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Helen Keller

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Helen Keller

Some things Teacher wouldn't say,
but Helen Keller wondered, between bursts
of finger and hand and grimace, about things
she couldn't ask, for she recalled the white days
of romps with the kitchen boy and knew
that something dangled there. All her books,
chaste classics carefully edited into Braille,
had nothing explicit spelled out, and so
now, as she waited in the cold foyer
of some Great House, the temptation to touch
hovered like a hummingbird in the room.
No one was there but the statue, man-sized,
in a niche, a Greek athlete with ivy in his hair.
Her hands reached down, found the pedestal,
the sandaled feet. She touched the ankles and
the bunched calves. She cupped his knee, clasped
the tension between heave and balance.
She leaned forward, held her forearms flush
against each thigh, fingertips poised
at the groin. Softly then, not to intrude,
as if invited to touch a dear acquaintance's face,
she set the heel of her hand against the stone curls,
and inch by incremental inch, caressed its shape.
Still unsatisfied, she bowed forward and, with her
unimpaired tongue, touched the salty stone until
the girl who spoke only water knew this element as well.

Donelle Ruwe is an Associate Professor of English at Northern Arizona University. She is Co-President of the 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writer's Association and a member of the Annual *Lion and the Unicorn* Award for Excellence in North American Poetry committee. Her chapbook *Another Message You Wish the Point of* received the 2006 Camber Press Poetry Chapbook Prize.