no comparable exploration of the interplay of image and object. Begun in 1893, the year after the *Shelley Memorial*, and also in Oxford, the effigy lies in peaceful, eternal slumber. Only in one of Ford's last sculptures did he return explicitly to the strategies of the *Shelley Memorial*. A decade later and at the turn of the century, Ford revisited the interplay of materiality and the corpse in the marble statuette *Snowdrift* of 1901–02 (fig. 84).<sup>63</sup>

Many commentators have seen in *Snowdrift* an echo of the *Shelley Memorial*.<sup>64</sup> Although smaller and without the multi-layered pedestal, the similarities between the two effigies are striking. *Snowdrift* represents an emaciated nude body that has died, presumably of exposure, and is being overtaken by the snow. As in the *Shelley Memorial*, Ford employed multiple materials and colors, making the white of the marble far from a neutral given. The treatment of the thin body with its protruding bones was arguably more realist and unflinching than the rendering of Shelley's corpse. Furthermore, the symbiosis between materiality and representation was even more extensive than in the *Shelley Memorial* with its commemorative function. The dead body is becoming the snowdrift, merging into an undifferentiated mass of white matter (fig. 70). The self-reflexivity of the interplay between representation and materiality sets the *Snowdrift* apart from morphologically similar works ranging from Clésinger's *Femme piquée par un serpent* to F. W. Pomeroy's *Nymph of Loch Awe* (1897, Tate, London). In *Snowdrift*, the white marble, the white snow and the white corpse approach indistinguishability. One reviewer's comments evidence this fusion, saying that it "gives one a rather painful sense of chilliness – perhaps what was intended."<sup>65</sup>

As in the *Shelley Memorial*, *Snowdrift* attempts to establish a second-order discourse about the dynamic potential of sculptural representation's relationship with actuality, realism, and materiality. Ford harked back not just to the form of Shelley's effigy but, more significantly, to its art-theoretical challenge. *Snowdrift* amplifies the corporeal interplay between the literal sculptural object and its figural denotation. Beyond reiterating the terms and art-theoretical agenda of the earlier work, *Snowdrift* simultaneously represents a reaffirmation and a strengthening of Ford's own exploration of the poetic potential of realism, materiality, and corporeality. The "chilliness" of *Snowdrift* may be seen, in this light, as a response to the touching of cold marble. Or is it the coldness of the snow? Or that of the corpse?

- helping to explain its anomalous status within Gilbert's oeuvre.
- 51 Alfred Gilbert, "Sculpture. Presidential Address," in *Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry* (London: National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, 1888), 104.
- 52 F. S. Blizard, "L'Art Nouveau: What it is and what is thought of it. A Symposium. 1," *Magazine of Art* n.s. 17 (1904): 211.
- 53 Eric Underwood, *A Short History of English Sculpture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), 137.
- 54 "Eros Sculptor in Lecture: Sir A. Gilbert Walks Out," unidentified clipping dated 15 March 1933, CBA.
- 55 A parallel case is made about the Arts and Crafts Movement in S. K. Tillyard, *The Impact of Modernism 1900–1920: Early Modernism and the Arts and Craft Movement in Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 1988).
- 56 Lorado Taft, *Modern Tendencies in Sculpture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917), 76–77.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 77.
- Modernity*, ed. Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 19–48; and Alison Smith, "The 'British Matron' and the Body Beautiful: The Nude Debate of 1885," in *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 217–39.
- 6 For an overview of the French context, see Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971); Geneviève Lacambre, "Toward an Emerging Definition of Naturalism in French Nineteenth-Century Painting," in *The European Realist Tradition*, ed. Gabriel Weisberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 229–41; and Margaret Cohen and Christopher Pendergast, eds., *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre, Cultural Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). For a concise introduction to the problematic usage of the term, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* [1976], rev. ed. (London: Flamingo, 1983), 257–64.
- 7 On the moral undertones of "realism," see the brief discussion of the term in Kate Flint, "Moral Judgement and the Language of English Art Criticism 1870–1910," *Oxford Art Journal* 6, no. 2 (1983): 59–66.
- 8 Claude Phillips, "The Royal Academy. III.," *The Academy*, 29 May 1886, 385.
- 9 Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors*, 60. See also Marion H. Spielmann, "Sculpture: Modern British Sculpture," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, 32 vols. (New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911), 24: 503. Cosmo Monkhouse struggled with this same issue in his discussion of Alfred Gilbert, instead using the term "heroic genre" sculpture; W. Cosmo Monkhouse, "Alfred Gilbert, A. R. A.," *Magazine of Art* 12 (1889): 37. See also the brief discussion of the term "imaginative realism" in Beattie, *New Sculpture*, 53.
- 10 Wolfram's portrait was exhibited in the 1899 Royal Academy exhibition. Its later Pre-Raphaelitism is discussed in Percy Bate, *The English Pre-Raphaelite Painters* [1899], rev. second edition (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901), 114. The painting is untraced. It is also briefly discussed in Frank Rinder, "Edward Onslow Ford, R.A.," *Art Journal* 64 (1902): 60–61.
- 11 [Edmund Gosse], "Sculpture in 1887," *Saturday Review*, 9 July 1887, 42.
- 12 "Sculpture of the Year," *Magazine of Art* 13 (1890): 363.
- 13 Claude Phillips, "Sculpture of the Year," *Magazine of Art* 18 (1895): 442. My emphasis.
- 14 [Gosse], "Sculpture in 1887," 42.

#### Chapter 4

- 1 The *Shelley Memorial* barely received mention in the two main treatments of the New Sculpture: Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 179; and Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 294. An important exception is the brief discussion in Horst Woldemar Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 243–44.
- 2 Marion H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of To-Day* (London: Cassell & Co., 1901), 51.
- 3 [Edmund Gosse], "Sculpture in 1884," *Saturday Review*, 24 May 1884, 678. My emphasis.
- 4 Marion [Marian MacMahon] Hepworth Dixon, "Onslow Ford, R. A.," *Art Journal* 60 (1898): 294. Emphases original. Earlier critics had struggled to defend the realist *Folly* in the ideal genre. See, for instance, "The Royal Academy. (Concluding Notice.)," *The Standard*, 10 June 1886.
- 5 On the realist nude and the perceived moral ambiguity of the model, see Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Alison Smith, "Nature Transformed: Leighton, the Nude and the Model," in *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance,*



- 15 *Works by E. Onslow Ford, R.A., from 1875 to 1901*, handwritten manuscript (most likely by Wolfram Onslow Ford) in Courtauld Institute of Art Library Archives, 88/9.P917. The obituary in *The Athenaeum* claimed that Ford sculpted over 250 busts. "Edward Onslow Ford, R.A.," *The Athenaeum*, 4 January 1902, 23.
- 16 Eric Underwood, *A Short History of English Sculpture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), 119.
- 17 Gordon Onslow Ford to David Getsy (e-mail), 2 May 2002.
- 18 Marion [Marian MacMahon] Hepworth Dixon, "Onslow Ford, A.R.A.," *Magazine of Art* 15, no. 10 (1892): 325–30; "Onslow Ford" (1898): 294–97; and "Onslow Ford, R.A.: An Imaginative Sculptor," *Architectural Review: For the Artist & Craftsman* 8 (1900): 257–63. She wrote under the male pseudonym "Marion." Her daughter Ella Hepworth Dixon wrote a memoir, *As I Knew Them: Sketches of People I Have Met on the Way* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1930), which includes a brief discussion of Dixon and passing references to Ford.
- 19 Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1892): 325–26.
- 20 Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1898): 295.
- 21 On Rodin's reception in Britain, see Benedict Read, "L'Affaire Rodin de 1886," *Revue de l'Art* 104 (1994): 51–54. I am grateful to Claudine Mitchell for sharing her analysis of these events, "'The Zola of Sculpture'? A Franco-British Dialogue," which will appear in Claudine Mitchell, ed., *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), an anthology still unpublished when my book was in press.
- 22 Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1898): 295. My emphasis.
- 23 Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1900): 258.
- 24 Walter Armstrong, "E. Onslow Ford, A.R.A.," *The Portfolio* 21 (1890): 70.
- 25 Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1892): 326.
- 26 Armstrong, "Onslow Ford" (1890): 70.
- 27 Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1898): 295. My emphasis.
- 28 On Lady Shelley, see Sylva Norman, *Flight of the Skylark: The Development of Shelley's Reputation* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954).
- 29 Maud Rolleston, *Talks with Lady Shelley* (London: George C. Harrap & Co., 1925), 71. On Weekes's memorial see Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, 178–79.
- 30 The debate over Shelley's political legacy was exemplified in Edmund Gosse's Shelley Centenary lecture at Horsham (reprinted as "Shelley in 1892," in *Questions at Issue*, London: William Heinemann, 1893, 201–15), and in George Bernard Shaw's reply at a workers' rally in London (reprinted as "Shaming the Devil about Shelley" [1892], in *Works*, v. 18: *Pen Portraits and Reviews*, London: Constable & Co., 1932, 236–46). Characteristically, Gosse attended the Oxford unveiling of the *Shelley Memorial* (letter from Edmund Gosse to Hamo Thornycroft, 14 June 1893, Gosse Papers, BLUL). See also Neil Fraistat, "Shelley Left and Right: The Rhetorics of the Early Textual Editions," in *Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 105–13; and Simon Haines, *Shelley's Poetry: The Divided Self* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), esp. 21–22.
- 31 Rolleston, *Talks with Lady Shelley*, 88–93.
- 32 Concurrently, there were also unrealized plans to place a different, scaled-down version of the memorial on the shores of Viareggio. Despite some confusion by twentieth-century commentators, the original memorial was not intended for this site. The sketch model for the Viareggio memorial (without lions and muse) was illustrated in Dixon, "Onslow Ford" (1892): 328.
- 33 "The Royal Academy (Fourth and Concluding Notice)," *The Times*, 28 May 1892, 17. For an account of the dedication ceremony, see "Memorial to Shelley at University College," *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 18 June 1893. On the initial gift to Oxford, see letter from Lady Jane Shelley, 1 December 1891, University College, Oxford, Archives UC:FA11/2/C1/1-1. On changes in the architectural enclosure, see University College Minutes UC:FA11/2/C1/1-2.
- 34 Matthew Arnold, "Shelley" [1888], in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 327. Arnold quoted from his own 1881 essay on Byron.
- 35 John Addington Symonds, "Landscape," in *Essays Speculative and Suggestive* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1893), 318.
- 36 Edward Carpenter, "Art and Democracy: Wagner, Millet, and Whitman," in *Angels' Wings: A Series of Essays on Art and Its Relation to Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1898; reprint, 1920), 11.
- 37 Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 93–123, 299–301.
- 38 G. W. Alger, "In Memoriam, Shelley. 1792–1892," *Poet-Lore* 4, nos. 6–7 (1892): 317–18.
- 39 Letter from Edward Onslow Ford to the Fellows of University College, 9 May 1892; University College, Oxford, Archives UC:FA11/2/C1/1-10.
- 40 "The Shelley Memorial," *The Athenaeum*, 5 March 1892, 314–15.
- 41 Letter from Onslow Ford to Isadore Spielmann, 16 March 1897; National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, MSL/1999/2/913. In the end, the work was not sent.

- 42 “Ford” *Athenaeum* (1902): 24.
- 43 Gordon Onslow Ford to David Getsy (e-mail), 2 May 2002. Many commentators have speculated that the model for the effigy was female. There is no evidence for this claim, and I am grateful to Gordon Onslow Ford for the information that it was his uncle Wolfram who posed for the work. Wolfram was also the model for other works such as the late *St. George and the Dragon*, posthumously completed in 1902. See Andrew Clay et al., *British Sculpture in the Lady Lever Art Gallery* (Liverpool: National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, 1999), 29.
- 44 For an account of the original Oxford installation, see John L. Hurst, “The Graves of Shelley and Trelawny,” *The Critic*, 2 November 1895, 285: “[A] good-natured custodian unlocks the door to a circular mausoleum, where, in the reflection of the sunlight through the skylight, there glows a heroic marble figure of the poet as he was picked up lifeless on a strange coast.” For a later, but similar impression, see Jan Morris, *Oxford* [1965], rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 210: “You approach [the *Shelley Memorial*] down a darkish corridor, past a door loftily labelled The Linen Room, and suddenly there it is, bathed in a creepy half-light behind an iron grille: a life-size figure of the drowned poet, stretched out white and realistic upon a marble bier.” Significantly, Morris emphasized the “realistic” effect of the effigy when encountered in its dramatic, staged environment.
- 45 For a discussion of Oxford’s acceptance and housing of the memorial, see R. H. Darwall-Smith, “The Shelley Memorial; or, the Monument Nobody Wanted,” *University College Record* 12, no. 4 (2000): 74–87; see also “The Shelley Memorial,” *University College Record* (1934): 1–2.
- 46 “Shelley Memorial” (1892): 315. My emphasis.
- 47 See Noehlin, *Realism*, 57–101.
- 48 Claude Phillips contrasted the *Shelley* to sepulchral conventions in his critique “Sculpture of the Year: British Sculpture,” *Magazine of Art* 15 (1892): 379–80. On the effigy and the *en transi* in this tradition, see Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), 76–81. For speculation on further precedents (such as Stefano Maderno’s *St. Cecilia*), see Francis Haskell, “The Shelley Memorial,” *Oxford Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (1978): 3–6. For the French context, see Fred Licht, “Tomb Sculpture,” in *The Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth-Century Sculpture from North American Collections*, exh. cat. (New York: George Braziller, 1980), 96–108.
- 49 Dixon, “Onslow Ford” (1898): 295.
- 50 Agnes Rindge, *Sculpture* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1929), 118.
- 51 Walter Pater, “Luca della Robbia” [1893], in *The Renaissance*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 42. My emphasis.
- 52 Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors*, 59.
- 53 “Shelley Memorial” (1892): 315.
- 54 Edward John Trelawny, *The Last Days of Shelley and Byron: Being the Complete Text of Trelawny’s “Recollections” Edited, with Additions from Contemporary Sources, by J. E. Morpurgo* (Westminster: Folio Society, 1858; reprint, 1952), 81.
- 55 While *The Athenaeum*, “Shelley Memorial” (1892): 314–15, refers to the muse as marble, a letter from Lady Shelley’s secretary to Benjamin Jowett dated 23 September 1891 describes it as bronze (quoted Darwall-Smith, “Shelley Memorial,” 75). It may be that Ford vacillated on the question of the material of the muse. The memorial was at one point considered complete with her envisioned in marble, as is shown in a presentation photograph of the painted plaster in the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art (fig. 83; also used as an illustration in Phillips, “Sculpture of the Year,” [1892]: 381). By the time it was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1892, however, Ford had changed the material back to bronze as critical accounts evidence, for example “The Royal Academy (Fourth and Concluding Notice),” *The Times*, 28 May 1892, 17.
- 56 “Sculpture at the Royal Academy,” *Building News* 62, no. 1950 (1892): 691.
- 57 Phillips, “Sculpture of the Year” (1892): 379.
- 58 Dixon, “Onslow Ford” (1892): 329.
- 59 Phillips, “Sculpture of the Year” (1892): 379. My emphasis.
- 60 See Mary Shelley, “Note on the Poems of 1822” [1839], in *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 10 vols., ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter Peck (London and New York: Ernest Benn & Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928), 4: 212–13. This analogy was also employed by Weekes in his memorial.
- 61 Shelley wrote *Adonais* (published 1821) as an elegy on the death of John Keats. See Anthony D. Kerr, *Shelley’s Adonais: A Critical Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 45.
- 62 Dixon, “Onslow Ford” (1892): 329. Also see Janson, *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, 244.
- 63 Ford died suddenly during the last days of 1901, and *Snowdrift* was completed under Wolfram’s supervision. It is unclear how near completion the carving was at the time of Ford’s death. Exhibited just a few months later at the Royal Academy, the marble was, according to his son, faithful to Ford’s intentions. A letter from Wolfram Onslow Ford, dated 2 October 1941, in the curatorial archives of

the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, states that the pedestal was carved according to his father's sketches. In the same letter, Wolfram noted that his father's *St. George* (also unfinished at the time of his death) was completed by Seymour Lucas.

- 64 Rinder, "Edward Onslow Ford, R.A.," 59–60; Haskell, "Shelley Memorial," 5; and Clay et al., *British Sculpture*, 31.
- 65 "Sculpture at the Royal Academy," *The Builder* 82, no. 3095 (1902): 535.

## Chapter 5

- 1 Very little has been published about Thomas since his death in 1921. The James Havard Thomas papers held in the Tate Gallery Archive, collection 924 (TGA), contain his manuscripts, letters, and technical notes as well as Thomas's own press clippings archive. The Collins-Baker Archive in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California (CBA), also proved to be a rich source for contemporary newspaper accounts of Thomas and the *Lycidas* affair. Items from press clippings archives are indicated where relevant. For general and biographical information on Thomas, see Frank Gibson, "The Sculpture of Professor James Havard Thomas," *The Studio* 76, no. 313 (1919): 79–85; George Clausen, "James Havard Thomas," in *Memorial Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawings by the Late J. Havard Thomas (1845–1921)* (London: Leicester Galleries, 1922), 5–10; and Fiona Pearson, "The Correspondence between P. H. Emerson and J. Havard Thomas," in *British Photography in the Nineteenth Century: The Fine Art Tradition*, ed. Mike Weaver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 197–204. These three items are the only substantive assessments of Thomas to have been published to date.
- 2 For context on the "realist" debates of the mid-1880s, see chapters 3 and 4. On its 1886 and 1887 showings, the *Slave Girl* generally received high praise. The *Manchester Guardian* (9 June 1886), for instance, remarked "the happy line between the too realistic and the too ideal has been exactly hit." When it was exhibited in Glasgow, however, local critics derided the attention to the particularities of the nude body, equating it with immorality.
- 3 The printed pamphlet resulting from this petition cited the support of "783 artists who have signified their adhesion to the principle 'that the Juries for selecting and placing works of art must be elected from and by the artists of the kingdom'" (Royal Academy of Arts Archives, London, SP/1/89). For an account of these events, see Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Palo Alto, California: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1985; reprint, 1996), 180–92.
- 4 Direct carving concurrently played a central role in Adolf von Hildebrand's theories of sculpture. See Adolf von Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* [1893], trans. Max Meyer and R. M. Ogden (authorized), fourth revised ed. (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1907). Before writing this treatise, Hildebrand had experimented with the practice of direct carving in such works as his *Netcarrier* (1886). Although their interpretations of direct carving differed, both Thomas and Hildebrand are notable for precociously advocating it in the 1880s.
- 5 Clausen, "Havard Thomas," 6.
- 6 Eric Underwood, *A Short History of English Sculpture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), 120. Decades later, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska would be considered remarkable for carving his *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound* direct from life and for practicing direct carving in metal (as in his *Torpedo Ornament*, 1914).
- 7 Three drawings by Thomas in the British Museum, London, bear evidence of use as guides for transcription to marble surfaces (*Canonite Gatherer*, 1922, 1017.8; *Fisherboy*, 1922, 1017.10; and *Woman Thrashing Rye*, 1922, 1017.7; all purchased from Thomas's son, George Havard Thomas). I am grateful to Donato Esposito for bringing these to my attention.
- 8 In general, see Kineton Parkes, *The Art of Carved Sculpture*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1931), 1:22–23. Despite it being widely remarked upon (e.g., Clausen, "Havard Thomas," 6; Underwood, *English Sculpture*, 120; and Marion H. Spielmann, "Sculpture: Modern British Sculpture," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, New York: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911, 24:503), Parkes did not discuss Thomas's pioneering role in direct carving, seeing the verisimilitude of Thomas's marbles as inassimilable to the conception developed around modernist sculpture. A similar cautious acknowledgement of late Victorian direct carving was made by Eric Gill about Thomas's friend, Thomas Stirling Lee. See Eric Gill, *Autobiography* (Cardiff: Plantin Publishers, 1940; reprint, 1992), 160–61.
- 9 See Thomas's comments on the state of sculpture in Britain in "Mr. Havard Thomas in Bristol," *Western Daily Press*, 8 May 1905.
- 10 Telephone conversation with the artist's granddaughter, Mrs. Anne-Marie Duff, 22 May 2001.

David J. Getsy

# Body Doubles

Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905

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*Frontispiece* James Havard Thomas, *Lycidas*, 1905 (cast 1908),  
bronze, 161 × 83 × 52 cm.; Tate, London.

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