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Abstract:

This essay returns to the seminal accounts of late-Victorian sculpture provided by Philip Henry Gosse. It seeks to suggest that an interdisciplinary, Janus-faced methodology, one that looks both forward to Modernism and backward to the mid-Victorian period, and out from art history to the Victorian cultures of literature and science/faith, are likely to prove the most historiographically productive way to continue rehabilitating Victorian sculpture.

## Generations of Modernism, or, A Queer Variety of Natural History: Edmund Gosse and Sculptural Modernity

by Jason Edwards

### On or About 1907? The Janus-Face of Victorian Sculpture Studies

Traditional histories of British sculpture have tended to emphasize a paradigm shift around 1907, the year in which Jacob Epstein's (1880–1959) "primitivist" British Medical Association sculptures signaled the birth of a semi-abstract sculptural Modernism in London (fig. 1).<sup>[1]</sup> This was a Modernism in conscious revolt against Victorian values, and in particular against the idealized realism of the so-called New Sculpture that was fashionable in the final decades of the nineteenth century;<sup>[2]</sup> an Oedipal revolt emblemized by Ezra Pound's (1885–1972) decision to entitle his influential 1914 *Egoist* article "The New Sculpture," concerned with Epstein's generation.<sup>[3]</sup>



Fig. 1, Anonymous, *Jacob Epstein in his studio with a plaster cast of Dancing Girl*, commissioned for the British Medical Association Building, London, ca. 1907. Photograph. Tate Enterprises, Courtesy Leeds Museums & Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive). [\[larger image\]](#)

Over the last decade, scholarship has begun to challenge this assumption. David J. Getsy's *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905* (2004) established the New Sculpture's proto-Modernist claims and reflexive art-theoretical sophistication; while his edited volume *Sculpture and the Pursuit of A Modern Ideal in Britain, c.1880–1930* (2004) demonstrated further the significant continuities between Victorian and Modernist sculpture. While I remain sympathetic to Getsy's strategically revisionist endeavors, which successfully returned Victorian sculpture to center stage for the first time in a generation, in this essay I adopt a more Janus-faced methodology. I suggest that in order to return nineteenth-century British sculpture to its rightful place as a ubiquitous, paradigmatic Victorian art form, we need to rewrite its history with two academic contexts in mind. The first is an early twenty-first-century art history still predisposed towards Modernism, but increasingly interested in the earlier Victorian generations that predated the New Sculpture.<sup>[4]</sup> The second is an interdisciplinary Victorian studies still biased towards literature and science.

I explore this historiographic dilemma through the example of the writing of the late-Victorian polymath, Edmund Gosse (1849–1928), the critic who first coined the term “The New Sculpture” in a series of four articles published in the *Art Journal* in 1894.<sup>[5]</sup> In a “proto-Modernist” critical idiom, I begin by demonstrating that, in his acclaimed 1907 autobiography *Father and Son*, Gosse makes a surprising claim for his own Modernism, by aligning himself with the Primitivism then fashionable across Europe, and by “anticipating” a Vorticism soon to emerge as the dominant vanguard movement in pre-war London.<sup>[6]</sup> In the second part of the essay, however, I demonstrate that Gosse’s critical position as a pseudo-scientific advocate of idealized sculptural realism, and his aesthetic emphasis on the rich variety of carved and modeled surface textures within the New Sculpture, align him even more closely with his father P. H. Gosse’s (1810–88) popular mid-Victorian writings on marine biology (fig. 2). To make this case, I draw particular attention to Edmund Gosse’s 1894 account of the New Sculpture in the context of his earlier, and less well known, 1890 memoir of his father. I make this Janus-faced argument to emphasize the paradigmatic way in which Gosse junior’s multidisciplinary writings usefully address the differently dominant discourses of art-historical Modernism and inter-disciplinary Victorianism, demonstrating that Gosse’s ideas are as responsive to Vorticism as to mid-Victorian natural theology. Gosse’s writings thus embody a historically dialectic sensitivity and polymath interdisciplinary ambition that turn-of-the-twenty-first-century sculptural historians might emulate.



Fig. 2, Anonymous, *Philip Henry Gosse with his son Edmund*, 1857. Photograph. Frontispiece to the first edition of *Father and Son* (London: William Heinemann, 1907). [\[larger image\]](#)

### Mid-Victorian Father and Modernist Son? Edmund Gosse, ca. 1907

The author of more than 30 books and numerous articles, Gosse published poetry, ambitious critical studies and translations of Scandinavian authors, biographies of Algernon Charles Swinburne and others, and art criticism for the *Art Journal* and *Saturday Review* that was particularly acute on sculpture.<sup>[7]</sup> This essay focuses on three particularly significant, and, I would argue, closely-related texts from Gosse’s extensive oeuvre. The first is *Father and Son*, his 1907 memoir of his childhood.<sup>[8]</sup> The second is his often-cited series of articles in the 1894 *Art Journal*, “The New Sculpture, 1879–1894.”<sup>[9]</sup> The last is his comparatively little-known 1890 biography of his father.<sup>[10]</sup> The essay contends that if, within the contemporary disciplinary context of art history, we might be tempted to emphasize Gosse’s and late-Victorian sculpture’s

proto-Modernism, such a prioritization comes at a significant cost if it requires the caricature of eminent mid-Victorians as naïve and old-fashioned; a rhetorical move likely to prove detrimental in the context of interdisciplinary Victorian studies.

Keeping in mind the specific character of the “British” sculptural Modernism of Epstein’s generation, it should, perhaps, come as little surprise that, in *Father and Son*, Gosse sought to distance himself from the mid-Victorian Puritanism of his father’s generation and to align himself with Primitivism and with something which, retrospectively at least, looks like Vorticism. I make this claim because when faced with his father’s Puritanism, Gosse repeatedly characterized his rebellious youthful self in positive, Primitivist terms, describing his brain as “savage and undeveloped,” and noting how his belief in natural magic “approached the ideas of a savage at a very early stage of development.”<sup>[11]</sup> In addition, describing the “distressing visions” he suffered from as a child, Gosse “anticipated” a Vorticist rhetoric subsequently elaborated in *Blast* and elsewhere. He recalled how, after a particularly traumatic incident, his nightmares returned “with a force and expansion” due to his “increased maturity.” He had hardly laid his head on his pillow, when it seemed as if he was

taking part in a mad gallop through space. Some force, which had tight hold of me, so that I felt myself an atom in its grasp, was hurrying me on, over an endless slender bridge, under which on either side a loud torrent rushed at a vertiginous depth below. At first our helpless flight, - for I was bound hand and foot like Mazeppa, - proceeded in a straight line, but presently it began to curve, and we raced and roared along, in what gradually became a monstrous vortex, reverberant with noises, loud with light, while, as we proceeded, enormous concentric circles engulfed us, and wheeled above and about us. It seemed as if we, - I, that is, and the undefined force which carried me, - were pushing feverishly on towards a goal which our whole concentrated energies were bent on reaching, but which a frenzied despair in my heart told me we never could reach, yet the attainment of which alone could save us from destruction. Far away, in the pulsation of the great luminous whorls, I could just see that goal, a ruby-coloured point waxing and waning, and it bore, or to be exact it consisted of, the letters of the word  
C A R M I N E.<sup>[12]</sup>

In addition to the monstrous vortex itself, much about his passage resonates with Vorticism: the violence, formal geometry, concentrated and pulsing energy, vocabulary of force and space, and interest in molecular physics. And yet, viewed from the other end of the long nineteenth century, the passage is, perhaps, as Romanticist as Vorticist. After all, Gosse is not here on a tube, bus, plane, or train, but on horseback; his is a mad *gallop* through space. He also compares himself to the naked, horse-bound, titular hero of Byron’s 1819 poem.<sup>[13]</sup> The slender bridge under which the loud torrent rushes at a vertiginous depth echoes any number of late-eighteenth-century Gothic novels or treatises on the sublime. The scene is not underpinned by a masculinist, Modernist *jouissance*, but by a frenzied despair, the passage not so much climaxing as ending, with deliberate bathos, in the word “carmine”: the colored paint, we learn later, that represents, for Gosse, the height of luxury and indulgence.

We might be tempted, then, within the context of an early twenty-first-century art historiography, to emphasize Gosse’s Modernist credentials. However, because the Modernist bias of particularly British sculptural history needs to be challenged further, and in the context of an interdisciplinary Victorian studies with its own leaning towards literature and science, the

second part of this essay considers some of the potential *continuities* between Gosse's turn-of-the-century writings on sculptural history and his father's mid-Victorian marine biology.

### Staging the Mid-Victorian

Although what it meant to be modern altered significantly between 1894 and 1907, Gosse always meant his writing to sound contemporary and to endorse the modern. To ensure this, as we have already seen, he repeatedly emphasized the modernity of his own generation and aesthetic position, and, as I now demonstrate, he set up, as straw men, his father specifically, and the mid-Victorian period more generally. For example, Gosse's 1894 account of the New Sculpture characterized contemporary sculpture as "startling and revolutionary," a "wholly new force" that was more "vital and nervous" than anything that preceded it within British sculpture.<sup>[14]</sup> And Gosse elaborated in some detail the qualities that distinguished the New Sculpture "from what it superseded."<sup>[15]</sup> He emphasized the distinctive "series of surfaces, varied and appropriate, all studied from nature."<sup>[16]</sup> He encouraged viewers to pay attention to the "freshness and harmony of lines," the "tenderness in the articulations of the joints," the "combination of virility and grace," and the "fresh and picturesque" attitudes and expressions.<sup>[17]</sup> He also commended the New Sculptors' "progress in technical perfection,"<sup>[18]</sup> and noted the "effect of colour on the eye of the spectator"<sup>[19]</sup> as well as the "fresh concentration on the intellectual powers of a branch of art which had been permitted to grow dull and inanimate."<sup>[20]</sup>

To emphasize the self-consciously modern character of the New Sculpture, Gosse influentially caricatured, for future historians of British art, the work of the mid-Victorians. He noted that, by 1872, the "very thought" that English sculpture was "ridiculous" was a journalistic cliché, with every newspaper "annually lift[ing] a hoof and kick[ing] the sculptors; while, by the early 1870s, British sculpture had "sunken . . . to the lowest depth of desuetude," being "practically dead."<sup>[21]</sup> Gosse also characterized mid-century sculpture as "insipid," "dull," "cold and lifeless," consisting of "simpering allegories" and "waxen mythologies."<sup>[22]</sup> In addition, he singled out the work of mid-century favorites John Henry Foley (1818–74), who, "hankering after 'breadth,'" apparently "thought nothing of surface";<sup>[23]</sup> and John Gibson (1790–1866) who, being in the "purely conventional tradition" of Antonio Canova (1757–1822), struggled to preserve the master's "dignity" and "polish" as it passed into "feebler hands and emptier heads."<sup>[24]</sup>

In response to such feeble, repressed, mid-Victorian neoclassical sculptural aesthetics, Gosse emphasized his own comparatively liberated, tactile relation to the New Sculpture. He suggested that viewers could feel the artists' "thumb-touch" in their work,<sup>[25]</sup> and that spectators could recognize an "individuality of touch"<sup>[26]</sup>—such that Edward Onslow Ford's (1852–1901) was initially "timid and uncertain,"<sup>[27]</sup> while William Goscombe John's (1860–1952) hand seemed to have been "slightly checked by a too-conscientious anxiety."<sup>[28]</sup> Gosse also emphasized the way in which lost-wax casts reproduced "the smallest touch made by the sculptor on the clay."<sup>[29]</sup>

Gosse's strategic critique of the mid-Victorian period was, if anything, only more extreme by the time that he published *Father and Son* in 1907. There, he ridiculed the Puritanism and Philistinism of the Plymouth Brethren community in which he grew up, especially when it came to sculpture. Indeed, perhaps the single most famous and oft-cited passage from the book points to the problem of iconoclasm. The scenes I am referring to begin with Gosse

discovering, in his recently arrived, new stepmother's collection, a "gaudy gift-book of some kind, containing a few steel engravings of statues."<sup>[30]</sup> These "attracted" Gosse "violently" because he had "never seen so much as a representation of a work of sculpture" until this point.<sup>[31]</sup> Gazing on "Apollo with his proud gesture, Venus in her undulations," Diana's "kirtled skirt," and "Jupiter voluminously bearded," and able to find very little information regarding them, Gosse asked his father about these old Greek gods. P. H. Gosse's answer was "direct and disconcerting."<sup>[32]</sup>

He said—how I recollect the place and time, early in the morning, as I stood beside the window in our garish breakfast-room—he said that the so-called gods of the Greeks were the shadows cast by the vices of the heathen, and reflected their infamous lives; "it was for such things as these that God poured down brimstone and fire on the Cities of the Plain, and there is nothing in the legends of these gods, or rather devils, that it is not better for a Christian not to know." His face blazed white with Puritan fury as he said this—I see him now in my mind's eye, in his violent emotion. You might have thought that he had himself escaped with horror from some Hellenic hippodrome.<sup>[33]</sup>

Gosse's account here is spitefully insinuating. While the "garish breakfast-room" emphasizes his mid-century father's poor taste, Gosse junior's claim that his father seemed to have escaped with horror from a Hellenic hippodrome suggests that P. H. Gosse was protesting too hard, and was more familiar with the Greek pleasures his son was just waking up to than he was letting on.<sup>[34]</sup> At this "aesthetic juncture," Gosse junior revealed, he was "drawn into what was really rather an extraordinary circle of incidents,"<sup>[35]</sup> which is worth quoting in full.

Among the "Saints" in our village there lived a shoemaker and his wife, who had one daughter, Susan Flood. She was a flighty, excited young creature, and lately, during the passage of some itinerant revivalists, she had been "converted" in the noisiest way, with sobs, gasps and gurglings. When this crisis passed, she came with her parents to our meetings, and was received quietly enough to the breaking of bread. But about the time I speak of, Susan Flood went up to London to pay a visit to an unconverted uncle and aunt. It was first whispered amongst us, and then openly stated, that these relatives had taken her up to the Crystal Palace (fig. 3), where, in passing through the Sculpture Gallery, Susan's sense of decency had been so grievously affronted, that she had smashed the naked figures with the handle of her parasol, before her horrified companions could stop her. She had, in fact, run amok among the statuary and had, to the intense chagrin of her uncle and aunt, very worthy persons, been arrested and brought before a magistrate, who dismissed her with a warning to her relations that she had better be sent home to Devonshire and "looked after." Susan Flood's return to us, however, was a triumph; she had no sense of having acted injudiciously or unbecomingly; she was ready to recount to everyone, in vague and veiled language, how she had been able to testify for the Lord "in the very temple of Belial," for so she poetically described the Crystal Palace. She was, of course, in a state of unbridled hysteria, but such physical explanations were not encouraged amongst us, and the case of Susan Flood awakened a great deal of sympathy.<sup>[36]</sup>



Fig. 3, Philip Henry Delamotte, *Greek Court Crystal Palace, Sydenham, Greater London*, ca. 1859. Photograph. Photograph courtesy English Heritage, Swindon. [\[larger image\]](#)

Now, as Gosse acknowledged, his father, unlike the majority of the Plymouth Brethren, did not fully endorse such juvenile iconoclasm. Indeed, although Edmund does not mention it, P. H. Gosse was the author of two illustrated books on sculpture: *The Monuments of Ancient Egypt and their Relation to the Word of God* (1847), and *Assyria: Her Manners and Customs, Arts and Arms Restored from her Monuments* (1852), both written for, and published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.<sup>[37]</sup> What *Father and Son* does suggest is that Gosse junior's subsequent turn to sculpture was, nevertheless, an act of Oedipal rebellion. For example, in an earlier scene, Gosse revealed that, although he could not recall why he was "pertinacious on the subject" of idolatry as a child, having been rather puzzled by the concept, he "pinned down" his father, like a specimen, to the "categorical statement" that idolatry consisted in "praying to anyone or anything but God himself."<sup>[38]</sup> One morning, therefore, when his parents were safely out of the house, an increasingly experimental and rebellious Gosse junior prepared for a "great act of heresy" by praying to a wooden chair.<sup>[39]</sup> Anxiously awaiting the meteorological change that would signal divine disapproval, and breathing the "high sharp air of defiance," he was "very much alarmed, but still more excited" when precisely *nothing* happened in relation to his "impious and wilful action."<sup>[40]</sup> As a result, Gosse reported, his faith in both the existence of God and his father's authority crumbled a little further.<sup>[41]</sup>

Gosse's subsequent, highly embodied sculptural interests did not, however, emerge *ex nihilo*. In *Father and Son*, as we have seen, he suggested that it was his stepmother, rather than his father, who was at least partly responsible for bringing to light his later interest in art. Gosse junior thus documented how, on her arrival in 1860, his stepmother "brought a flavour of the fine arts with her," and a "kind of aesthetic odour, like that of lavender, clung to her as she moved."<sup>[42]</sup> His mother had studied under the Norwich School landscape painters, and her sketchbooks may not have been "exciting art," Gosse condescendingly recalled, "but it was, so far as it went, in its lady-like reserve, the real thing."<sup>[43]</sup> And, as such, Gosse suggested, his stepmother's passion for painting interrupted the puritanical philistinism of a physically repressed father for whom "certain senses" were simply absent.<sup>[44]</sup> Indeed, according to Gosse, his father "saw everything through a lens," and offered his son only the most intermittent, "shy and furtive caresses."<sup>[45]</sup>

Other, equally telling moments in *Father and Son*, however, reveal that Gosse's attitude to the mid-Victorian period was not as straightforwardly critical as it first appears. For example, he admitted that he was intensely nostalgic for the Devonshire coast where he spent his youth. Indeed, writing from "these twentieth-century days," when a "careful municipality" had "studded the down with rustic seats," "shut its dangers in with railings," "cut a winding carriage-drive round the curves of the cove down to the shore," and "planted sausage-laurels at intervals in clearings made for that aesthetic purpose," Gosse reported turning from his old Oddicombe home, now "smartened and secured, with its hair in curl-papers and its feet in patent-leathers," in "anger and disgust, and could almost have wept."<sup>[46]</sup> That was because he could still remember the "blaze of sunshine" and "descents of slippery grass to moons of snow-white shingle, cold to the bare flesh" and a "sea that was like sapphire" that accompanied his "glorious" childhood games among "wild boys on the margin of the sea": a happy, Henry Scott-Tuke-like (1858–1929) clan "climbing, bathing, boating, lounging, chattering, all the hot day through."<sup>[47]</sup> Gosse could also recall, from the same period, a mid-Victorian marine ecology beloved by both father and son that was similarly "long over and done with."<sup>[48]</sup> The "very thin and fragile" "ring of living beauty drawn about our shores" that "thronged with beautiful sensitive forms of life" was now, Gosse mourned, "profaned," "emptied" and "vulgarised" by an "army of 'collectors'" who had "ravaged every corner" of the "fairy paradise."<sup>[49]</sup>

In concluding this section, I want to draw particular attention to these last two, related erotic and nostalgic scenes because, considered together, they give us the first, strong indication that, once seen from a mid-Victorian cultural-historical—rather than a Modernist art historiographical—perspective, Gosse's sculptural criticism might be understood as a "queer variety" of his father's mid-century marine biology, as I now demonstrate.<sup>[50]</sup>

### **A Queer Variety of Natural History? A Portrait of the Sculptural Critic as a Young Naturalist**

Unlike *Father and Son*, Gosse's earlier, and considerably less-well-known *Life of Philip Henry Gosse* (1890) is not primarily concerned with characterizing Gosse senior as an abusive parent.<sup>[51]</sup> Indeed, there are perhaps just two sentences in the more hagiographic *Life* in which Gosse junior suggests the unhappiness of his childhood: when he describes himself as a "helpless and unwelcome" newborn "apparition" in his parents' home;<sup>[52]</sup> and when he confesses the "deplorable" effects of his father's solitary tendencies, the result of a "conviction that his duty lay in . . . isolation."<sup>[53]</sup> And it is worth returning to the *Life*, and especially to the two decades after 1850—in which P. H. Gosse published, in quick succession, and in addition to his S.P.C.K. volumes on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments, *The Ocean: A Naturalist's Rambles on the Devonshire Coast* (1853), his *Handbook to the Aquarium* (1854), his *Evenings at a Microscope* (1859), and *A Year at the Shore* (1865). I make this claim for three reasons. Firstly, because this was the period in which Edmund was his father's "constant, and generally his only companion."<sup>[54]</sup> Secondly, because this was the time in which P. H. Gosse's writings on marine biology, in Edmund's words, "probably reached a more varied circle of readers" than at any other moment.<sup>[55]</sup> And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, because this was evidently the period in which Edmund began to formulate his subsequent sculptural criticism—and these were plausibly the texts through which he did so.

Traditionally, when it comes to considering the inter-relation of Edmund and his father's polymath projects, scholars cite the fact that Edmund contributed to P. H. Gosse's 1859 book,



*Actinologia Britannica* “not merely a new species, but a new genus to the British fauna.”<sup>[56]</sup> This was *phellia murocinta* which Edmund found on June 29, 1859, as he reported in *Father and Son*.<sup>[57]</sup> And, according to this, later “Modernist” Gosse, who preferred to emphasize his contribution to his father’s research than acknowledging P. H. Gosse’s influence on his sculptural criticism, his father was sorry that “so fair a swallow should have made no biological summer in after-life.”<sup>[58]</sup>

A comparative, close reading of Gosse’s 1894 articles on “The New Sculpture” in relation to the *Life of P. H. Gosse* of four years earlier, however, tells a different story, one in which readers may recognize Gosse’s sculptural criticism, as I have already briefly indicated, as a “queer variety” of his father’s marine biology. This is true at a number of textual levels. That is because Gosse repeatedly emphasizes the New Sculptors’ “naturalism” and scientific credentials.<sup>[59]</sup> He describes their “delightful and complete science”;<sup>[60]</sup> their “close study of natural forms,”<sup>[61]</sup> and their “attention to anatomy.”<sup>[62]</sup> He emphasizes their “minute study of nature” combined with a careful “selection of type”;<sup>[63]</sup> their “superior science and conscientiousness”;<sup>[64]</sup> and their “series of surfaces, varied and appropriate, all closely studied from nature.”<sup>[65]</sup> Gosse also points to the New Sculptors’ commitment to depicting “that detail which exists in nature.”<sup>[66]</sup> Indeed, Gosse argued, the “final word” about the various “specimens” that comprised the New Sculpture<sup>[67]</sup> was that their “careful, sensitive modelling” embodied a “close and reverent observation of nature.”<sup>[68]</sup>

Such phrases resonate not just with P. H. Gosse’s broader empirical method, but also with his more specific natural theological stance. Firstly, because of Edmund’s dual, scientific-illustrative emphasis on the New Sculpture’s minute detail and selection of idealized, representative types. And secondly, because of his emphasis on the New Sculptors’ “delight” in their natural “specimens”; an aesthetic pleasure that echoes P. H. Gosse’s natural theological presupposition that God, like an artist, had created beauty in the world for humanity’s aesthetic delectation, beginning with the bodies of Adam and Eve, modelled in clay.

In addition, Gosse’s New Sculptural writings also repeatedly employ coastal and tidal metaphors. For example, Gosse described the declining vigor of English sculpture in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century as being akin to “dying rivulets fast disappearing into the sand.”<sup>[69]</sup> He noted that, after a period in Paris, English sculptor Thomas MacLean (1845–91) “allowed the psychological moment to pass, and the tide swept by him.”<sup>[70]</sup> Gosse also characterized the annual swing from impressive to disappointing Royal Academy exhibitions, in the mid-1880s, in terms of the “retreating wave of each alternate year.”<sup>[71]</sup> Now, such metaphors might initially seem commonplace, but they resonated deeply in the mid-Victorian, natural-theological matrix of Gosse’s psyche. For example, in *Father and Son*, Gosse recalled that “collecting, examining and describing marine creatures”<sup>[72]</sup> from the “shallow tidal pools”<sup>[73]</sup> in the “limestone rocks”<sup>[74]</sup> of the Devon sea-shore formed a “very prominent part” of his life in the period between 1858 and 1879;<sup>[75]</sup> a period, curiously, not ending until the year 1879, the year his attention turned to the New Sculpture, according to his 1894 account of the movement.<sup>[76]</sup>

In addition, the persistently anthropomorphic character of P. H. Gosse’s marine biological writings, and his tendency to employ sculptural metaphors and techniques in his coastal fieldwork and texts, suggest that Edmund was protesting too hard when he claimed that his

father was indifferent to the human form. For example, in the *Life*, Gosse suggested that his father “regarded man rather as a blot upon the face of nature, than as its highest and most dignified development.”<sup>[77]</sup> Edmund also contended that P. H. Gosse’s attention was “scarcely directed to humanity”; that Gosse senior preferred landscapes in which “nothing which suggested human life was visible”; and that he was “absolutely unable to copy a human face or figure.”<sup>[78]</sup> In addition, Edmund suggested that, within the many thousand illustrations that his father completed, not one attempted to “depict the human form”; that humanity was “the animal” Gosse senior “studied less than any other,” and “understood most imperfectly”; and that P. H. Gosse’s “appreciation of the plastic arts, notwithstanding his training and his skill, was very limited.”<sup>[79]</sup> Indeed, choosing to actively ignore his father’s two volumes on ancient Assyrian and Egyptian monuments, Edmund went so far as to assert that his father was “positively blind to sculpture,” to the “presence of which his attention had to be forcibly drawn, if it was to be drawn at all”; and that if P. H. Gosse went to the Royal Academy, his interest was “invariably in the direction of detecting errors or the reverse in the drawing of plants, animals or heavenly bodies.”<sup>[80]</sup>

Such sentences might again encourage us to imagine that Edmund’s turn to Royal Academy sculptural criticism represented an Oedipal flight in the face of his father’s supposed puritan iconoclasm, or sought to compensate for P. H. Gosse’s disinterest in the human form. However, Gosse senior’s marine biology, like his son’s sculptural criticism, as I have just briefly indicated, is everywhere characterized by sculptural techniques and similes, and by a shared love of sculpted forms and carved and patinated sculptural surfaces. I make this claim because just as Edmund repeatedly emphasized his pleasure in the precise detail and sensitive patination of New-Sculptural lost-wax bronzes, describing how he had felt “across the surface of the patina” the “very breath” of the sculptor,<sup>[81]</sup> so had his father earlier run his fingers along metallic sucking fish, “not covered with scales, but a sort of long flat prickles, concealed under the skin, but causing a roughness when rubbed against the grain.”<sup>[82]</sup> Like Edmund’s later sculptural criticism, which took pleasure, as we have seen, in modelled and carved “surfaces, varied and appropriate, all closely studied from nature,”<sup>[83]</sup> P. H. Gosse was particularly alive to the stony surfaces of the shoreline and of creatures with exoskeletons: to the “singular variety and beauty” of the surface of corals;<sup>[84]</sup> to the “dark-brown spots and mottlings” of crabs;<sup>[85]</sup> to the texture of “sand, spotted with shells”;<sup>[86]</sup> to rock pools of which “every part of its surface is seen, on close examination, to be studded with” polyps; and to rocks “covered with brainstones of vast size, mushroom-corals, and other madrepoes, of the most grotesque forms” (fig. 4).<sup>[87]</sup> Anticipating his son’s pleasure in carved stones, P. H. Gosse also emphasized the pleasure of looking at “grey, discoloured”<sup>[88]</sup> and “honeycombed” marble-like limestone;<sup>[89]</sup> at “perforated caverns”;<sup>[90]</sup> and at the surfaces of “rough cliff[s]” and the “rocky margin[s] and sides” of rock pools;<sup>[91]</sup> at “the broken rock-work of the promontory or miniature archipelago”; at “the retreating seaward surface of mimic cliffs”;<sup>[92]</sup> at “rough leprous-barnacled” rocks;<sup>[93]</sup> at the again marble-like “pellucid white” cyclopediae, which shone brightly in the light “like a polished egg”;<sup>[94]</sup> and at the “silecious skeletons” of sponges.<sup>[95]</sup>

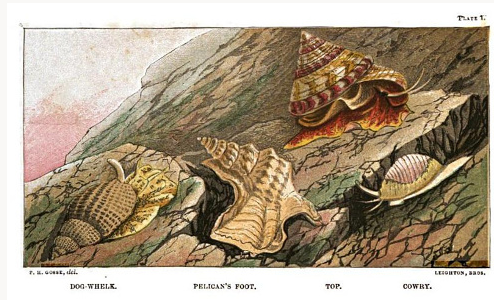


Fig. 4, Philip Henry Gosse, Plate I (Dog-Whelk, Pelican's Foot, Top, and Cowry), *A Year at the Shore* (London, 1865). Chromolithograph. [\[larger image\]](#)

There is also, perhaps, an interesting relation to be teased out between Gosse's description, in "The New Sculpture," of Henry Hugh Armstead's (1828–1905) chiselled marble surfaces, "worked up to the highest pitch of delicacy" and "full of individual detail"—marble surfaces not incidentally comprised of the post-mortem remains of millions of sea creatures<sup>[96]</sup>—and P. H. Gosse's similarly minute and pleasurable aesthetic examination of the "worm-eaten surface of the rock above and below the brim" of a tidal pool in which he was searching for the "roughest and most corroded points of rock, those offering the best refuge for a variety of creatures," before himself "chisel[ing] off fragments as low down in the water as he could," and plunging them into salt water jars in which they could be transported home so that he and Edmund could spread them out "face upward, in shallow pans of clean sea-water," and, once the "dirt had subsided" and the "living creatures . . . recovered their composure," could collectively investigate the "minute surface[s]" of these relief like forms, leaning over them until "everything was within an inch or two" of their eyes (fig. 5).<sup>[97]</sup> Those "minute surfaces," you will recall, also recur, in almost exactly the same phrase, in Gosse's 1894 account of "The New Sculpture."<sup>[98]</sup>



Fig. 5, Henry Hugh Armstead, *The Courage of David: David and the Lion*, 1880. Marble. Now lost but formerly in the Wellington Barracks, Guards Chapel, London. Reproduced in M.H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of Today* (London: Cassell, 1901): 17. [\[larger image\]](#)

I draw particular attention to this anecdote because it indicates further that father and son shared a love of stony sculpted surfaces and forms, both relief and fully three-dimensional, and, moreover, because it reveals how closely P. H. Gosse's marine biological methods paralleled the sculptural methods of modelling and carving that so preoccupied his son. For example, according to Edmund, his father was equally manually adept at collecting algae, which would "come away under the pressure" of his fingers, like modelling clay; and at using a hammer and chisel, like a carver, at "chipping off just as much of the rocky support" as the roots of seaweeds required, "and no more," and whose "skilful blows would bring away the fragment of the rock, with its atoms of animated jelly adhering to it, uninjured and almost unruffled."<sup>[99]</sup> Again, like a good carver, Gosse senior was also an expert at selecting appropriate stones for his work. Thus, Edmund documented, "one important portion" of his father's coastal fieldwork consisted in

turning over the large flat stones in sequestered places. Great discretion was needed in selecting the right stones. Those which were too heavily set would contain nothing, resting too deeply to admit the sea to their lower surfaces. Those which were balanced too lightly would be found deserted, because too frequently disturbed. But the stone sagaciously chosen as being flat enough, and heavy enough, and yet not too heavy, would often display on its under surface a marvellous store of beautiful minute rarities—nudibranches that looked like tiny animated amethysts and topazes; unique little sea-anemones in the fissures; odd crabs, as flat as farthings, scuttling away in agitation; fringed worms, like bronzed cords, or strings dipped in verdigris, serpentine in and out of decrepit tufts of coralline.<sup>[100]</sup>

Various aspects of this description again resonate with Edmund's later pleasure at the New Sculpture. P. H. Gosse's comparison of the fringed worms with "bronzed cords, or strings dipped in verdigris" anticipates Edmund's interest in the varieties of bronze patination.<sup>[101]</sup> Gosse senior's description of "odd crabs, flat as farthings" anticipates his son's interest in the medals and coins of contemporary sculptors.<sup>[102]</sup> And P. H. Gosse's account of nudibranches as "minute rarities" that "looked like tiny animated amethysts and topazes" brings to mind the mixed-media works by New Sculptors that Gosse admired, such as Alfred Gilbert's polychrome *St. George* of ca.1895, which is similarly encrusted with shell-like armor, and which might, in this context, be understood to make semi-permanent, and to celebrate and to commemorate, the lost "fairy paradise" world of rock-pools thronged with "beautiful sensitive forms of life" that so enchanted P. H. Gosse and his son, and that, by 1907, were long gone.<sup>[103]</sup> The "submarine vision of dark rocks, speckled and starred with an infinite variety of colour, and streamed over by silken flags of royal crimson and purple" had been crushed forever, Gosse mourned, "under the rough paw of well-meaning, idle-minded" collectors.<sup>[104]</sup>

### **A Portrait of the Supposedly Puritan Naturalist as a Proto Aesthete**

P. H. Gosse's marine biological writings do not just resemble his son's sculptural criticism because of their shared interest in "sculptural" techniques, forms, and surfaces. Like Edmund's later sculptural criticism, with its repeated echoes of Walter Pater's famously sensuous 1873 "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*,<sup>[105]</sup> there is something distinctively and erotically Aestheticist about many of Gosse senior's most famous mid-century writings on marine biology, and about the accounts of him Edmund provided in the *Life*. For instance, in a letter to his son, P. H. Gosse himself characterized, as one of many "samples which ought to make your mouth water," the

“tenderest pea-green” and “chocolate purple” colors of a butterfly’s wings; a feast for palettes painterly and gustatory.<sup>[106]</sup> More erotically, Gosse senior characterized, in suggestively vaginal terms, some salty “clefts and fissures,” “half hidden by the waving tangles of purple weed”;<sup>[107]</sup> in suggestively clitoral language, some “minute orifices, from each of which projects a little fleshy polyp” which “contracts its arms and withdraws” on being touched;<sup>[108]</sup> and, in suggestively seminal terms, the way in which a “milky whiteness” pervaded “every part” of a rock pool, “slightly varying in intensity, arising from inconceivably numerous animalcules, so small as to be separately indistinguishable, but in their aggregation illuminating” its depths.<sup>[109]</sup>

In conceptualizing and contextualizing these scenes, we should also be imagining P. H. Gosse as a thoroughly embodied naturalist “fairly stripped,” and working “like a youth in the cold pools” of the of the Devonshire Coast;<sup>[110]</sup> jumping or stepping regularly “up to his chest into deep rock pools”;<sup>[111]</sup> and as a man whose skin was equally alive to the “dripping walls” of “small fissures and caverns.”<sup>[112]</sup> According to his son, Gosse senior was also a man who liked virginal, littoral spaces best if they remained “unrifled by the rude hands of man,”<sup>[113]</sup> who “nourished a jealous and almost whimsical affection” for his preferred pools,<sup>[114]</sup> and who would collect specimens for hours on end until he would “turn away at last” spent, “drenched almost to the skin,” “not satisfied, but exhausted almost to extinction,” a “violent revulsion” overtaking him “caused by the briny rain from the shaken curtains of the sea-weeds.”<sup>[115]</sup> In addition, by Edmund’s 1890 account, P. H. Gosse was a natural theologian—which is to say an Aesthete-naturalist—who was, like his more or less bisexual son, as entranced by “the *lady-like* appearance” of lace-winged flies<sup>[116]</sup> as by a “pet” male lobster: a “beautiful” and “very saucy and fierce” fellow who was “quite cock of the walk,” but who Gosse senior “put up with” because the “gentleman” was “such a beauty.”<sup>[117]</sup> And particularly revealing is Edmund’s description of his father finding the “under surfaces of the pebbles on Babbicombe beach singularly rich in those fantastic and gem-like creatures, the nudibranch mollusca.”<sup>[118]</sup> I draw attention to this last phrase because its description of the “gem-like” molluscs either tacitly recalls, if one is imagining Edmund writing in 1890—or curiously “anticipates,” if one imagines Edmund is employing free indirect discourse to catch his father’s idiom—Pater’s 1873 “Conclusion,” which famously encouraged its readers to seek not the “fruit of experience, but experience itself,” and to “burn always” with a “hard, gem-like flame.”<sup>[119]</sup> When it came to Pater, like father, like son.

### **Conclusion: Interdisciplinary Aestheticism, on or Around 1859, or 2015?**

Through a close reading of Gosse’s 1890 *Life of P. H. Gosse*, 1894 *Art Journal* articles on “The New Sculpture,” and the 1907 *Father and Son*, this essay has demonstrated the advantages of a Janus-faced approach to the revisionist historiography of Victorian sculpture, one engaging with both an early twenty-first-century Art History that is finally beginning to throw off its century-long allegiance to Modernism and to discover the delights of the mid-Victorian, as well as with an interdisciplinary Victorian studies that has, historically, been preoccupied with literary and scientific cultures, rather than the cultures of sculpture. And in concluding, I want to suggest that we conceptualize the history and *ecology* of British sculpture in the long nineteenth century as a temporal period and *biocultural* field characterized by intertextuality and by inter-generational and inter-species inter-relationship, by complex and simultaneous continuity and differentiation.<sup>[120]</sup> And what better model for such a subtly differentiated, inescapably enmeshed, inter-generational, inter-species, and interdisciplinary ecological and cultural-historical field could there be than the Gosse family, whose collective works encourage us to re-imagine interdisciplinary Aestheticism in 1859 (and in 2015) in just such a way, not just as a form

of proto-Modernism, but as a complex, polymath, mid-Victorian *environment*?<sup>[121]</sup> One comprising not only the vanguard literary and painterly works of the extended Rossetti circle, and a more-or-less-Protestant Oxford Movement that encouraged their congregations to relish in the supposedly “purely aesthetic” aspects of religious artefacts,<sup>[122]</sup> but also P. H. Gosse’s by turns paradigmatic and eccentric, empirical and imaginative, erotic and aesthetic, sculptural and natural-theological, marine biological experiences and treatises.

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## Notes

For David J. Getsy and Nicola Bown.

I am grateful to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation for the Conference Grant that enabled me to travel to the College Art Association in Dallas in 2008, where I first gave a version of this article as a paper.

[1] For a representative account, see Richard Cork, *Wild Thing: Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Gill* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2010), which argues that, around 1907, British sculpture was “ripe for a thoroughgoing overhaul” following the “decline” (12) of the New Sculpture in 1898–1901.

[2] For more, see Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); David J. Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877–1905* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004); and Fine Art Society, *Sir Alfred Gilbert and the New Sculpture* (London: Fine Art Society, n.d.).

[3] Ezra Pound, “The New Sculpture,” *Egoist*, February 16, 1914, 68. For more, see Sarah Victoria Turner, “Ezra Pound’s New Order of Artists: The ‘New Sculpture’ and the Critical Formation of a Sculptural Avant-Garde in Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” *Sculpture Journal* 21, no. 2 (2012): 9–22. See also Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[4] Recent, paradigmatic examples of the renewed interest in British sculpture across the period include Paula Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture: Native Genius Reaffirmed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Jason Edwards and Michael Hatt, eds., “Displaying Victorian Sculpture,” special issue of *Sculpture Journal* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2014); and Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt, eds., *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837–1901* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013). These return to the earlier, more synoptic example of Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983).

- [5] Edmund Gosse, "The New Sculpture, 1879–1894," *Art Journal* 56 (1894): 133–42, 199–203, 277–82, 306–11.
- [6] For more, see Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1976); Paul Edwards, *Blast: Vorticism 1914–1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Paul Edwards, *The Great London Vortex: Modernist Literature and Art* (Bath: Sulis, 2003); and Jonathan Black, ed., *Blasting the Future: Vorticism in Britain 1910–1920* (London: Philip Wilson, 2004).
- [7] For more on Gosse, see Evan Charteris, *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse* (London: Heinemann, 1931); and Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984).
- [8] From its first initially anonymous publication, *Father and Son* has rarely been out of print, with subsequent editions in 1913 (Heinemann), 1934 (OUP), 1958 (Heinemann), 1965 (Houghton Mifflin), 1970 (Heinemann Educational), 1974 (OUP), 1983 (Penguin Classics), and 2004 (OUP). In addition, the novel formed the inspiration for Dennis Potter's 1976 television drama *Where Adam Stood*, and for Peter Carey's popular 1988 novel *Oscar and Lucinda*, which won the Booker and Miles Franklin prizes in 1989, and was made into a successful 1997 film.
- [9] The centrality of these articles to the subsequent scholarship on late-Victorian sculpture is obvious from the title of the first, significant synoptic appraisal of late-Victorian sculpture: Beattie's *The New Sculpture* (1983). For further discussion of Gosse as a critic of sculpture, see Mark Stocker, "Edmund Gosse on Sculpture," *University of Leeds Review* 28 (1985–86): 283–310; Jason Edwards, "An Entirely Unimportant Deviation: Aestheticism and the Critical Location of the Statuette in Fin-de-Siècle England," *Sculpture Journal* 7 (2002): 58–69; Michael Hatt, "Near and Far: Hamo Thornycroft's *Mower* and the Homoerotics of Labour," *Art History* 26 (2003): 26–55; and Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 2–9, 65–73.
- [10] Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.* (London: Kegan Paul, 1890). For a profound recent assessment of P. H. Gosse, see Ann Thwaite, *Glimpses of the Wonderful: The Life of Philip Henry Gosse* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002).
- [11] Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son* (1907; London: Penguin, 1983), 58, 60.
- [12] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 132–33.
- [13] For more, see W. H. Marshall, "A Reading of Byron's *Mazeppa*," *Modern Language Notes* 76, no. 2 (1961): 120–24; and Mark Phillipson, "Alteration in Exile: Byron's *Mazeppa*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 58, no. 3 (2003): 308–12.
- [14] Gosse, "New Sculpture," 140.
- [15] *Ibid.*
- [16] *Ibid.*
- [17] *Ibid.*, 141–42.
- [18] *Ibid.*, 310.
- [19] *Ibid.*
- [20] *Ibid.*, 311.
- [21] *Ibid.*, 138.
- [22] *Ibid.*
- [23] *Ibid.*, 277. For more on Foley, see Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*, 104–36. For a revisionary, post-colonial reading, see Ronan Sheehan, *Foley's Asia* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1999).
- [24] Gosse, "New Sculpture," 138. For more on Gibson's changing nineteenth-century status, and a similar attempt to turn the clock back from Modernism to the mid- and early nineteenth century, see Jason Edwards, "'By Abstraction Springs Forth Ideal Beauty?': John Gibson's Modernity," in *Living with the Royal Academy: Artistic Ideals and Experiences in Britain, 1768–1848*, ed. Sarah Monks, Mark Hallett, and John Barrell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 195–220. For more on Gibson, see Roberto Ferrari, "Beyond Polychromy: John Gibson, the Roman School of Sculpture and the Modern Classical Body" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2013).
- [25] Gosse, "New Sculpture," 281.
- [26] *Ibid.*, 203.
- [27] *Ibid.*, 278. For more on Ford, see Jason Edwards, "In Focus: *The Singer* exhibited 1889 and *Applause* 1893 by Edward Onslow Ford," Tate, accessed April 28 2015, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/edward-onslow-ford>; and catalogue entries 7, 35, 79, 138 and 140–41 in Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*.
- [28] Gosse, "New Sculpture," 281. For more on John, see Fiona Pearson, *Goscombe John at the National Museum of Wales* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1979).

- [29] Gosse, "New Sculpture," 278.
- [30] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 204.
- [31] Ibid.
- [32] Ibid.
- [33] Ibid., 204–5.
- [34] Ibid.
- [35] Ibid., 205.
- [36] Ibid., 205–6.
- [37] These are available in full online at the Haitha Trust Digital Library.
- [38] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 66.
- [39] Ibid.
- [40] Ibid.
- [41] Ibid.
- [42] Ibid., 191.
- [43] Ibid.
- [44] Ibid., 123.
- [45] Ibid., 123, 160. For more on Gosse's stepmother, Eliza Brightwen, a renowned author herself, see W. H. Chesson, ed., *Eliza Brightwen: The Life and Thoughts of a Naturalist* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909).
- [46] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 100.
- [47] Ibid., 185. For more on Tuke, see Michael Hatt, "A Great Sight: Henry Scott Tuke and His Models," in *Models and Supermodels: The Artist's Model in Britain*, ed. Jane Desmarais, Martin Postle, and William Vaughan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 89–104; and Michael Hatt "Uranians and Imperialists," in *Art and the British Empire*, ed. Timothy Barringer, Douglas Fordham, and Geoffrey Quilley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).
- [48] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 125.
- [49] Ibid.
- [50] The phrase is Gosse's. Ibid., 50. For more on what a queer natural history might look like, see Bruce Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); and Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
- [51] Unlike *Father and Son*, the 1890 *Life* went to only one further, 1896, edition and remains out of print.
- [52] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 223.
- [53] Ibid., 83.
- [54] Ibid., 276.
- [55] Ibid., 177.
- [56] For example, Thwaite reports that "On 29th June 1859 Edmund Gosse, aged 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ , added a new genus to the British fauna: *Phellia Muocinta*, the walled corklet." Thwaite, *Glances of the Wonderful*, 39.
- [57] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 126–27.
- [58] Ibid.
- [59] Gosse, "New Sculpture," 200.
- [60] Ibid., 278.
- [61] Ibid., 203.
- [62] Ibid., 281.
- [63] Ibid., 277.
- [64] Ibid., 200.
- [65] Ibid., 140.
- [66] Ibid., 311.



- [67] Ibid., 278.
- [68] Ibid., 310.
- [69] Ibid., 138.
- [70] Ibid., 143. For more on Maclean, see the entry in the *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851–1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011, accessed January 12, 2015, <http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/>.
- [71] Gosse, “New Sculpture,” 282.
- [72] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 114.
- [73] Ibid., 123.
- [74] Ibid.
- [75] Ibid.
- [76] Gosse, “New Sculpture,” 138.
- [77] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 349–50.
- [78] Ibid.
- [79] Ibid.
- [80] Ibid.
- [81] Edmund Gosse, “The Place of Sculpture in Daily Life: II: Sculpture in the House,” *Magazine of Art* 18 (1895), 370–71.
- [82] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 120.
- [83] Gosse, “New Sculpture,” 140.
- [84] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 174–75.
- [85] Ibid., 117.
- [86] Ibid., 119.
- [87] Ibid.
- [88] Ibid., 146.
- [89] Ibid., 253.
- [90] Ibid.
- [91] Ibid., 237.
- [92] Ibid., 286–87.
- [93] Ibid., 311.
- [94] Ibid., 168.
- [95] Ibid., 245.
- [96] For an important account of non-human agencies within an otherwise still dominantly anthropocentric humanities and social sciences, see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010). For related suggestions of animal agency and presence within the specific context of Victorian sculpture, see my catalogue entries on William Coombe Sanders and on Alfred Stevens, in Droth, Edwards and Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*, 285–87, 359.
- [97] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 126–27. For more on Armstead, see catalogue entries 44, 71, 79, 99 and 144 of Droth, Edwards and Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*. Armstead’s work may also be particularly resonant in the context of this essay since Gosse thought some of Armstead’s reliefs had a “curiously Assyrian look” (Gosse, *Father and Son*, 201); an interest in Assyrian sculpture shared, as we have seen, by P. H. Gosse.
- [98] Gosse, “New Sculpture,” 277.
- [99] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 246, 287.
- [100] Ibid., 286.
- [101] Ibid.
- [102] For Gosse’s views on Victorian coins and medals, see Gosse, “Place of Sculpture,” 370. For more on coins and medals as pieces of relief sculpture, see Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*, 76–101.
- [103] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 125.

- [104] Ibid. For more on Gilbert's *St George*, see Jason Edwards *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism: Gilbert Amongst Whistler, Wilde, Leighton, Pater and Burne-Jones* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 176–89; Getsy, *Body Doubles*, 87–119; and Droth's reading of the figure in Droth, Edwards, and Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious*, 374–77.
- [105] For more, see Edwards, "Unimportant Deviation," 58–70. For a bravura, synoptic reading of Pater's responses to sculpture, see Lene Ostermark-Johansen, *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).
- [106] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 314. For a similar reading of oral aesthetics in the work of another, supposedly repressed Victorian artist, William Etty, see Jason Edwards "Queer and Now: On Etty's *Autobiography* (1849) and *Male Nude with Arms Up-Stretched* (c.1830)," in *William Etty: Art and Controversy*, ed. Sarah Burnage, Mark Hallett and Laura Turner (York: York Museums Trust, 2011), esp. 94–95. Both are inspired by Michael Moon, "Oralia: Hunger for Women's Performances in Joseph Cornell's Boxes and Diaries," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8 no. 2 (1996), 39–59.
- [107] Gosse, *Life of Philip Henry Gosse*, 119.
- [108] Ibid., 174–76.
- [109] Ibid.
- [110] Ibid., 310.
- [111] Ibid., 240–41.
- [112] Ibid.
- [113] Ibid., 307.
- [114] Ibid., 238.
- [115] Ibid., 287.
- [116] Ibid., 78. Emphasis in the original.
- [117] Ibid., 312.
- [118] Ibid., 238.
- [119] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 152.
- [120] For a deliciously queer account of such a "nature-culture," see Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- [121] For enthrallingly intelligent and highly generative readings of the myriad ways in which Aestheticism powerfully anticipates Modernism, see David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England 1848–1914* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004); Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: The Art of John Everett Millais* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); and Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).
- [122] Gosse, *Father and Son*, 92.

## Illustrations



Fig. 1, Anonymous, *Jacob Epstein in his studio with a plaster cast of Dancing Girl*, commissioned for the British Medical Association Building, London, ca. 1907. Photograph. Tate Enterprises, Courtesy Leeds Museums & Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive). [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Anonymous, *Philip Henry Gosse with his son Edmund*, 1857. Photograph. Frontispiece to the first edition of *Father and Son* (London: William Heinemann, 1907). [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Philip Henry Delamotte, *Greek Court Crystal Palace, Sydenham, Greater London, ca. 1859*. Photograph. Photograph courtesy English Heritage, Swindon. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Philip Henry Gosse, Plate I (Dog-Whelk, Pelican's Foot, Top, and Cowry), *A Year at the Shore* (London, 1865). Chromolithograph. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Henry Hugh Armstead, *The Courage of David: David and the Lion*, 1880. Marble. Now lost but formerly in the Wellington Barracks, Guards Chapel, London. Reproduced in M.H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and Sculptors of Today* (London: Cassell, 1901): 17. [\[return to text\]](#)