

Physical 'Wholeness' and 'Incompleteness' in Victorian Prosthesis Narratives

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I think you had better not go to look at him. He's a dreadful object—the worst I've seen. They cut off his legs close to the trunk, his arms at the shoulders, the nose and ears. He was such a handsome fellow, too! But I tell you, sir, now he's nothing better than a human bundle—a lump of breathing, useless flesh.

Ernest G. Henham, 'A Human Bundle' (1897).¹

Published in the metropolitan middle-class family magazine *Temple Bar* in 1897, Canadian-British author Ernest G. Henham's short story 'A Human Bundle' is a text that in hyperbolic terms perpetuates fears about physical 'loss'—anxieties central to nineteenth-century Western bodily discourse.² The quotation above, from a horrified medical student who has witnessed the shocking amputation of an unfortunate young man's legs, arms, nose, and ears suggests what the 'loss' of body parts meant in the nineteenth century. For the medical student, the patient is neither human nor useful but rather 'nothing better than a human bundle'.³ The student's harsh assessment is partly justified by the egregious nature of the medical procedures undertaken, but such a response raises a series of questions about what constituted physical 'normalcy' and difference in this period, which historical factors underpinned negative attitudes to 'non-normative' bodies, and to what extent the apparent hegemony of physical 'wholeness' was complicated by literary representations.

¹ Ernest G. Henham, 'A Human Bundle', *Temple Bar*, 111 (1897), 42–58.

² For more on *Temple Bar*, see Peter Blake, 'The Paradox of a Periodical: *Temple Bar* Magazine under the Editorship of George Augustus Sala (1860–1863)', *The London Journal*, 35 (2010), 185–209. For more on Henham's short story, see Ryan Sweet, "'A Human Bundle': The Disaggregated Other at the *Fin de Siècle*", *Victorian Review*, 40 (2014), 14–18.

³ Henham, 'A Human Bundle', 58.

This chapter will explore, on the one hand, how, as the concept of physical ‘normalcy’ became increasingly reinforced as culturally dominant, those who were perceived to be ‘missing’ body parts were marginalised. Buttressed by a post-Enlightenment belief that medicine and the emerging sciences could ‘fix’ the issue of bodily ‘loss’, what disability-studies scholars call the ‘medical model’ of disability, prostheses came to the fore as devices that could supposedly standardise aberrant bodies, making them aesthetically acceptable and ‘useful’. However, because prostheses were and remain devices that undermine binaries of self/other, organic/artificial, real/fake, and disabled/nondisabled, they also complicated the hegemony of organic ‘wholeness’. Their very production was mandated by preferences for physical ‘completeness’, but their implementation shifted definitions of what it meant to be ‘whole’. The conceptual complexity of the prosthetic provided material to fiction writers who responded to the growing dominance of physical ‘wholeness’. Using two fictional case studies that represent artificial-hand users, English poet, novelist, and playwright Robert Williams Buchanan’s ‘Lady Letitia’s Lilliput Hand’ (1862) and the lesser-known short-story writer T. Lockhart’s ‘Prince Rupert’s Emerald Ring’ (1895), I argue that literary representations of prostheses often simultaneously reinforced and complicated the hegemony of physical ‘completeness’.⁴ Such stories perpetuated fears of physical disaggregation while also bringing into question the efficacy of prostheticising. Though for reasons of concision I primarily investigate upper-limb ‘loss’ in relation to ableist discourses, it should be noted that related social attitudes also permeated, and at times

⁴ Robert Williams Buchanan, ‘Lady Letitia’s Lilliput Hand’, *Temple Bar*, 4, 5 (1862), 551–69, 114–31; T. Lockhart, ‘Prince Rupert’s Emerald Ring’, *Chambers’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts*, 12 (1895), 300–304. I would like to thank Pamela K. Gilbert for bringing Buchanan’s short story to my attention. The author attribution for ‘Prince Rupert’s Emerald Ring’ comes from Sue Thomas, ‘Chambers’s Journal: indexes to fiction’, *Victorian Fiction Research Guides* 17, victorianfictionresearchguides.org/chambers-journal/author-index/. Accessed 13 November 2018.

were problematised, in literary representations of other prosthesis users, including consumers of artificial legs, eyes, teeth, and hair.

This essay differs from much historical work on prosthesis in terms of attitude. Whether wittingly or not, some histories of prostheses fall into a trap of endorsing a 'medical model' of disability by over-optimistically celebrating the success of prostheses without paying attention to either the 'normative' forces that helped to popularise them or the transgressive sources that challenged 'normalcy's' social dominance. Studies by scholars such as Erin O'Connor, Edward Steven Slavishak, and Guy Hasegawa, for instance, are extremely useful for the wealth of historical detail that they provide, but at times they express somewhat idealistic views about artificial limbs, especially legs, without fully unpacking the problematic social mandate that, in part, brought about their proliferation in the nineteenth century.⁵ Failing to challenge the medical model in a manner that disability studies has shown is so important, these studies present prosthetic technologies as philanthropic, utilitarian, widely accepted and, at times, techno-utopian solutions to the perceived crisis of bodily 'loss' without considering, first, the social and environmental factors that made life difficult for those deemed to be 'missing' body parts; second, the extent to which prosthetists exploited and contributed to social demands for 'normalcy'; and, third, instances in which the efficacy of prostheticising was challenged in literary and cultural sources. This chapter thus adds complexity to our understanding of historical attitudes to prostheses by considering them in relation to the social mandate for physical 'wholeness', which encouraged the use of prostheses that could supposedly enable users to appear 'normal', and

⁵ Erin O'Connor, *Raw Material: Producing Pathology in Victorian Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Edward Steven Slavishak, 'Artificial Limbs and Industrial Workers' bodies in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh', *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003), 365–88; Guy R. Hasegawa, *Mending Broken Soldiers: The Union and Confederate Programs to Supply Artificial Limbs* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012).

highlighting how prostheses were not always fully endorsed by literary representations. As I show, transgressive sensation-fiction narratives, such as Buchanan's and Lockhart's short stories, though not entirely devoid of ableist inclinations, critiqued prostheses for not enabling haptic sensation and imaginatively explored the potential benefits of owning rather than hiding physical difference. With its focus on artificial hands, this chapter also adds to what is a relatively small body of work concerning the technological, cultural, and literary history of this form of prosthesis.⁶

To demonstrate how and why physical 'wholeness' became culturally dominant in the nineteenth century, and how literary representations of prosthetics coextensively endorsed and critiqued this model, this chapter is split into two. The first part surveys the historical factors underpinning the rise of physical 'normalcy'; the second part then turns to the transgressive representations of prostheses. Here I explore the motif of the uncanny artificial hand.

Part 1: Cultivating 'Completeness'

On a practical level, the perceived 'need' for prostheses in the nineteenth century can be partially attributed to not only an increased risk to bodily 'integrity' effected by industrialism but also developments in surgical practice, hygiene, and pain relief. Innovations, such as the implementation of soft-tissue- and transfixion-flap modifications to amputation techniques, the introduction of anaesthetics in the 1840s,

⁶ This chapter therefore builds on the following recent studies: Sue Zemka, '1822, 1845, 1869, 1893, and 1917: Artificial Hands', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net (2015), branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=sue-zemka-1822-1845-1869-1893-and-1917-artificial-hands. Accessed 13 November 2018; Clare Stainthorp, 'Activity and Passivity: Class and Gender in the Case of the Artificial Hand', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 45 (2017), 1-16; and Laurel Daen, "'A hand for the One-Handed': User-Inventors and the Market for Assistive Technologies in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Rethinking Modern Prostheses in Anglo-American Commodity Cultures, 1820-1939*, ed. by Claire L. Jones (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 93-113.

and the gradual adoption of Listerian principals of prophylactic antisepsis from the 1870s onwards, meant that more patients survived amputations and more survived with serviceable stumps suitable for being fitted with prosthetics.⁷ These developments coincided with and, to an extent responded to, a rise in injuries to limbs stemming from the growing use of industrial machinery in the workplace (which was often poorly regulated) and the increasing efficacy of firearms used on the battlefield.⁸ Part of the story of why prostheses became increasingly desirable commodities can thus be explained by the enlarged number of amputees effected by modernity in nineteenth-century Britain. But such a narrative only paints part of the picture. Also circulating in this period were an increasingly codified set of conventions that positioned physical 'normalcy' as positive and 'difference' as negative. To use David Bolt's terminology from his 'tripartite model of disability', we see the rise of 'normative positivism' (the privileging of 'normalcy', that is, ableism) and 'non-normative negativism' (the denigration of physical difference, that is, disablism).⁹ A range of social, medical, and legal factors enmeshed, placing considerable pressure on amputees to use prostheses to not only help perform certain bodily acts but also attempt to 'pass' as 'normal' so as to avoid discrimination and social marginalisation.¹⁰

⁷ John Kirkup, *A History of Amputations* (London: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 68–95.

⁸ See Jamie L. Bronstein, *Caught in the Machinery: Workplace Accidents and Injured Workers in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 8–9; and Kirkup, *A History of Amputations*, 49.

⁹ David Bolt, 'Not Forgetting Happiness: The Tripartite Model of Disability and its Application in Literary Criticism', *Disability and Society*, 30 (2015), 1103–17.

¹⁰ For more on disability and 'passing', see Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson (eds.), *Disability and Passing: Blurring the Lines of Identity* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013).

Theories of the body and mind

Though there has been considerable debate as to when a concept of physical ‘normalcy’ emerged, what disability-studies scholars tend to agree on is that the dominance of the ‘normal’ body is historically contingent, socially constructed, and, in societies where it is present, a pervasive marginalising force that works to the detriment of people whose bodies are perceived as ‘non-normative’.¹¹ Aligning with the work of Lennard J. Davis, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, and Lillian Craton, this chapter sees the nineteenth century as a seminal period in terms of the Western development of ‘normalcy’ as hegemonic.¹²

Among the most important and well-covered factors contributing to the rise of ‘normalcy’ in the nineteenth century was the development of bodily statistics. Belgian mathematician, statistician, astronomer, and sociologist Lambert Adolphe Quetelet’s concept of ‘*l’homme moyen*’, or ‘the average man’, became popular in England in the 1830s.¹³ Quetelet’s *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties* (1835) ‘calculated the mathematical norms for a range of physical and social categories[,] everything from head circumference to age of marriage to criminal tendency in order to

¹¹ Lennard J. Davis and Katherine J. Kudlick argue that ‘normalcy’ is a post-Enlightenment construction. See Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995); Lennard J. Davis, *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism, and Other Difficult Positions* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002); and Katherine J. Kudlick, ‘Disability History, Power, and Rethinking the Idea of “The Other”’, *PMLA*, 120 (2005), 557–61. Elsewhere, Ruth Bienstock Anolik and Ato Quayson separately argue that equivocal concepts to ‘normalcy’ have existed for much longer. See Ruth Bienstock Anolik (ed.), *Demons of the Body and Mind: Essays on Disability in Gothic Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 4; Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 20.

¹² Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* and *Bending Over Backwards*; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997); Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (New York, NY: Cambria Press, 2009).

¹³ Adolphe Quetelet, *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*, ed. by Thomas Simbert, trans. by R. Knox (Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1842).

draw a detailed portrait of the human norm'.¹⁴ For Quetelet, his average man constituted a kind of paradoxical ideal:

If the average man were completely determined, we might [...] consider him as the type of perfection; and every thing differing from his proportions or condition, would constitute deformity and disease; everything found dissimilar, not only as regarded proportion and form, but as exceeding the observed limits, would constitute a monstrosity.¹⁵

Quetelet's influential claims, which aligned 'normalcy' with health and difference with illness, evidence Bruce Haley's observations that Victorian understandings of health centred on the concept of 'wholeness'.¹⁶ The implications of Quetelet's work on 'non-normative' bodies are concisely noted by Davis: 'When we think of bodies, in a society when the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants'.¹⁷

Another significant context that contributed to the stigmatisation of physical 'loss' was the developing—though markedly controversial—scientific and philosophic interest in breaking down Cartesian boundaries between mind and body. This movement intersected with Quetelet's taxonomical work and built upon the principles germane to physiognomy and phrenology (popular sciences of assessing character by facial appearance and cranium shape respectively). The impact of such work further solidified the premium on physical 'completeness'. For instance, pre-eminent psychiatrist Henry Maudsley, a key figure in the drive to develop a physiological approach towards phenomena of mind (labelled by some as the psycho-physiology movement), bolstered links between body and mind in his 1874 work *Responsibility in Mental Disease*. For Maudsley, the brain was not the only physiological matter that could

¹⁴ Craton, *Victorian Freak Show*, 32.

¹⁵ Quetelet, *Treatise on Man*, 99.

¹⁶ Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 3–20.

¹⁷ Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 29.

influence the mind; for him, other parts of the body could affect the temperament of a subject in various ways. Associating physical deviances with specific moods and behaviours, Maudsley implied that those who displayed physical difference were also mentally aberrant, therefore legitimising the work of Quetelet. Endorsing a theory that suggested physical and mental degeneration are passed on to several generations, Maudsley and his affiliates supported a deterministic understanding of the human condition that stigmatised physical difference.¹⁸

This growing scientific interest in forging links between mind and body compounded with Quetelet's popularisation of social statistics, culminating in the publication of Cesare Lombroso's *Criminal Man* (1876), a work that famously attempted to demonstrate empirically a correlation between 'monstrousness' and criminality. Curiously, though Lombroso's text was never translated fully into English, its impact in Britain was profound.¹⁹ The deviant body thus became an increasingly centralised topic as anxieties about physical aberrancy and 'degeneration' grew. Such a process of marginalisation reinforced the dominance of physical 'wholeness'.

In addition to the feared criminal traits of those who displayed physical difference, the premium on physical 'integrity' was also bolstered by medical and lingering folkloric views of the aberrant body as a direct physical threat to 'normative' society. For instance, anxieties surrounding 'maternal impression'—the theory that if a pregnant woman witnessed a person with a deformity, the 'shock' caused by such an encounter could result in her unborn child bearing a similar 'affliction'—thrived in

¹⁸ For more on Maudsley and the implications of his work on heredity in regards disability, see Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 66, 68.

¹⁹ See Neil Davie, 'The Impact of Criminal Anthropology in Britain (1880–1918)', *Criminocorpus: Revue d'Histoire de La Justice, Des Crimes et Des Peines*, 4 (2010), <https://journals.openedition.org/criminocorpus/319>. Accessed 14 November 2018.

Victorian Britain. Linked to such fears, Martha Stoddard Holmes explains that for many Victorians, 'any physical impairment had the potential to be perceived as transmissible by contact; by miasmatic air; by a combination of contact, environment, and individual constitution; or perhaps simply by the social class into which one was born'.²⁰ The sheer variety of explanations listed by Holmes reveals the heightened level of anxiety that surrounded disability in terms of heritable and contagious risk.

Legal and social factors

In addition to the various scientific and medical developments that buttressed 'normative positivism' and 'non-normative negativism', several important legal and social changes also contributed. Linked to Quetelet's drive for standardisation, another event of the 1830s that further stimulated anxieties surrounding physical difference was the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. The new system sent able-bodied men seeking relief to the workhouse while providing limited out-relief to those deemed 'deserving'—that is, those perceived 'unable' to work, including the young, the elderly, and the disabled. Much discussion about the extent to which the unwaged disabled were 'deserving' of relief perpetuated as a result. The act thus brought public attention to the ability of aberrant bodies, the classifying of such bodies, and an association of physical difference with mendicancy.²¹

Related to this legal and social discourse, changing meanings of work further exacerbated links between physical difference and a perceived 'lack' of productivity, a factor that had particular implications for men—the primary breadwinners in this period. Texts such as Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) and Samuel Smiles's *Self*

²⁰ Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 63–66.

²¹ *Ibid.* 109–22.

Help (1859) were influential as they propounded the importance of industriousness and renounced idleness.²² John Tosh plots the rise of this ideology between the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1884, when suspicions surrounding privilege gained momentum and faith in the idea of individual autonomy took its place.²³ Such ableist emphases on autonomy and industry meant that those exhibiting physical difference were seen as 'lacking' the necessary attributes to succeed in life. As Erin O'Connor explains, 'Victorian ideals of health, particularly of male health, centered on the concept of physical wholeness: a strong, vigorous body was a primary signifier of manliness, at once testifying to the existence of a correspondingly strong spirit and providing that spirit with a vital means of material expression'.²⁴ As we learn from Henham's 'The Human Bundle', where the maimed man is branded 'a lump of breathing useless flesh', for men in particular, physical difference—especially when obvious and extreme—was seen as an indicator of a subject's 'lack' of productive potential.

While physically 'incomplete' men were often believed to be unable to work, a point evidenced in autobiographical memoirs by disabled factory workers, such as William Dodd,²⁵ women 'missing' body parts were regularly represented as unmarriageable and thus not 'useful' in terms of procreation or social obligations—they were seen as part of the 'superfluous women' problem. Exceptions to this trend were imagined in literary texts, such as Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* (1872).²⁶ But in reality barriers existed that made it difficult for physically and cognitively different

²² Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (1843; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); and Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (1859; London: John Murray, 1958).

²³ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire, Women and Men in History* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 96.

²⁴ O'Connor, *Raw Material*, 104.

²⁵ William Dodd, *A Narrative of the Experience and Sufferings of William Dodd* (1841), in *Factory Lives: Four Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiographies*, ed. by James R. Simmons Jr. (London: Broadview, 2007), 181–222.

²⁶ Wilkie Collins, *Poor Miss Finch*, ed. by Catherine Peters (1872; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

women to enter the marriage market. For instance, the same contemporary medical science that warned of the transmissibility of disability placed disproportionate stress on women, raising proto-eugenicist concerns about ‘non-normative’ mothers extending their supposedly ‘contaminated’ bloodlines.²⁷

Persuasive prosthetists

Before turning to the fictional representations of prostheses, which, I argue, complicated the growing dominance of physical ‘wholeness’, it is worth considering the position that the emerging prosthesis market assumed amidst the culture described so far. Aligning with the trends in patent medicine described by historians such as James Harvey Young, Anne Digby, and Claire L. Jones, prosthetists of all types—including makers of limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair—capitalised on and contributed to the perpetuation of growing anxieties about maintaining or attaining physical ‘integrity’.²⁸ As O’Connor has shown us, the notion of ‘rebuilding’ amputees to a condition of ‘wholeness’ was commonly evoked in nineteenth-century prosthesis discourses, especially in regards male amputees.²⁹ American prosthesis firm, A. A. Marks, one of the most famous and internationally successful makers of its time, for instance, included the following testimony from the *Atlanta Christian Index and Southwestern Baptist* in its 1888 catalogue: ‘Mr. Marks has the most skilled mechanics in his manufactory, turning out frequently a dozen or more limbs a week. It is interesting to see his patrons leave their crutches in his office, and walk off apparently *whole*—men, too, who had lost both

²⁷ Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction*, 34–93.

²⁸ James Harvey Young, *The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America Before Federal Regulation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Anne Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720–1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Claire L. Jones, *The Medical Trade Catalogue, 1870–1914* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014).

²⁹ O’Connor, *Raw Material*, 102–47.

legs and who were brought in by attendants'.³⁰ After purchasing one of Marks's patented artificial legs with rubber foot, John McKenzie, a Civil War amputee, similarly testified, 'I felt like a whole man again'.³¹ Limb makers such as Marks were keen to assert to potential users the abilities of their devices to 'recomplete' 'disaggregated' bodies.

The popular consensus among historians of prostheses is that the artificial legs produced by high-end makers such as A. A. Marks, though prohibitively expensive and thus available to a limited group in Britain, were in many cases effective functionally for lower-limb amputees. Top-of-the-range artificial legs were, it seems, helpful in terms of enabling physical locomotion and, if disguised correctly by clothing, assisting a user to 'pass' as 'normal'. Artificial arms, by contrast, were not so effective. Sue Zemka explains that due to difficulties replicating the complex biomechanics of the human hand, artificial arms 'languished on an impasse between functionality and a natural appearance'.³² Rudimentary hooks, available many years before the Victorian period, remained the most effective artificial hands up until and far beyond the turn of the twentieth century. Though, as Zemka states, one must be careful regarding the application of labels of 'progress' and 'improvement' to the nineteenth-century history of artificial arms, there certainly was enumeration in terms of new designs, manufacturers, and marketing. Improvements in artificial arms were ultimately insubstantial but the transatlantic attention paid to developing technologies to replace lost arms was unprecedented. In the 1820s, there were three artificial limb firms in

³⁰ Quoted in Marks, George E., *Marks' Patent Artificial Limbs with Rubber Hands and Feet* (New York, NY: A. A. Marks, 1888), 154.

³¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 232.

³² Zemka, '1822, 1845, 1869, 1893, and 1917', 2.

London; by the 1880s, there were eighteen.³³ Furthermore, though we can certainly question the functionality of nineteenth-century artificial hands and arms, contemporary manufacturers were not shy in promoting their devices as great successes. Carefully constructed testimonials hinted at the somewhat ornamental nature of their artificial arms without making their limited functionality manifest. For instance, a commendation by Eli J. Wing for American maker John S. Drake's artificial arm read: 'It improves my form, so that a stranger would not notice that I had ever lost my shoulder, and it more than meets my expectation as to keeping my coat in place'.³⁴ Here we can see how prosthesis advertisements sought to balance honesty with endorsement while perpetuating the apparent need for amputees to use prostheses to 'pass'.

Part 2: Uncanny Hands

The relationship between literature and the contemporary prosthesis market was a complex one. On the one hand, literary texts often endorsed the physical preferences for 'wholeness' that made the production of artificial body parts such a growing industry in the nineteenth century. For instance, in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65)—a text by an author for whom prostheses permeate his very conception of narrative and his sense of the organic structure of the novel—the amputee Silas Wegg is depicted as physically inferior to the able-bodied characters that he competes with (most notably Noddy Boffin and John Harmon Jr./John Rokesmith) in his battle for social mobility.³⁵ Other depictions, on the other hand, tended to mock attempts at

³³ Gordon Phillips, *Best Foot Forward: Chas. A. Blatchford & Sons Ltd. (Artificial Limb Specialists) 1890–1990* (Cambridge: Granta, 1990), 34–5.

³⁴ Quoted in John S. Drake, *Drake's Patent Artificial Legs, Hands, Arms, &c* (Boston, MA: J. Drake, 1859), 33.

³⁵ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65; London: Everyman, 2000). For more on Dickens's engagement with prosthesis, see V. R. 'The Wooden Legs in Dickens', *Notes and Queries*, 171 (1936), 74–

replicating the natural form of the human body—for instance, Anthony Trollope’s representation of Miss Ruff’s aptly stern-looking artificial eye in *The Bertrams* (1859)—thereby problematising the social investment in occluding physical difference from public view.³⁶ A trope of prosthesis representation, which this chapter explores, used the uncanny verisimilitude of the high-end prosthesis as narrative device to invite reader intrigue. While this chapter could explore better-remembered texts that used this representational model, for example Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Man That Was Used Up’ (1839) or ‘The Spectacles’ (1844)—texts by another author who was seemingly fixated with the artificial body—in what follows I bring two neglected texts, which both focus on artificial arms, to the fore: namely, Buchanan’s ‘Lady Letitia’s Lilliput Hand’ and Lockhart’s ‘Prince Rupert’s Emerald Ring’.³⁷ These texts, I argue, not only used prostheses as plot devices, but can also be read as having exposed the fragility of physical ‘wholeness’s’ dominance. The use of highly finished prostheses in these texts reveals the complex and contradictory attitudes that encompassed responses to the use of such devices. If we consider prosthesis consumption as inspired by a ‘medical-model’ understanding of physical difference, an approach that sees the disabled body as ‘defective’ and in need of ‘curing’, the following analyses provide examples of Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky’s claim that ‘[the] “medical model”, powerful though it

77; Michael Cotsell, *The Companion to Our Mutual Friend* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 50–1; Michael Allen, *Charles Dickens’s Childhood* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1988), 16, 77; Adrienne E. Gavin, ‘Dickens, Wegg, and Wooden Legs’, *Our Mutual Friend: The Scholarly Pages* (1998), <http://omf.ucsc.edu/london-1865/victorian-city/wooden-legs.html>. Accessed 13 November 2018; Jay Clayton, ‘Hacking the Nineteenth Century’, in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 186–210 (p. 189); Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph, ‘Prefiguring the Posthuman: Dickens and Prosthesis’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32 (2004), 617–28; Goldie Morgentaler, ‘Dickens and the Scattered Identity of Silas Wegg’, *Dickens Quarterly*, 22 (2005), 92–101; Ryan Sweet, ‘Legs of Wegg and Others’, *Dickens Our Mutual Friend Reading Project* (5 August 2015), dickensourmutualfriend.wordpress.com/2015/08/05/month-16-august-1865-legs-of-wegg-and-others/. Accessed 13 November 2018.

³⁶ Anthony Trollope, *The Bertrams* (1859; London: Trollope Society, 1993).

³⁷ Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Man That Was Used Up: A Tale of the Late Bugaboo and Kickapoo Campaign’, in *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe, 4 vols* (New York, NY: Blakeman and Mason, 1859), vol. 4, 315–25; Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Spectacles’, in *Prose Tales (Second Series)* (Boston, MA: Dana Estes, 1884), 161–98.

has been in shaping the life experiences of people with disabilities, has never gone uncontested'.³⁸

Reflecting their limited real-life success and uptake, unlike prosthetic lower limbs (in particular peg legs), which were depicted frequently in literary stories—think, for example, of Captain Ahab, Arthur Conan Doyle's villain Jonathan Small, and a host of Dickensian figures, including not only Silas Wegg but also Simon Tappertit and Mr Tungay—prosthetic hands and arms appeared less often in nineteenth-century literature.³⁹ While hook-hand users, including, most famously, Captain Cuttle and Captain Hook, were occasionally represented, artificial hands—by which I mean more sophisticated prostheses that attempted to stand in aesthetically and functionally for absent limbs—were few and far between in literary texts from this period.⁴⁰ The few texts that included artificial-hand using characters, such as Buchanan's 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' and Lockhart's 'Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring', brought to fore the haptic differences between organic and artificial hands. As I suggest below, by focussing on the inability of artificial hands to replicate how organic hands feel to others, as well as how they enable sensory touch, these stories brought to the fore the inadequacies of a medical-model approach to hand 'loss', which sought to render invisible amputated stumps. On the one hand, then, these stories were buttressed by an ableism that saw the 'whole' organic body as sacrosanct, but, on the other, they also suggest how such ableist impulses might lead to absurd results in regards the use of prostheses for 'passing'.

³⁸ Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 259.

³⁹ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, NO EDITOR LISTED (1851; London: Penguin, 2012); Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, intr. by Peter Ackroyd and notes by Ed Glinert (1890; London: Penguin, 2001); Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*; Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, ed. by Clive Hurst (1841; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. by Jeremy Tambling (1849-50; London: Penguin, 2004).

⁴⁰ Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, ed. by Andrew Sanders (1846-48; London: Penguin, 2002); J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan: A Fantasy in Five Acts*, NO EDITOR LISTED (1904; London: Samuel French, 1977).

Buchanan's 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' was written in the style of sensation fiction and published when that literary mode was at its height in 1862. It therefore appeared almost a decade before the author's career-defining public spat with Algernon Charles Swinburne and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in which he famously labelled the latter of 'the fleshly school of poetry'—a charge that seems somewhat rich after learning more about Buchanan's earlier short story.⁴¹ 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' explores the history of an alluring yet highly mysterious woman whose most attractive features are her conspicuously dainty, perfectly formed hands. As the author, remarks, 'it was by her beautiful hands that the Lady Letitia achieved her choicest triumphs. Hands so tinily, delicately lovely were never imitated by sculptor; and when she waved them before her slaves, the heart was hushed with admiration'.⁴² Helena Michie has identified how common it was for women's hands to function as sexual symbols in the Victorian novel.⁴³ As Clare Stainthorp puts it, 'Nineteenth-century norms of female dress pushed the localisation of the erotic to the peripheries of the body, the hand being one such site'.⁴⁴ But in the case of Lady's Letitia, the narrator's 'normative positivism' is complicated as we learn more about one of her hands in particular.

We first meet Lady Letitia amidst a scramble of suitors attempting to take her hand in marriage. The frontrunner for her affections, the wealthy artist Edward Vansittart, is kept at arm's length by the protagonist after a second mysterious character, Mr Montague Vernon, appears on the scene. As we move forward, we learn that this new arrival is a disguised figure from Lady Letitia's past. Vernon is, in fact,

⁴¹ 'Thomas Maitland' [Robert Williams Buchanan] 'The Fleshly School of Poetry,' *Contemporary Review*, 18 (1871), 334-50.

⁴² Buchanan, 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand', 552.

⁴³ Helena Michie, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 98.

⁴⁴ Stainthorp, 'Activity and passivity', 9.

Louis Carr, the once fraudulent associate of her late husband, the financially ruined gambling addict Lord Augustus Marlowe. The narrator reveals that Vernon/Carr had previously attempted to win Letitia's affections by manipulative and duplicitous means and intends to do so again by blackmailing her with misleading evidence that portrays her as Lord Augustus's murderer. The visual motif that Buchanan centres the unravelling mystery on is Lady Letitia's wonderfully formed left hand, which we learn is prosthetic. The narrator reveals that her hand was amputated after it was crushed by a heavy window during a deathbed struggle with her late husband, who had poisoned himself to frame Lady Letitia as his murderer, a desperate attempt at revenge after discovering that Carr's attempts to woo his wife had made some progress. All ends well, however. Lady Letitia manages to counter Vernon/Carr's blackmail by threatening to claim him as an accomplice and reveal his identity to the authorities—a move that would be disastrous for the blackmailer since he is wanted for gambling fraud. Carr flees, but is unluckily arrested and later hanged for his crimes, while Lady Letitia and Vansittart are happily reunited. Running counter to contemporary marital norms, Vansittart marries Lady Letitia even after she reveals all, including the fact that her most prized asset, her hand, is artificial. As a kind of postscript for the narrative, the narrator includes a note from Vansittart commenting on his marriage with Lady Letitia. We learn that she was a good wife and that she died after giving birth to his eldest daughter. Highlighting the narrative and symbolic work that the prosthetic body part does in this story, it ends with a Gothic yet sentimentalised image: Vansittart reveals that he keeps 'the Lilliput Hand' as 'a memento'.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Buchanan, 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand', 131.

One of the ways that this short story exploits prosthesis use for narrative purposes, while also interrogating the use of such devices as solutions for physical 'loss', is through the way it draws attention to the sensory difference of Lady Letitia's prosthesis. The bodily variation that her hand presents is indeed a source of mystery, intrigue, and grotesqueness. Her hand is cold to touch, providing a grotesque morbidity as well as a sense of foreboding and uncanniness to her literary depiction. The coldness of her hand provides a hint of her 'non-normativity', echoing the concern of the British prosthesis maker Henry Heather Bigg, who in 1855 lamented the fact that 'touch instantly decides between the real hand and its counterfeit'.⁴⁶ Adding to the grotesqueness of Stainthorp's depiction, there is a shocking scene in which her hand is stabbed right the way through without causing so much as a drop of blood or cry of pain. Her hand is thus depicted as conspicuously different to an organic one in that it both feels 'non-normative' and is unable to feel itself. As Pamela K. Gilbert and Stainthorp would point out, the fact that her hand is prosthetic exacerbates the tension between her passive, touched, aristocratic, feminine hand and the active, touching, middle-class, masculine hands of her suitors.⁴⁷ In aesthetic terms, the hand acts as a Gothic motif, a kind of uncanny vestige of the past that works as a sensational plot device. We could also label the stabbing scene as an instance of 'bodily shock', a trademark of the sensation-fiction genre. In fact, the centrality of Lady Letitia's prosthetic hand to nexus of the plot provides evidence for Holmes and Mark Mossman's argument that 'Disability can be seen as central to the very poetics of sensation

⁴⁶ Henry Heather Bigg, *On Artificial Limbs, Their Construction and Application* (London: John Churchill, 1855), 62. Quoted in Stainthorp, 'Activity and passivity', 4.

⁴⁷ Pamela K. Gilbert, 'The will to Touch: David Copperfield's Hand', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 19 (2014), <https://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/articles/10.16995/ntn.695/>. Accessed 13 November 2018. Stainthorp, 'Activity and passivity'.

fiction'.⁴⁸ However, chiming with Holmes and Mossman's elaboration that disability is in no way a stable signifier in sensation fiction, there is clearly embedded in Buchanan's narrative a comment on the pressures of 'normativity'.⁴⁹ Though clearly underpinned by a way of thinking about the body that privileges organic physical 'completeness', the haptic critique of the prosthetic that this story brings to the fore questions the efficacy and potential implications of using a hand that looks real but feels fake. 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' suggests that using such a device will always eventually invite suspicion, a feeling that no prosthesis user from this period wished to evoke since doing so would undermine her/his ability to 'pass'.

The greatest resistance to 'normative positivism' and 'non-normative negativism' that Buchanan's short story provides comes in the form of the 'non-normative' marital success that Lady Letitia eventually achieves. Ultimately, she is able to recapture Vansittart's affection and secure his hand in marriage not by concealing her use of a prosthesis but by revealing its artificiality and the scandalous back story that its use conceals. Alison Kafer's concept of 'crip time' provides a helpful model for understanding Buchanan's representation as not merely conforming to but rather disrupting ableist traditions.⁵⁰ Kafer's 2013 book *Feminist, Queer, Crip* conceptualises crip time in opposition to common curative trends in imagining disabled futurity, which see disability as something that should be avoided or 'cured' at all costs. According to ableist thinking, the only conceivable alternative to being 'cured' is a life of 'unending tragedy'. Kafer instead seeks to imagine 'more accessible futures, [...] [a] yearning for an elsewhere—and, perhaps, an "elsewhen"—in which disability is understood otherwise:

⁴⁸ Martha Stoddard Holmes and Mark Mossman, 'Disability in Sensation fiction', in Pamela K. Gilbert (ed.) *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (London: Blackwell, 2011), 493–506 (493).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 494.

⁵⁰ Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

as political, as valuable, as integral'.⁵¹ In other words, Kafer's project is to challenge the ableist thinking in our present that affects the real and imagined futures of people living with disabilities. It would be remiss to say that 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' participates in this kind of disruptive and progressive crip project, but what can be argued is that the disabled future that it imagines for the amputee Lady Lilliput is one that resists the hegemonic 'normative' ways of thinking about disabled women in regards marital futures. Lady Letitia can thus be read in relation to the transgressive, bold, and sexually active disabled female characters of Wilkie Collins's sensation fiction—Madonna Blyth of *Hide and Seek* (1854) and Lucilla Finch of *Poor Miss Finch* most notably.⁵² Unlike these novels, or indeed the 'familiar' disabled marriage narratives described by Talia Schaffer—which presented disabled characters as integral parts of domestic marital family networks, Buchanan's text provides a direct affront to the 'normative positivism' engendered by the curative concept of the concealing prosthesis, highlighting the success and attraction of disavowing 'passing' as the primary prerogative for a prosthesis user.⁵³ Vansittart's decision to keep hold of the Lilliput Hand after his wife's death is at once fetishistic and also revealing of a transgressive fondness for physical difference.

The insensitivity of an artificial hand is, however, also a focal point of Lockhart's similarly sensational, though decidedly less serious, 'Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring'. Very much a story 'with a secret', but not as socially transgressive as many sensation-fiction texts, the plot of Lockhart's short story centres on a valuable ring that goes missing following a wedding reception. After following several false leads, we learn that

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵² Wilkie Collins, *Hide and Seek*, ed. by Catherine Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵³ Talia Schaffer, *Romance's Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 160–98.

the ring in question was all along worn on a broken wooden hand of the jewel's inheritor, a wealthy war veteran called General Wylkyns. Ironically and unusually for a fictional representation of such a device, early in the story the functionality of Wylkyns's prosthetic is lauded. Slipping the emerald ring on his false hand, the General boasts, 'I can fish, shoot, hunt, carve, box—do anything with it, in fact'.⁵⁴ The asyndetic nature of this list highlights the enumerable ways in which his prosthesis is practicable. The artificial hand is even shown to possess some advantages over his organic one: first, his artificial fingers are slenderer than those of his original hand, which are too gouty for the ring to fit; second, when he slips over after drinking too much wine, his wooden hand takes the brunt of the force, meaning that he remains unharmed. Only after the mystery is revealed and the unfeeling nature of the false hand is brought to the fore are the inadequacies of prostheses shown.

The timing of this story, at the end of the nineteenth century, is particularly interesting since at this time prostheses were often heralded as lifelike. A testimonial in A. A. Marks's 1888 treatise on prosthetics, for example, stated, 'The arm I ordered of you last April gives perfect satisfaction. The rubber hand is immense. I do not think there could be any thing gotten up to equal it. It looks perfectly natural; in fact, some of my friends did not know that I had lost my arm'.⁵⁵ Because of the supposed mimetic capacities of contemporary artificial limbs, we might consider Lockhart's story a critique of prostheses. The suggestion in this story is that each part that constitutes a body should be a feeling entity. The hand serves as a case study to make the point that while prostheses may look and even function like real body parts, they remain an accessory rather than a truly integrated aspect of the structural 'whole' since they

⁵⁴ Lockhart, 'Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring', 301.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Marks, *Marks' Patent Artificial Limbs*, 377.

cannot harmonise with the body's nervous system. The ableist premium on physical 'wholeness' is thus again brought to the fore, while the logic of prostheticisation is ironically challenged. Here, however, it is not necessarily the prosthesis that is faulty but rather people's expectations of them. Clearly Wylkyns's hand is an effective functional aid for many physical activities, but it falls short when used in a manner in which it is intended to 'pass' as a 'normal' hand suitable for ring-wearing.

Analysing 'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' and 'Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring' complicates our understanding of Victorian attitudes to prostheses, showing that though ableist sentiments were often present, some texts did not fully accord to the status quo. Indeed, texts such as Buchanan's and Lockhart's challenged aspects central to the social dominance of physical 'wholeness'. Buchanan's short story used the burgeoning, socially disruptive sensation genre to present an ironically 'non-normative' two-way marital solution for the issue of physical 'loss': honesty and acceptance of physical difference. Lockhart, on the other hand, presents an otherwise useful prosthesis whose insensate limitations make us question whether the potential to 'pass' should really be a priority for prosthetic body parts. Though written for slightly different kinds of readers—'Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand' for *Temple Bar's* metropolitan middle-class family readership and 'Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring' for *Chambers's* popular readership with emergent middle-class sentimentalities—both texts bring into question the dominance of physical 'wholeness' by scrutinising the mandate to 'pass' as 'normal'.⁵⁶ Reading texts like these help us to appreciate how physical 'wholeness' was being anatomised as it was being constructed.

⁵⁶ For more on the readerships of these journals, see Thomas, 'Chambers's Journal'; and Peter Blake, 'The Paradox of a Periodical', 185–209.