

The Trouble with Feeling Now: Thomas Woolner, Robert Browning, and the Touching Case of *Constance and Arthur*

Sophie Ratcliffe

Now

Late last year, I visited a private house to look at a nineteenth-century marble statue by the Pre-Raphaelite Thomas Woolner. The work is a life-size group, depicting a young girl in a nightgown leaning tenderly over a younger nude boy (*Fig. 1*). One of her hands is lifted gently towards his shoulder, touching him near his neck. The other gently embraces him. The sculpture had its first public viewing at the 1862 International Exhibition, named in the catalogue as *Brother and Sister*, but is generally known as *Constance and Arthur*, and these are the names inscribed on its pedestal.¹ It was commissioned by Sir Thomas Fairbairn, an industrialist patron of the arts and one of the exhibition's commissioners. The subjects were his two elder children, who were both deaf.

Reviewed by Francis Palgrave, written about by Robert Browning, and photographed by the London Stereoscopic Company, the statue, so striking in its depiction of intimate stillness, has a far-reaching network of wider connections. In thinking about the feelings surrounding this sculpture, and how we might understand them, this article sets out to unravel the rich series of historical narratives associated with *Constance and Arthur* — narratives which include the history of its production, reception, and marketing, the relationship between its existence as image and as text, and its identity on the borderlines of the New Sculpture. A study of this sculpture of two deaf children also allows us to glimpse something of the ways in which disability was perceived in the nineteenth century — in particular,

¹ I would like to thank the Fairbairn family, Sir Brooke and Lady Fairbairn, and Griff and Robert Fairbairn, for their invaluable help with this research, and their kindness in allowing me to view the sculpture. My thanks, too, to the Special Collections, Photography, and Images Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and to Peter and Renate Nahum of The Leicester Galleries. And also to Victoria Mills and the anonymous readers of this article, for their very helpful suggestions. In this article, I will refer to the sculpture as *Constance and Arthur*. Some figure captions choose the statue's alternative title, *Brother and Sister*.



Fig. 1: Thomas Woolner, *Constance and Arthur, or Brother and Sister*, 1857–62, marble, private collection. © Sophie Ratcliffe.

what Vanessa Warne refers to as ‘the lowly status of touch in a hierarchically conceived human sensorium’.² However, this case study is centred as

² Vanessa Warne, ‘Between the Sheets: Contagion, Touch, and Text’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 19 (2014), p. 1 <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.715>>.

much on present, and even future feelings, as it is in recovering the feelings and responses of the past. Drawing on contemporary models of disability theory — both what Tobin Siebers calls the ‘aesthetic value’ of disability, and Natalie Prizel terms ‘the precept of disability as a site of relational ethics’, I look to explore how an encounter with this sculpture and its accompanying poem may enlarge an understanding of what it means to feel.³ In doing so I hope to highlight some narratives which may be harder to hear — narratives which concern the silencing of certain ways of communicating or expressing ourselves in the world more broadly, and in the academy in particular. In literary studies, the dominant methodological approach to emotion and art is a historical one. One might say that being ‘touched’ — in the sense of being emotionally moved — also has a comparatively ‘lowly status’. This article aims to foreground questions of feeling in the present, particularly as present feelings may be accessed in the tactile moment. In this sense, my account will both practise what Rita Felski calls ‘critical historicism’ but also highlight its limitations. By dwelling on what Felski describes as the ‘transtemporal impact’ and ‘affective resonance[s]’ of a Victorian work, I look to disturb the ways that we historically conceive of Victorian feeling.⁴ Contemporary disability theories which are explicitly relational may, I hope, sharpen this understanding. Framed as such, this is a case study which explicitly involves a first-person account, not as ornament or anecdote, but as central to its approach.

When I first encountered the statue in reality, I had little time, or indeed inclination, to reflect upon my own response. This was a work of art that I had read about and assiduously researched for the last two years. I set about examining it from a position of detailed and ostensibly detached historicism, a position which, as Nicola Bown argues, encourages ‘a kind of freezing off of one’s own involvement with the work in question’.⁵ As I looked, photographed, and gathered evidence, the statue’s owner spoke. ‘Stop’, he said, ‘feel this.’ His right index finger stroked the underside of the marble girl’s foot. I stopped, surprised. Almost hidden from view, the foot was perfectly accurate, sculpted so one could feel the ball and arch, and imagine the texture of a child’s heel, unhardened by adult life (*Fig. 2*). This foot was, I realized, a replica of the owner’s great-great-aunt’s foot. The boy figure beside her was his great-great-grandfather. Standing near these stone bodies, this moment felt as near as anyone might get to time travel.

³Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 20; Natalie Prizel, ‘Disability Theory, Queer Time and “We Other Victorians”’ <<http://v21collective.org/natie-prizel-disability-theory-queer-time-and-we-other-victorians/>> [accessed 12 November 2016].

⁴Rita Felski, ‘Context Stinks!’, *New Literary History*, 42 (2011), 573–91 (p. 574).

⁵Nicola Bown, ‘Tender Beauty: Victorian Painting and the Problem of Sentimentality’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16 (2011), 214–25 (p. 215).



Fig. 2: Detail from *Constance and Arthur* (Fig. 1). © Sophie Ratcliffe.

I was also moved by the act of touch itself. It was partly the odd contrast between the appearance of life and the coldness of stone — but also the rarity of the experience. It struck me that in my academic reflections on ‘feeling and the arts’, how little physical ‘feeling’ I had actually done — how little space I gave to the question of physical touch during the course of my research into the emotions. In this sense, I am not unusual. ‘Touch’, as Constance Classen argues, ‘is not so distant from thought as we might imagine’, but, as the editorial of a recent issue of *19* on the ‘tactile imagination’ demonstrates, it is often neglected as a mode of understanding. ‘In the field of nineteenth-century studies’, Heather Tilley argues, ‘touch (and other sensory modalities) have been largely overlooked.’⁶

This particular act of touch made me realize that I had been oblivious to the importance of this sculpture’s current curated environment, which was itself centrally concerned with the physical senses. On the nearby dining table lay items relating to the career of the figured marble boy, who would grow up to be known as the ‘Deaf Baronet’. Sir Arthur was known for his ‘hearty and unselfish interest in the cause of the deaf and dumb’, and the value of tactile communication. Throughout their lives, Arthur and Constance Fairbairn worked to promote and campaign for the value of fingerspelling, opposing the hearing community’s edicts about the importance of ‘oralism’.⁷ I was yet to think feelingly about my position in relation

⁶ Constance Classen, *The Book of Touch* (New York: Berg, 2005), p. 2; Heather Tilley, ‘Introduction: The Victorian Tactile Imagination’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 19 (2014), p. 1 <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.723>>.

⁷ See ‘A Deaf Baronet’, *Deaf Mute’s Journal*, 1 April 1897, p. 2; and Arthur Dimmock, ‘Sir Arthur Henderson Fairbairn (1852–1915): Britain’s Deaf and Dumb Baronet’, *Deaf History Journal*, 6 (2002), 32–34. For an account of the debate between the advocates of fingerspelling and the promoters of oralism, see Jennifer Esmail, *Reading*

to this figuring of disability, and to consider my relations with it. It seemed, in and of that moment, that I knew so much about the nineteenth-century world surrounding the sculpture, but that none of this helped me to know how to be with, and feel for, the object itself. Victorian sculpture, as Angela Dunstan has written, is ‘disconcertingly difficult to read’.⁸ It is also hard to touch. Our encounters with Victorian art are so often at arm’s length, kept at bay by photography, digitization, or the conventions of museum curation and behaviour. The physical distance between the object of study and ourselves is echoed, as Bown argues, by the problematic conventions of scholarly distance — ‘the modernist critical agenda which demands that we as viewers must be distant from a work of art’ (p. 225). The case of *Constance and Arthur* will, I hope, create a more intimate space to elaborate on Dunstan’s question, ‘What does sculpture make us feel, and why?’ (‘Reading Victorian Sculpture’, p. 6).

Seeing and feeling the International Exhibition

Nearly one hundred and sixty years ago, the statue found itself in a busier atmosphere, as an exhibit in the 1862 International Exhibition. It was not a venue that invited viewers to dwell on their feeling for art, in either the physical or emotional sense, but if there was a sensory focus, it was overwhelmingly visual. This is not surprising. Museums are, as Susan Stewart argues, ‘so obviously — so, one might say, naturally, empires of sight that it barely occurs to us to imagine them as being organized around any other sense or senses’.⁹ The exhibition catalogue does briefly register the presence of those who might primarily experience the world through senses other than the visual or aural — but this is framed in a characteristically ableist Victorian discourse. The author points out that visitors should look out for developments in education which may benefit not just ‘the heathen world’ but ‘a large class, who, from physical infirmity’, are ‘in a similar way’ ‘practically shut out from the world. We refer to the deaf and dumb, for whose special benefit works have been prepared, and of which several were exhibited in this class.’¹⁰ Primarily, however, the emphasis is on the

Victorian Deafness: Signs and Sounds in Victorian Literature and Culture (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), p. 2.

⁸ Angela Dunstan, ‘Reading Victorian Sculpture’, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 22 (2016), p. 3 <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.776>>.

⁹ Susan Stewart, ‘Prologue: From the Museum of Touch’, in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, ed. by Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999), pp. 18–36 (p. 28).

¹⁰ Colonel Tal. P. Shaffner and Rev. W. Owen, *The Illustrated Record of the International Exhibition [. . .] of All Nations in 1862* (London: London Printing and Publishing, 1862), p. 253.

sighted. The *Guardian* complained about the ‘crowd’, who ‘thronged the refreshment rooms with the intention of eating, and paraded the splendid picture-galleries, without any intention of looking at the pictures’.¹¹ The quantity of exhibits were seen to displease the sightline: ‘generally speaking, the eye is greeted on all hands with a confusion worse confounded by incongruous objects.’¹² Writers of the ‘enormous amount of “Exhibition literature”’ cashed in on this, offering ways to negotiate the exhibition at speed.¹³ From the *Penny Guide* advising “What to See”, “How to See” and “Where to See”, to the *Three Penny* version ‘calculated to SAVE TIME and GIVE PLEASURE’, many of these guides construct the kind of visitor who was time-poor but culture-hungry — they generate the idea of seeing and feeling in a hurry.¹⁴ Of course, all aesthetic responses were put under a new kind of pressure by the idea of exhibition culture, for any exhibition is ‘designed to be ephemeral’. Its limited duration meant lasting feelings had to be summoned in minutes.¹⁵ The ‘great higgledy-piggledy at the Brompton end of the town’ was seen as a particular case in point (‘Exhibition Tactics’, pp. 375–76). The crowds, and what Britt Salvesen describes as the ‘etiquette of exhibition going’, meant nobody could linger in front of an exhibit.¹⁶ Return visits were of course possible, and there was also the option of purchasing a season ticket. However, works such as *How to See the Exhibition in One Day* (1862) and *A Plain Guide to the International Exhibition: The Wonders of the Exhibition Shewing How They May Be Seen at One Visit* (1862) suggest that this was, for many, a rare opportunity.

One review stands out. *Temple Bar*’s 1862 first-person piece, ‘How a Blind Man Saw the International Exhibition’, takes, from its title onwards, an inspiringly critical approach to the Victorian cult of visual spectacle.¹⁷ While satirizing the exhibition’s crowds and disorganization, the reviewer

¹¹ Quoted in *What Do You Think of the Exhibition?*, ed. by Robert Kempt (London: Hogg, [1862?]), pp. 50–52 (pp. 50–51).

¹² ‘Exhibition Tactics’, *Intellectual Observer*, 1 (1862), 375–78 (p. 375). I owe my knowledge of this source to Britt Salvesen’s excellent “‘The Most Magnificent, Useful, and, Interesting Souvenir’: Representations of the International Exhibition in 1862”, *Visual Resources*, 13 (1997), 1–32 (p. 16).

¹³ Robert Kempt, ‘Introduction’, in *What Do You Think of the Exhibition?*, ed. by Kempt, pp. 5–6 (p. 5).

¹⁴ *The Penny Guide to the International Exhibition* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1862), p. 1. Clarus’s *The Three Penny Guide to the Pictures, English & Foreign; or, A Companion to the Official Catalogue with Memoirs, Anecdotes, Criticism and Legends Calculated to Save Time and Give Pleasure* is advertised on p. 31 of the *Penny Guide* on a blue paper insert.

¹⁵ Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 6.

¹⁶ Salvesen, p. 17. See, for example, the guide aimed at this new species of time-poor visitor, *How to See the Exhibition in One Day* (London: Richard, 1862).

¹⁷ ‘How a Blind Man Saw the International Exhibition’, *Temple Bar*, January 1863, pp. 227–37.

also does something powerfully different. Focusing on the acoustic and tactile experience of the International Exhibition, the account highlights a way of feeling for a cultural spectacle which would otherwise go unnoticed. The blind writer, Vanessa Warne notes, ‘was repeatedly invited to touch the machinery, crafts and specimens on offer’.¹⁸ The *Temple Bar* reviewer highlights, in particular, the ways in which individuals at the exhibition were offered the opportunity to place their hand on certain machines, supplementing their discoveries with ‘explanations so kindly given’ (p. 234). Such an account shifts the ground away from a discourse of what seems ‘natural’ and towards a different understanding of haptic abilities.¹⁹

The acoustic and tactile rendering of the International Exhibition in *Temple Bar* is unusual in many ways, but typical in one — it dismisses the exhibition’s sculpture galleries. This author was not alone. An account of the exhibition in the *Saturday Review* noted that ‘as a rule the sculpture is not looked at’. This was partly because it was not ‘first-rate’ but also because it was ‘so dispersed’.²⁰ Statues were placed in the middle of the great hall, becoming meeting points for lost visitors. The overflow teetered around stairs and fountains. Much was squeezed in between the two picture galleries. Marbles competed with paintings, advertisements for carpets, labels for enormous clocks, and each other. ‘There is a need of Originality, of knowledge, or true Art-Feeling [. . .] amongst British sculptors as represented here’, lamented the *Athenaeum*.²¹

There is a sense in which sculpture itself seems ‘practically shut out’ from the exhibition’s visual whirl. In one catalogue guide, a few sculptures find themselves squeezed in, as a postscript:

Before passing into the picture gallery, look at the ‘Girl bathing,’ ‘Ino and Bacchus,’ and ‘Nymph and Cupid’ of Wyatt.

And now, ‘with a heart and room for every joy,’ laying aside, if we have grace to do so, all prejudice and favour, let us enter the picture gallery, ready to study and willing to learn.²²

¹⁸ Vanessa Warne, “How a Blind Man Saw the International Exhibition”: Visual Disability and Victorian Educational Entertainments’, paper given at the symposium ‘The History of Blindness and the Blind’, Fondation Singer-Polignac, Paris, 27–29 June 2013, available at <<http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x128hlo>> [accessed 12 November 2016].

¹⁹ See also Warne’s discussion of Frederick Halliday’s 1858 painting *The Blind Basket Maker and His First Child*, which was also exhibited in the 1862 exhibition, in Warne, “How a Blind Man Saw”.

²⁰ ‘Country Cousins in London’, *Saturday Review*, 12 July 1862, pp. 50–53 (p. 51).

²¹ Quoted in *What Do You Think of the Exhibition?*, ed. by Kempt, p. 181.

²² *A Plain Guide to the International Exhibition: The Wonders of the Exhibition Shewing How They May Be Seen at One Visit* (London: Sampson Low, 1862), p. 49.



Fig. 3: London Stereoscopic Company, photograph of 'Brother and Sister' (1857–62) by Thomas Woolner, London International Exhibition, 1862. Modern copy of 1862 photograph. William England, Hulton Archive © Getty Images UK Ltd.



Fig. 4: London Stereoscopic Company, photograph of 'Brother and Sister' (1857–62) by Thomas Woolner, London International Exhibition, 1862. Modern copy of 1862 photograph. William England, Hulton Archive © Getty Images UK Ltd.



Fig. 5: London Stereoscopic Company, photograph of the English Picture Gallery, London International Exhibition, 1862. Modern copy of 1862 photograph. William England, Hulton Archive © Getty Images UK Ltd. The statue is in the distance, highlighted in red.

Another compendium simply offers a dizzying list of the sculptures on display, ranging from ‘marble statues of Mercury, and of Venus tying her sandals’ to ‘Gibson’s TINTED VENUS, Pandora and Cupid’ and ‘Lord Lyon’s monument for St Paul’s’.²³ Although this particular catalogue seems comprehensive, it overlooks Woolner’s marble group, which was praised by

²³ *The Compendium Catalogue of the International Exhibition 1862* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, [1862?]), p. 45.



Fig. 6: *Views of the International Exhibition* (London: Nelson, 1862), p. 10.

other contemporary commentators as one which ‘visitors would do well to notice’ (*A Plain Guide*, p. 50). Singled out for special illustration by *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper Exhibitor*, the statue is described as ‘at once tender, natural and graceful [. . .]. The design cannot fail to delight, not only artists and connoisseurs, but all who gaze upon the group.’²⁴

A Victorian stereoscopic photograph attempts to capture its grace (*Fig. 3*). But, as Joanne Lukitsh explains, this image, artfully set off by its black background, does not represent the reality of the exhibition experience.²⁵ A clearer sense of the sculpture *in situ* may be seen in the following photographs, where we see it placed against its real background, then distantly in this picture gallery (*Figs. 4, 5*), and perhaps most accurately by this illustration (*Fig. 6*), where we see it crowded out of view. In the world of the International Exhibition, *Constance and Arthur* was just one of many sculptural works which could easily be missed. Its subject matter, however, is curiously in tune with its fate. This sculpture which feels for and expresses the tactile, rather than the visual, hints at the ease with which certain modes of feeling can be overlooked, or unbeheld.

²⁴ ‘Fine Arts in the Exhibition — IV: Sculpture’, *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper Exhibitor*, 23 August 1862, pp. 105–07 (p. 105).

²⁵ Joanne Lukitsh, *Thomas Woolner: Seeing Sculpture Through Photography* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2005), p. 9.

The making of *Constance and Arthur*

This was not, of course, the only context for the sculpture. *Constance and Arthur* stemmed from a background of family pride, and family tragedy. Initially suggested as a commission by Sir Thomas Fairbairn in 1857, it was one of a series of Fairbairn family portraits which were painted or sculpted over the years. The perception of each work would have been affected by the shadow of sadness surrounding the first in the series. The Fairbairns' first born, Mary Eleanor, had died at two years old in 1852, but not before she appeared in a mother-and-child portrait painted by Margaret Gillies. Emma Constance, known as Constance, and Arthur were both also painted separately by Gillies in 1853.²⁶

The siblings were born deaf, and went on to be educated as boarders at a school for the deaf, 'of a strictly private and domestic character', run by Henry Brothers Bingham.²⁷ A letter from Fairbairn to Woolner demonstrates that Fairbairn had to time Woolner's arrival at the family home of Northwood to work on the study of the children in order to coincide with their school holidays.²⁸ Once the statue was returned from the International Exhibition to Northwood, it served as a kind of proxy for the absent children. (Constance and Arthur are the only children not present in Fairbairn's later family portrait by William Holman Hunt, *The Children's Holiday* (1865), possibly because their own school holidays did not permit them to be there.)

A further context for the sculpture derives from the economic and artistic pressures upon Woolner. The group in marble took five years to produce, and throughout the time he was working on it, he wrote repeatedly about the difficulties of capturing Thomas Fairbairn's children. They were restless, and so was he. Driven by the financial anxiety of 'securing other commission[s]', he struggled to focus his attention:

I am going on with my sketch for Mr. Fairbairn's children but at present I cannot say satisfactorily: I find it so hard to fix my mind upon one subject after having had it dissipated upon many as I had at the Manchester Ex: and railway travelling always upsets me for work for some time.²⁹

²⁶ See Judith Bronkhurst, 'Fruits of a Connoisseur's Friendship: Sir Thomas Fairbairn and William Holman Hunt', *Burlington Magazine*, 125 (1983), 586–95 (pp. 587–88).

²⁷ Henry Brothers Bingham's educational services are advertised in the preface to *Essays by the Pupils at the College of the Deaf and Dumb, Rugby, Warwickshire* (London: Longman, 1845), pp. iii–iv (p. iv).

²⁸ In an undated letter from Southport, Fairbairn writes, 'My children return to Northwood on Wednesday next — Any time after Sunday night, we shall be glad to see you, for the purpose of your studies.' Sir William Fairbairn, letter to Thomas Woolner, undated, Oxford, Bodleian Special Collections, Papers of Thomas Woolner, MSS. Eng. lett. d. 96.

²⁹ Thomas Woolner, letter to Mrs [Emily] Tennyson, quoted in Amy Woolner, *Thomas Woolner R. A. Sculptor and Poet: His Life in Letters* (New York: Dutton, 1917), pp. 136–37 (p. 137) (23 August 1857).

In October 1860 he was still waiting on a block of marble for the group, and in 1861 he was working on seven commissions for different patrons simultaneously: ‘altho’ nearly badgered to death I have not been idle; but all my hard work seems to bring me nothing but more worry and I see no chance for any ultimate reward.’³⁰ He was, he complained, ‘a model of perpetual motion’ — a man of ‘frantic philanthropies’, short of cash and even shorter of publicity.³¹

As the International Exhibition drew near, much was at stake for Woolner. It was crucial that the sculpture of the two children was placed well and prominently. His correspondence for this time shows his anxieties about where the sculptures would be placed. A friend attending a preview had written to him, lamenting that he had found Woolner’s statue of Francis Bacon ‘hiding himself behind the Royal “Trophy!” — This of course must not be — we shall have him firmly before the public or I am much mistaken.’³² As *Constance and Arthur* depicted the family of one of the exhibition’s commissioners, Woolner hoped for a prominent placement, and this was an ideal opportunity for self-promotion. Woolner began his own publicity campaign, inviting friends and fellow artists to his studio to view the statue.³³

A letter written on 23 April 1862 indicates that Robert Browning had offered to write some lines of poetry about the statue, or, possibly, that he had been invited by Woolner to do so. The lines would then be placed in the official exhibition catalogue, presumably with the intention of causing a viewer to pause in front of the sculpture, or to remind them, when looking through the catalogue afterwards, of the sculpture they had seen. Such poetic ‘mottos’ were commonplace — though most sculptors settled for taking their poetry from a previously existing work. Richard Westmacott, for instance, takes a few lines from *Lalla Rookh*, and Shakespeare Wood borrows some of *Idylls of the King* for his marble ‘Elaine’ (Fig. 7). An original Browning stanza in the catalogue, then, would be a real sculptural

³⁰ Thomas Woolner, letter to Mrs [Emily] Tennyson, quoted in Amy Woolner, pp. 205–06 (p. 206) (5 October 1861). In a letter of 16 February 1860, Edward Lear writes to Woolner: ‘I do hope though that you’ll soon get a block of marble for the little Fairbairns’, in Amy Woolner, pp. 185–86 (p. 186).

³¹ Thomas Woolner, letter to Mrs [Emily] Tennyson, in Amy Woolner, pp. 141–42 (11 February 1858).

³² Unknown, letter to Thomas Woolner, 3 May 1862, Papers of Thomas Woolner, MSS. Eng. lett. d. 292–3; Eng. poet. e. 124–6.

³³ Some attempts at publicity went awry. Woolner’s friend Francis Turner Palgrave took matters into his own hands, causing a scandal by highly praising Woolner’s work in his *Descriptive Handbook*, and denigrating the work of his rivals. See Francis Turner Palgrave, *Descriptive Handbook to the Art Collections of the International Exhibition of 1862*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1862), p. 112. As the reviewer for *Cassell’s Illustrated Family Paper Exhibitor* notes, Woolner’s ‘works would have made a much more decided impression on the public mind had he not been so injudiciously praised by his friends’ (23 August 1862, p. 105).

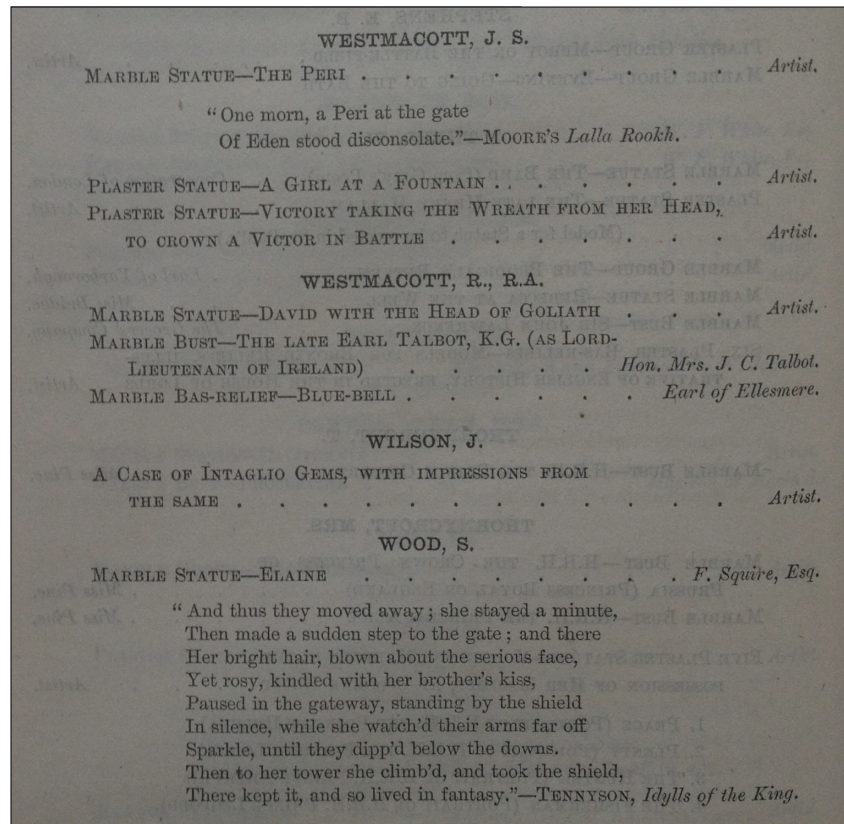


Fig. 7: *International Exhibition 1862: Official Catalogue of the Fine Art Department* (London: Truscott, Son & Simmons), p. 150.

puff. However, the envisaged poem did not materialize and Woolner wrote to ask if he might have it. The note is a marvellous mixture of panic and affected nonchalance:

My Dear Mr Browning,

Pray do not consider me troublesome but as the 1st May is so near and the Art Cat of the I. N. Ex must be printed before then, I am most anxious to get the stanza for my group in time for the first edition. Do you think that you could let me have it within 2 or 3 days?

Of course if nothing has come into your mind and you are very busy — do not bother yourself, but it would be of great value to me if you had thought of something.

In haste
Most truly yours
Tho. Woolner.³⁴

³⁴ Thomas Woolner, letter to Robert Browning, 23 April 1862, General Manuscripts Miscellaneous Collection, Box 55, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare

This was sent on 23 April 1862. On the next day Browning duly produced a poem, possibly written overnight, and delivered it to Woolner. It reads as follows:

DEAF AND DUMB CHILDREN

Only the prism's obstruction shows aright
 The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
 Into a jewelled bow from blankest white;
 So may a glory from defect arise:
 Only by Deafness may the vexed Love wreak
 Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
 Only by Dumbness adequately speak
 As favoured mouth could never, through the eyes.³⁵

Drawing on the version of events that Woolner's daughter gives in the biography of her father (Amy Woolner, p. 211), Judith Bronkhurst notes that the poem was the product of Browning's spontaneous feelings on viewing the statue at the International Exhibition 'where it inspired Browning to call on Woolner and leave a stanza' (p. 591). Benedict Read also argues that 'what aroused a response in Browning was the pathos of the work'.³⁶ As Woolford, Karlin, and Phelan's latest volume of Browning's poetry explains, the poem was in fact, written before the exhibition opened. The letters surrounding the sculpture suggest the emotions surrounding it and the poem were slightly less 'spontaneous'. Browning may or may not have been 'inspired' by the statue, but inspiration was clearly given a firm push by Woolner's business acumen and urgent plea.³⁷ Browning's poem was received with approbation in terms of the role it would serve in promoting the statue. After praising its poetic merits, Woolner told Browning, 'it does what I want admirably'.³⁸

Attention, even aesthetic attention, in the nineteenth century was a saleable commodity, and Browning knew his role in procuring it. He called works such as 'Deaf and Dumb', written for inclusion in art catalogues, his 'Catalogue Original Poetry', the generic joke indicating his

Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, CO140.

³⁵ I give the text of the poem as it was published in Amy Woolner, p. 216, presuming this is closest to the manuscript. On first publication of the poem in 1868, Browning retitled it 'Deaf and Dumb'.

³⁶ Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 10.

³⁷ See *The Poems of Robert Browning*, ed. by John Woolford, Daniel Karlin, and Joseph Phelan, Longman Annotated English Poets (London: Routledge, 1991-), IV: 1862-1871 (2011), pp. 1-2.

³⁸ Thomas Woolner, letter to Robert Browning, 24 April 1862, General Manuscripts Miscellaneous Collection, Box 55, Princeton University Library, CO140.

own participation in what we might, today, call the ‘attention economy’ — a world in which value is driven not by the worth of goods, but by the amount of consumer attention they garner.³⁹ This was a world in which, as Palgrave noted, on opening a newspaper and turning to the section on art, one was likely to find ‘less a review than an advertisement’.⁴⁰ Once, catalogue poems had meant epic lists; now, things were more Argos than Argonauts.

As is the case with any work of explicit sentiment, there could be seen to be something instrumentalist about *Constance and Arthur*, and about Woolner’s marketing of it. Whether one sees the sculpture as attempting to build sentimental links with its audience by, as Caroline Arscott suggests, building empathy between viewer and subject — or, as Roger Fry argues, creating ‘a certain moral satisfaction’ which a viewer has ‘done nothing to earn’, it is clear that the emotional response to his artwork may have had a personal pay-off, offering benefits for his future career.⁴¹ In the case of *Constance and Arthur*, the layers of emotion and sentiment feel particularly tangled. Woolner found himself modelling two disabled subjects whose marginalized status may have chimed with his own feelings about his artistic marginalization.⁴² The felicitous analogy between subject and sculptor is an edgy one, and touches on the idea of the world of sculpture as one which is always, in some way, speechlessly on edge.

³⁹ Robert Browning, letter to Fanny Haworth, [c. 1841], in *The Brownings’ Correspondence*, ed. by Philip Kelley and others (Winfield, KS: Wedgestone, 1984–), v: *January 1841–May 1842*, ed. by Philip Kelley and Ronald Hudson (1987), p. 189. Other poems include the opening to ‘In a Gondola’ (1842), which was written to accompany a painting by Daniel Maclise, and ‘Eurydice to Orpheus’, written on the frame of a painting by Lord Leighton. See *The Poems of Browning*, 11: *1841–1846*, ed. by Woolford and Karlin (1991), p. 118. For a good account of the development of the term ‘attention economy’, see Tiziana Terranova, ‘Attention, Economy and the Brain’, *Culture Machine*, 13 (2012) <<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewArticle/465>> [accessed 12 November 2016].

⁴⁰ Quoted in Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, p. 10.

⁴¹ See Caroline Arscott, ‘Sentimentality in Victorian Paintings’, in *Art for the People: Culture in the Shums of Late Victorian Britain*, ed. by Giles Waterfield (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1994), pp. 64–81 (p. 72); and Roger Fry, ‘The Meaning of Pictures I — Telling a Story’, in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. by Christopher Read (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 393–400 (p. 400). I owe my knowledge of these to Nicola Bown who cites them in ‘Tender Beauty’, pp. 219, 217.

⁴² As Angela Dunstan notes, Woolner ‘inhabits the margins both of Pre-Raphaelitism and the history of sculpture’. See Angela Dunstan, ‘Thomas Woolner’s “Bad Times for Sculpture”: Framing Victorian Sculpture in Vocabularies of Neglect’, *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies*, 19 (2014), 32–44 (p. 33).

'Deaf and Dumb'

Browning's poem did not appear in the catalogue in either the first or the second corrected edition, and no surviving documents explain why. One possible reason is that Fairbairn did not like the way Browning had described his children. Even Woolner hesitated a little on reading the poem, writing to Browning that 'at first I thought "wreak" a half tint too strong', but concluded that the poem had a 'painfully sweet feeling'.⁴³ Another possibility is that the poem simply arrived too late for it to be integrated into the catalogue.

The poem itself is a strangely contorted work, syntactically and emotionally difficult. Browning's words, 'Speak through the eyes', refer, in one sense, to the children's faces. Indicating the children's hearing disability slantwise, Browning implies that their deafness and their related absence of speech is balanced by a different sort of eloquence — that of the body. The sentiment of the final lines can be paraphrased roughly as 'only through the disability of deafness may authentic emotion truly speak, and it does so through the eyes'. Browning implies that the children express themselves through their meaning gaze.

But this idea of 'speak[ing] through the eyes' is not entirely happy. It partially fails because sculpture is conventionally seen as an art both for the blind, and *of* the blind.⁴⁴ By this I mean that classical sculpture, as received by the Victorians, was recognized and praised for its blank marble eyeballs, the way in which 'the glance of the eye is absent'.⁴⁵ (Intriguingly, a contemporary reviewer of the exhibition wrongly recorded that the statue was, in fact, 'the portrait of a blind child'.)⁴⁶ It also fails because there is a sense in which this statue is primarily concerned, less with sight or speech, than with touch. Touch and tactility were important to these children. Arthur Dimmock notes that Constance and Arthur did not favour 'speech or lip-reading throughout their lives' but 'were taught with finger spelling and sign language' (p. 33). This vital sense is rendered by the delicate handling of physical touch in the sculpture itself, as Constance's left hand rests on Arthur's shoulder, and he leans his head against hers. As Read notes, the

⁴³ Thomas Woolner, letter to Robert Browning, 24 April 1862, General Manuscripts Miscellaneous Collection, Box 55, Princeton University Library, CO140.

⁴⁴ For the idea that sculpture is an art form particularly fitted to the blind viewer and maker, see Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sculpture: Some Observations of Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream*, ed. and trans. by Jason Gaiger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 64.

⁴⁵ G. F. W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, trans. by F. P. B. Osmaston, 4 vols (London: Bell, 1920), III, 148.

⁴⁶ 'From the *Athenaeum*', in *What Do You Think of the Exhibition?*, ed. by Kempt, p. 184.

children have a ‘lack of marked facial animation’, but the statue is ‘replete with tactile emphases’.⁴⁷

Browning’s rendering of different kinds of expressive and haptic capabilities may be usefully thought about in relation to Tobin Siebers’s discussions of disability and aesthetics. In one section of his book, Siebers focuses on a painting by contemporary artist Susan Dupor, which shows a woman ‘swimming downstream in narrow river’:

Her eyes are closed, and she seems to be sleeping [. . .]. Only the appearance of nine hands rising out of the surface of the stream startles the tranquil scene [. . .]. Its goal is not to depict motion but thought [. . .] for Dupor is deaf, and this painting [. . .] includes multiple hands as a method of expressing the presence of sign language [. . .]. The effect here is not macabre because the hands are neither surrealist nor gothic. They clearly belong to the swimmer and they express a world in which she is deeply absorbed [. . .]. Spread out before her are the living symbols of a beautiful and expressive future. (Siebers, p. 138)

Browning attempts — and fails — to resist what Vanessa Warne terms the ‘standard [nineteenth-century] lamentation of sensory deprivation’. He finds ‘beauty’ in the statue, but only through the lens of ‘defect’. Dupor, in contrast, succeeds. She offers, in her painting, a rethinking of what Warne terms the ‘construction’ of a ‘hierarchically conceived human sensorium’ (‘Between the Sheets’, p. 2). Her painting finds a beauty in the idea of touch without seeking haptic equivalence elsewhere.

Browning liked the poem enough to see it as more than a catalogue blurb. Six years later, he placed it prominently in the 1868 edition of his poems, within *Dramatis Personae*, retitled ‘Deaf and Dumb: A Group by Woolner’.⁴⁸ If all the other poems in *Dramatis Personae* are works of art masquerading as the words of first-person human speakers, this one is more about the way a work of art articulates itself. For the words ‘speak through the eyes’ can be thought about not just as a reference to the sculpted eyes of the children, but as a reference to a viewer’s eyes — and the act of looking at either the poem or the sculpture. Browning’s poem is simultaneously about the senses and feelings of the sculpted children, and about the senses and feelings of the viewer and reader. And by this I mean any viewer or reader, at any point in time. Through what he terms its ‘printed voice’,

⁴⁷ Benedict Read, ‘Thomas Woolner: PRB, RA’, in *Pre-Raphaelite Sculpture: Nature and Imagination in British Sculpture 1848–1914*, ed. by Benedict Read and Joanna Barnes (London: Henry Moore Foundation/Lund Humphries, 1991), pp. 21–33 (p. 29).

⁴⁸ ‘Deaf and Dumb: A Group by Woolner’, in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, 6 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1868), vi: *In a Balcony — Dramatis Personae*, 151.

Browning's poem could be said to express itself through our eyes — right here, and right now.⁴⁹

For 'Deaf and Dumb', and *Constance and Arthur*, are works about art and feeling which exemplify the need for nineteenth-century art not just to be illuminated by context, but which exist through the way in which they evoke relational feelings in the moment. Indeed, there is a sense in which attempts to reconstruct the feelings of the past may actively prevent our understanding them. One of the emotions that this poem, and this statue demand, is that of being present — of being in the moment. The poem and statue, both then and now, interrogate what Angela Leighton describes as 'the purpose of form and beauty, their justification in a rough world'.⁵⁰ The poem partly came into being through the needs of the nineteenth-century attention economy. However, in asking a viewer or reader to reflect on the workings of art and feeling in ways which are temporally complex, it resists the simple narrative of forward-looking, capitalist attention. Both poem and sculpture also ask, perhaps, for a sort of feeling which stands in opposition to the prevalent academic economy, an economy which privileges the easily accountable idea of historical research.

The kind of attention to being in the present moment which any sculpture might invite has been brilliantly theorized by David Getsy in his essay on the performative 'stillness' of statues. Drawing on Barbara Johnson's conception of 'muteness' as a 'special feature' of poetry and prose, Getsy argues that 'for sculpture, the related and more fundamental term is *stillness*'.⁵¹ Playing with the ambivalence of stillness, in the sense of both immobility and temporal persistence, Getsy argues that sculpture's ontological presence in space, combined with its immobility, gives it its own specific claims on the rhetoric of immediacy. As he puts it, 'a focus on stillness can illuminate the ethical contours and recurring historical themes of the sculptural encounter' (p. 2). Getsy writes feelingly of the ways in which a statue 'stands before us, confronting us' (p. 3) — and in the feelings that this might generate in 'the sculptural encounter'. For Getsy, such stillness is a characteristic of any encounter with a statue. Woolner's *Constance and Arthur*, in particular, highlights the way in which the medium of sculpture encourages this sense of timelessness, and it does so through the composition and pose. Demonstrating what Getsy refers to as an 'unrecognized

⁴⁹ The phrase is taken from Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, 1. 176–77: '(and since he only spoke in print | The printed voice of him lives now as then)', in *The Ring and the Book*, ed. by Richard D. Altick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).

⁵⁰ Angela Leighton, 'The Work of Form: Some Afterwords', in *The Work of Form: Poetics and Materiality in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Ben Burton and Elizabeth Scott Bauman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 197–203 (p. 202).

⁵¹ David J. Getsy, 'Acts of Stillness: Statues, Performativity and Passive Resistance', *Criticism*, 56 (2014), 1–20 (p. 1), emphasis in original.

sophistication in sculptural theory', this work of art interrogates its own medium and place in space and time, by straddling at least two genres.⁵²

Woolner's reputation relied partly on his portrait medallions, large-scale public statuary, and bust portraiture. (In 1859 he sculpted a bust of Tennyson and in 1861 he was commissioned to create eight life-size statues for Manchester's Law Courts.) However, his reputation as 'life-like and true', the 'head of the realist school', was growing at this time, through his strength in intimate, familial scenes.⁵³ While *Constance and Arthur* may resemble some of his other realist sculptures, such as *The Lord's Prayer* (1867), which depicts a mother and child, or the radical depiction of *The Housemaid* (1892) on her knees, it manages something even more radically experimental.

Certainly, *Constance and Arthur* curates personal family sentiment and makes, as Read notes, 'a contribution to an accepted, established category, the possibly sentimental child portrait that verges on genre' ('Thomas Woolner: PRB, RA', p. 29). It has been designed to capture the particularity of these two children, in their time. The girl, with her draped Victorian nightgown, and the carefully sculpted nineteenth-century tiled floor seem to reside in Victorian genre painting permeated with family sentiment. Woolner, as Paul Barlow notes, prided himself on the 'look of vitality' he could infuse in the sculpted image.⁵⁴ Further, as is characteristic of Woolner, he uses classical idealism as a foil for his naturalism. As with other works, Constance's 'loose generalized night-gown is the modern equivalent to Classical drapery'.⁵⁵ The boy, however, is altogether stripped of his clothes — seemingly stripped of temporal concerns, and classically ideal. Together, the figures seem both temporally somewhere and, also, in a way, out of time. Woolner's nod to the pietà, in the juxtaposition of male and female, incarnate stone flesh, and marble drapery, bears this out. The resulting temporal tension means that this sculpture can be seen as moving towards the ideal of the New Sculpture to come.

With this statue, however, Woolner deserves even more credit for experimentation and thoughtfulness than he has yet received.⁵⁶ For the

⁵² David J. Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 2.

⁵³ See Richard Garnett's 1900 *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Woolner, repr. on *The Victorian Web* <<http://www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/woolner/biography.html>> [accessed 12 November 2016]; and Timothy Stevens, 'Thomas Woolner (1825–1892)', *ODNB* <<http://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29961>>. For more on Woolner's 'conscious pursuit of celebrities', see Dunstan's excellent 'Thomas Woolner's "Bad Times for Sculpture"'.
⁵⁴ Paul Barlow, 'Grotesque Obscenities: Thomas Woolner's *Civilization* and its Discontents', in *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque*, ed. by Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow, and David Amigoni (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 97–118 (p. 106).

⁵⁵ Barlow describes another of Woolner's sculpted nightgowns in this way (p. 98).

⁵⁶ As Getsy notes, thanks to the mischaracterization of mid- to late-Victorian

work arguably enacts and embodies the kind of complex relationship with sculptural theory that Getsy sees as characteristic of the New Sculpture; it attempts to ‘integrate’ the question of ‘figuration with physicality’ and ‘materiality’ (*Body Doubles*, p. 10). *Constance and Arthur* has a particular and unusual relationship not just with feelings of temporal and spatial ‘stillness’, but also with the idea of ‘muteness’. While Getsy acknowledges that sculpture has a relationship with that which is speechless, it is a quality that he identifies as more naturally associated with textual art. Woolner’s statue unsettles this assumption. For just as sculpture surprises us with its motionlessness, it also confronts its viewer with its lack of voice, forever ‘poised’, as Woolner’s *Pygmalion* has it, ‘in force of mute reserve’.⁵⁷ In most cases, a sculpture’s failure to speak creates a moment in which a viewer is confronted with the material nature of the sculpture itself, and its difference from its desired living double. The sculpture’s silence foregrounds its presence as mimesis. In the case of *Constance and Arthur*, however, the stone’s silence transforms it from representation to metasculpture. As Getsy argues, one of the remarkable effects of a work such as Edward Onslow Ford’s *Shelley Memorial* is the fact that it pushes ‘the boundaries of realism’, as the innate stillness of stone is used to render the stillness of death: ‘Only’, Getsy notes, ‘in the subject matter of death can the human body be like the statue in its ceaseless stillness’ (*Acts of Stillness*, pp. 5, 6). Analogously, perhaps, only when representing individuals who communicate in ways other than speech, the statue can become like the soundless body. Here, Woolner, like Ford, ‘trumps’ his own material (*Acts of Stillness*, p. 6).

We may speculate that Woolner’s interest in the ways in which stone might resonate with silence was not simply the result of this particular commission. The metaphorical weight of his material, the idea of what it might mean to be ‘stone deaf’, led him to return to the possibilities for a relationship between material and concept. In 1874 his ‘sketch for an imaginary memorial for a deaf child’ explores the possibilities of sculptural relief, playing with the ways in which a confined selfhood might potentially be expressed and bound in stone (*Fig. 8*). Despite its faults, Browning’s poem supports and expands upon the kind of temporal and affective relationship that the sculpture invites in an intriguing way. It does this particularly through its use of ekphrasis. As I have discussed, when Browning writes that the sculpture (and potentially the poem) ‘speak[s] through the eyes’, his use of ‘speak’ is figurative, drawing the reader’s attention to the ways in which the children, the sculpture, and the poem are silent. But Browning’s ‘eyes’ are worth a third look. ‘Deaf and Dumb’ is, after all, an explicitly ekphrastic poem — subtitled, in the 1868 edition, as ‘A Group by Woolner’.

sculpture by *fin-de-siècle* critics praising the New Sculpture, Woolner is among the sculptors who have ‘suffered a long period of neglect’ (*Body Doubles*, p. 46).

⁵⁷ Thomas Woolner, *Pygmalion* (London: Macmillan, 1881), p. 68.



Fig. 8: Thomas Woolner, *Listening Boy*, c. 1874, plaster relief. Photograph reproduced with permission of The Leicester Galleries.

Although correspondence reveals that the poem was originally read aloud by Woolner in manuscript, beside the statue, to a small audience of visitors, only a small proportion of those who read ‘Deaf and Dumb’ in *Dramatis Personae* would have also seen the sculpture itself.⁵⁸ Even fewer contemporary readers of the poem will have also seen the original Woolner statue in its marble, rather than photographic form — and most of us will encounter the poem before we see an accompanying photograph. The poem’s relation to the object is, then, that of remediation and of readjustment. Its ekphrasis is both occluding and illuminating.

We can see this poetic manoeuvre as an attempt to readjust one conventional hierarchy of our senses. Sighted readers of the poem are encouraged to feel for the world of the sculpture using something other than pure sight. The idea of ‘speaking through the eyes’ reminds us of other ways in which sculpture may be experienced apart from sight, ways which might include the mind’s eye and ekphrastic redescription. Such readjustment is in tune with the tenor of Woolner’s sculpture and its subject — a work which interrogates the institutionally valued scales of sense, where sight and hearing take precedence over touch and intuition. As a sighted reader, first encountering this poem apart from its sculptural source, I found myself both blinded and enlightened by the ekphrastic form. The poem was making me aware of something that was beyond my vision, and of different ways of experiencing and feeling. In this way, my experience of reading Browning’s brief verse brought me into an analogical relationship with the values that Constance and Arthur espoused. In their campaign for the recognition of tactile communication and fingerspelling, and resistance to ‘the oral system’, the Fairbairn siblings stood for the importance of valuing all modes of feeling and sensing equally. The ekphrastic encounter had a related, equalizing effect — serving as an introduction to the enlarging possibilities of disability.

The temporality of this encounter is worth thinking about too. In ‘Disability Theory’, Natalie Prizel argues that disability is ‘an interpersonal transfer that allows one to thrive and connect across space and time’. It is, she writes, ‘in and of itself *out of time*’ (emphasis added). It is a ‘shared telos’. ‘Many disability scholars’, Prizel notes, ‘use the term “TAB” — temporarily able-bodied — to indicate the universal march to disability that comes with aging.’ If we are ‘able-bodied’, all of us are only temporarily so. Foreshadowing this disability through its conjuring of blindness, an encounter with the poem feels complex, relational, and temporally queer. It is a temporal queerness which not only collapses the notion of a neat

⁵⁸ ‘I read it to some people this afternoon in my studio while they looked at the group, and they were charmed.’ Thomas Woolner to Robert Browning, 24 April 1862, General Manuscripts Miscellaneous Collection, Box 55, Princeton University Library, CO140.

historical distance between the reader and the text, involving us in what Nicola Bown calls ‘the messy business’ of a present-day, feeling response (p. 221). It is also a temporality which destabilizes, and disables chronological linear sequence. It takes us, as Prizel argues, quoting José Esteban Muñoz, into a world where the present is open to both the past and, importantly, the future; the poem makes us feel not just ‘here and now’, but ‘*then and there*’.⁵⁹

In the end, whether we are alone or in an art gallery, in a family house in 2016 or in a studio in 1862, our feelings are arguably shaped by immediate, time-bound — and partially commodified — concerns. Nearly a century ago, Samuel Beckett wrote feelingly of the way in which our encounters with a work of art are all too often reduced to a kind of book-keeping, matching our experience against frameworks we already possess. He uses an analogy of ‘the tourist, whose aesthetic experience consists in a series of identifications’. The ‘Baedeker’, for Beckett’s tourist, is often ‘the ends rather than the means’.⁶⁰ There is a sense in which using such frameworks to form our descriptions, frameworks which might include, for example, historicist methodologies, saves time. At its best, historical criticism is a way of ‘saving time’ in the sense of beginning to salvage a glimpse of the past. It is a way of holding it still, and close to us. But it can become ‘time saving’ in a less healthy and more fiscal sense. Overly led by what Paulo Freire calls the “banking” model of scholarship and pedagogy’, we may, like so many exhibition-goers, find our responses hurried and calcified.⁶¹ That moment of time taken, and time taking, of making physical contact with the statue in the dining room, enlarged a work of art for me in a very different way. The unusual privileging of touch, and the recognition of the valency of touching, opened up different ways in which the statue had been curated — and different ways in which it could be interpreted and felt. *Constance and Arthur* takes its place in a circuit of commission and patronage, in the history of sculptural technique, and as a figuring of domestic and familial emotion. It is also a work which invites a viewer to think through the lens of disability aesthetics and the relations of disability. A work such as this is significant, because, in Siebers’s terms, it ‘return[s] aesthetics forcefully to its originary subject matter: the body and its affective sphere’ (p. 2). In doing so, *Constance and Arthur* encourages us to think about and feel for Victorian sculpture as a form which exists, still, and in the moment. It is a feeling worth attending to.

⁵⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1, emphasis in original, quoted in Prizel.

⁶⁰ Samuel Beckett, ‘Proust’, in *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: Calder, 1965), pp. 7–93 (p. 23).

⁶¹ Quoted in Jane Gallop, ‘The Historicization of Literary Studies’, in *The Limits of Literary Historicism*, ed. by Allen Dunn and Thomas F. Haddock, Tennessee Studies in Literature, 45 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), pp. 3–8 (p. 7).