

Prosthetic Body Parts in Literature and Culture, 1832 to 1908

Submitted by Ryan Craig Sweet to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, March 2016.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Abstract

Covering the years 1832 to 1908, a period that saw significant development in prosthetic technologies—in particular artificial legs, teeth, and eyes—this thesis explores representations of prostheses in British and American nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and culture. By considering prosthetic devices such as wooden legs and hook hands alongside artificial body parts that are often overlooked in terms of their status as prostheses, such as wigs and dentures, this thesis is the first to examine holistically the varied and complex attitudes displayed towards attempts to efface bodily loss in this period. Lennard J. Davis has shown how the concept of physical normalcy, against which bodily difference is defined, gained cultural momentum in the nineteenth century as bodily statistics emerged onto the scene (*Enforcing Normalcy*). This thesis builds on Davis's work by considering other historical factors that contributed to the rise of physical normalcy, a concept that I show was buttressed by an understanding of the "healthy body" as "whole". Like Davis, I also explore the denigration of physical difference that such a rise encouraged. The prosthesis industry, which saw tremendous development in the nineteenth century, cashed in on the increasing mandate for physical normalcy. However, as this thesis shows—and where it breaks new ground—while contemporary journalism and advertising often lauded the accomplishments of an emerging group of professional prosthesis makers, fiction tended to provide the other side of the picture, revealing the stereotypes, stigma, scepticism, inadequacies, and injustices attached to the use and dissemination of prosthetic devices. I argue that Victorian prosthesis narratives complicated the hegemony of normalcy that Davis has shown emerged in this period. Showing how representations of the prostheticised body were inflected

significantly by factors such as social class, gender, and age, this thesis argues that nineteenth-century prosthesis narratives, though presented in a predominantly ableist manner, challenged the dominance of physical completeness as they either questioned the logic of prostheticisation or presented non-normative subjects in threateningly powerful ways.

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Introduction

I am not dead.
I guess I'm lucky
to still have one leg
and a job where I play like the gods
making legs of wood, leather and old tires
for those of us whose karma
is to step on small containers of evil.

I have a lot of time to think
molding calves, kneecaps, ankles, heels.

Because there are so many of us limbless ones,
maybe in two or three generations
mothers will give birth to one-handed
one-legged babies.
Then no one will assume that I am a beggar
built not to be loved.

One night I'll come back to the workshop late
after getting drunk watching the racing boats
at the *Omtuk* Festival to find
that all the pathetic imitations
have become real, brown and fleshy
with splayed toes that will soon know
the goosh of earth and will run
outside and fling themselves
back into the family of the body.
—Willa Schneberg, "Prosthesis Maker" (2000)

This poem is not Victorian. It was actually published in the 2000 disability arts and humanities edited collection *Points of Contact*. It is my contention, however, that attaining a knowledge of the nineteenth-century history of prosthesis adds much to our understanding of this poem and cultural depictions of prosthesis users in the twenty-first century more widely. As disability historians such as Lennard J. Davis, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Martha Stoddard Holmes and others have shown us, many of our contemporary attitudes to disability can be traced back to the nineteenth century and in particular its taxonomic frenzy brought about by industrialisation and developments in statistics, empirical science, and medicine.¹ In this poem the

¹ See Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*; Stoddard Holmes. Also see Oliver; Gleeson; Kudlick; LaCom, "The time is sick". Though

speaker's profession, prosthesis maker—which provides the title for the poem—evokes a historical trend for amputees to become prosthetists. Among the nineteenth century's most famous artificial limb makers, James Potts, B. Frank Palmer, James Hanger, and George Jewett were all amputees.² The speaker's playful comment that “maybe in two or three generations / mothers will give birth to one-handed / one-legged babies” brings to mind genuine fears about the hereditary risks of copulating with physically different subjects, fears that Stoddard Holmes has shown us were rife in the nineteenth century.³ Furthermore, the association between beggary and prosthesis use that the poem mentions echoes the sentiments of numerous literary and non-fiction sources that linked the use of wooden legs with mendicancy. Above all, though, as I shall go on to show in this thesis, the literary and cultural history of prosthesis reveals that the speaker's frustration at prostheses, the “pathetic imitations” inspired by a medical model understanding of disability that sees physical loss as a defect in need of fixing—something that disability studies scholarship, activism, and the work of disabled artists seeks to undermine—is *not* something new. “Prosthetic Body Parts” reveals that the notion of prostheticising the body in order to “pass” as nondisabled was a source of critique at the very time when the demand for and development of prosthetic technologies exploded.

Willa Schneberg's “Prosthesis Maker” is a poem representative of what since the 1960s has been a slow push towards the recognition of disability as an important social topic. Especially since major legislative changes in Britain

scholars including Anne Borsay, Ato Quayson, Colin Barnes, and Ruth Bienstock Anolik argue that the oppression of the disabled goes back much further than the Enlightenment, the historiography provided by the scholars listed above reveals the significance of the nineteenth century in terms of its shaping of attitudes to disability.

² See Hasegawa 8–9, 83–91.

³ See Stoddard Holmes 34–73.

and America in the 1990s, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 in Great Britain, disability has gradually crept into mainstream Western consciousness. The work of disabled activists, in demanding improved rights and a change in social attitudes to disability, has been key. Also important has been the growing popularity of Paralympic sports since the emergence of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) in 1989; the growing presence of disabled public figures, such as the actors Peter Dinklage and RJ Mitte; and the Disability Arts Movement.⁴ Imperative to the rise of disability in both the public and critical consciousness has been the social model of disability, a way of understanding the oppression of people with impairments inaugurated by disability rights activists and developed critically by disability studies scholars. As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson explains,

This new critical perspective conceptualizes disability as a representational system rather than a medical problem, a discursive construction rather than a personal misfortune or bodily flaw, and a subject appropriate for wide-ranging cultural analysis within the humanities instead of an applied field within medicine, rehabilitation, or social work. From this perspective, the body that we think of as disabled becomes a cultural artifact produced by material, discursive, and aesthetic practices that interpret bodily variation. (“The Beauty” 181)

The social model shows that the disabled have been repressed not because of their physical impairments but because society has ostracised those whose bodies are considered different to constructed bodily norms. “This model”, Marian Corker and Tom Shakespeare write, “makes a distinction between disability and impairment, similar to the feminist distinction between gender and

⁴ For more on the Disability Arts Movement, see Barnes and Mercer 207–11.

sex”: “It sees disability as *socially created*, or constructed on top of impairment, and places the explanation of its changing character in the social and economic structure and culture of the society in which it is found” (3). In other words, an environment has been constructed that is designed for an ideal of physical normalcy, not for those whose bodies deviate from it. Furthermore, culture has tended to privilege nondisabled bodies over disabled ones in various oppressive ways—to use the example of Hollywood film, consider, in spite of the examples provided above, its preference for depicting nondisabled actors in disabled roles, and its propensity for displaying physical difference in stereotyped ways.⁵

Schneberg’s poem appears in a collection that endorses a social model of disability and challenges a medical model that sees impairment as the source of disabled people’s marginalisation. It is certainly not the intention of this thesis to show that such a progressive and politicised view of disability was held by the nineteenth-century writers whose stories provide the primary material for this study. However, this thesis shows that hegemony of physical wholeness, a concept buttressed by a medical model understanding of disability that underpinned the concept of prostheticisation, was shown to be fragile and unstable by literary representations.

Covering the years 1832 to 1908—a period that saw significant development in prosthetic technologies, in particular artificial legs, teeth, and eyes—this thesis explores representations of prostheses in British and American nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and culture. By considering prosthetic devices such as wooden legs and hook hands alongside artificial body parts that are often overlooked in terms of their status as

⁵ See Longmore; Morris 84–117; Norden; Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*; Roche; Lennard J. Davis, *The End of Normal* 31–42. As Tom Shakespeare suggests, however, recent examples of disabled actors, such as Dinklage and Mitte, playing high-profile disabled roles show that some progress is being made in this area (Rev. of *The End of Normal* 115–16).

prostheses, such as wigs and dentures, this thesis is the first to examine holistically the varied and complex attitudes displayed towards attempts to efface bodily loss in this period. Davis has shown how the concept of physical normalcy, against which bodily difference is defined, gained cultural momentum in the nineteenth century as bodily statistics emerged onto the scene (*Enforcing Normalcy*). This thesis builds on Davis's work by considering other historical factors that contributed to the rise of physical normalcy, a concept that I show was buttressed by an understanding of the "healthy body" as "whole". Like Davis, I also explore the denigration of physical difference that such a rise encouraged. The prosthesis industry, which saw tremendous development in the nineteenth century, cashed in on the increasing mandate for physical normalcy. However, as this thesis shows—and where it breaks new ground—while contemporary journalism and advertising often lauded the accomplishments of an emerging group of professional prosthesis makers, fiction tended to provide the other side of the picture, revealing the stereotypes, stigma, scepticism, inadequacies, and injustices attached to the use and dissemination of prosthetic devices. I argue that Victorian prosthesis narratives complicated the hegemony of normalcy that Davis has shown emerged in this period. Showing how representations of the prostheticised body were inflected significantly by factors such as social class, gender, and age, this thesis argues that nineteenth-century prosthesis narratives, though presented in a predominantly ableist manner, challenged the dominance of physical completeness as they either questioned the logic of prostheticisation or presented non-normative subjects in threateningly powerful ways.

It is worth stating at the outset of this thesis that I investigate prosthesis in relation to a literal medical definition of the term—"An artificial body part, such

as a limb, a heart, or a breast implant” (“prosthesis, n”). To the chagrin of certain disability studies scholars and activists, whose positions I discuss later in this introduction, recent humanities scholarship has been littered with texts that use “prosthesis” as a metaphor through which to investigate various forms of relationships, in particular those between mind and body, human and machine, and human and animal. Mark Seltzer, for instance, uses the prosthetic as an icon to describe the late nineteenth-century “body-machine complex”, postulating that “the double logic of technology as prosthesis” expressed the simultaneously “panicked” and “exhilarated” proposition that “the individual is something that can be made” (157, 160).⁶ “Prosthetic Body Parts” moves away from this trend of metaphorsing the prosthesis, returning attention to the prosthetic body part and its user. Reflecting the types of prosthetic devices that were commonly used and depicted in the Victorian period, this thesis primarily investigates artificial limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair. I discuss my decision to focus on these particular devices in more depth in the methodology section of this introduction.

Literature Review

In arguing that Victorian prosthesis narratives simultaneously challenged and endorsed the hegemony of normalcy that was emerging in the nineteenth century, this thesis draws from important work in Victorian studies, the history of science and technology, medical history, thing theory, and cultural and literary disability studies. Where “Prosthetic Body Parts” breaks new ground is in the way that it uses literary examples of prosthetic body parts to think through

⁶ Other examples within Victorian studies that use the prosthesis as a metaphor include Ketabgian’s chapter “Human Parts and Prosthetic Networks” in *The Lives of Machines* (17–46), and the various contributions to the “Victorian Prostheses” forum in the “Victorian Disability” special issue of *Victorian Review*.

attitudes regarding the dominance of physical wholeness as affected by the human-technology relationship and representational factors such as class, gender, and age. As a topic of immense interest and debate in many disparate settings through the period 1832 to 1908, the exploration of literary depictions of prostheses demands an interdisciplinary approach that considers factors such as the lived experience of physical loss and the use of prostheses alongside conceptual topics such as the human-technology relationship, the cultural dominance of physical wholeness, and the effects that social factors such as class, gender, and age had on literary representations.

The importance of the social model of disability to this study has already been noted. This thesis adds to and complicates the social model by showing how literary representations of prosthesis contributed to the marginalisation of physical difference while also interrogating such a process. The foundations for this kind of project were laid by scholars such as Paul K. Longmore, Lennard J. Davis, Garland-Thomson, David T. Mitchell, Sharon L. Snyder, and Ato Quayson, who have demonstrated the importance of literature as a source for exploring attitudes towards physical disability. In his pioneering 1987 essay “Screening Stereotypes”, Longmore highlighted the longstanding propensity in literature and films for disabled subjects to be represented as either melodramatically monstrous or pitiful, and the surprising extent to which such representations had, up to the point of his study, been largely ignored. At the end of his essay he called for “more detailed investigation” of “people with disabilities in television, film, literature, and the arts” (146). Such a mantle was taken up emphatically by Davis (*Enforcing Normalcy*), Garland-Thomson (*Extraordinary Bodies*), and Mitchell and Snyder (*Narrative Prosthesis*), whose

seminal monographs, which are now the bedrocks of the field of cultural and literary disability studies, were published in 1995, 1997, and 2000 respectively.

Mitchell and Snyder's theory of "narrative prosthesis" is one of the most influential and widely adapted frameworks to come out of this surge. Referring to the way that physical difference has been used "throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight", Mitchell and Snyder build on the work of Longmore and others, arguing that "Disability inaugurates narrative, but narrative inevitably punishes its own prurient interests by overseeing the extermination of the object of fascination" (*Narrative Prosthesis* 57). Quayson takes up a similar project to Mitchell and Snyder in his book *Aesthetic Nervousness* (2007), a study in which he explores the centrality of disability within narrative structures. Quayson, however, provides a corrective to Mitchell and Snyder, arguing that disability representation is not as programmatic as they suggest. As Quayson writes, "even when the disabled character appears to be represented programmatically, the restless dialectic of representation may unmoor her from the programmatic location and place her elsewhere as the dominant aesthetic protocols governing the representation are short-circuited" (26–7). Quayson's overall argument is that the subliminal unease and moral panic entreated by the disabled is refracted within the structures of literature, a crisis he terms "aesthetic nervousness". This thesis, while less concerned with the ahistorical intersections of narrative structure and disability that underpin Mitchell and Snyder, and Quayson's work, draws from and adds complexity to the points made by these theorists. "Prosthetic Body Parts" provides a counterpoint to Mitchell and Snyder's argument about literature serving a prosthetic function in rendering physical difference invisible as I show that

Victorian prosthesis narratives often brought physical difference to the fore, attacking the prosthetic part as an ineffective solution to functional and social issues surrounding physical loss. This thesis takes a more historical approach to disability representation, considering how the rise of prosthetic technologies both effected and affected such depictions. Like Mitchell and Snyder, and Quayson's work, this thesis is invested in the complexity of disability representation, a topic that, as I discuss below, is even thornier given the human-technology-relationship and disfigurement-versus-disablement questions that are evoked by an investigation of prosthetics.

In terms of its contribution to nineteenth-century studies, this thesis draws needed attention to physical wholeness as a fundamental constituent of the construction of normalcy and uses hitherto largely unexplored material to consider how this paradigm was attenuated as it was constructed. In the field of nineteenth-century studies, a significant amount of attention has arisen in recent years regarding literary depictions of the disabled body. The ground work for the study of disability in the nineteenth-century American context has been laid by scholars such as Diane Price Herndl, Garland-Thomson, and Mary Klages.⁷ Meanwhile, historians including Cindy LaCom, Stoddard Holmes, and Julia Miele Rodas have pioneered studies of disability in the British context.⁸ Work on the transatlantic phenomenon of the freak show by Nadja Durbach, Lillian Craton, and the contributors to Marlene Tromp's edited collection *Victorian Freaks* (2008), has shown us how fascinated (while often simultaneously repulsed) Victorian audiences were by the phenomenon of physical difference. As Durbach writes, "freaks could . . . be found not only in established

⁷ To cite just a few of the other foundational texts in the field, see Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*; Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*; Longmore and Umansky; Gitter; Schweik.

⁸ To cite just a few of the other important texts in the field, see Flint, "Blindness and Insight"; Wright; Tilley; Bolt, Rodas, and Donaldson; Esmail.

entertainment venues, but also behind almost any door. The commodification of their unusual bodies was part and parcel of a pervasive, though not necessarily new, desire for the spectacular and the curious” (5). While the topic of blindness has tended to dominate the field of nineteenth-century disability studies, analyses of orthopaedic disability have also emerged in recent years.⁹ A seminal work in this field, Stoddard Holmes’s *Fictions of Affliction* (2004) works in conversation with Mitchell and Snyder’s work on “narrative prosthesis”, highlighting how melodramatic emotional frameworks of representation tended to shape nineteenth-century depictions of disability. Drawing from the feminist disability studies work of Garland-Thomson, Stoddard Holmes is one of several nineteenth-century scholars to consider the intersections of disability and gender in Victorian disability narratives.¹⁰ Overall, this thesis adds to the burgeoning field of Victorian literary disability history, which has shown that fiction played an important role in shaping both positive and stigmatising attitudes to physical difference, by turning attention to ways that representations of prostheses not only drew from but *challenged* dominant attitudes to physical difference.

In terms of work on literary representations of prostheses, the nineteenth century is also a period that has received notable interest. Where my work differs from existing work in this field is in terms of breadth, focus, and consideration of representations of prosthetic devices and prosthesis users in relation to social constructions of physical difference. I consider not only artificial limbs, as has been the scholarly trend, but also wigs, false teeth, and glass eyes in order to assess more holistically nineteenth-century attitudes to

⁹ See, for instance, Walker Gore; Bourrier, “The spirit of a man”, “Orthopaedic Disability”, and *The Measure of Manliness*.

¹⁰ See the references from the footnote above plus Herndl; Frawley; LaCom, “‘Is it more than lame?’”; Warne, “To invest a cripple”.

prostheticisation. This thesis represents the first book-length study of literary representations of prostheses and is the first to consider the ways that representations engaged with attitudes regarding the hegemony of physical integrity. This thesis is, however, indebted to the work of Warne, who laid the foundations for this kind of study. Her essays “If you should ever want an arm”, “Artificial Leg”, and “To invest a cripple with peculiar interest” reveal the import of prosthetic limbs in the social imagination on both sides of the Atlantic in the Victorian imagination. Warne not only provides useful information about the discourse surrounding prosthetics in this period but also guidance in terms of approach for studying literary representations of such devices. “The tension between literary representations and the lived experiences of amputees constitutes something of a problem for the study of prostheses in the Victorian period”, Warne writes (“Artificial Leg” 32). Steven L. Kurzman and Vivian Sobchack are two other scholars who have been particularly vocal in calling for a return to thinking about prosthetics literally rather than figuratively. As Sobchack writes,

the primary context in which “the prosthetic” functions literally rather than figuratively has been left behind—as has the experience and agency of those who, like myself, actually use prostheses without feeling “posthuman” and who, moreover, are often startled to read about all the hidden powers that their prostheses apparently exercise both in the world and in the imaginations of cultural theorists. Indeed, most of the scholars who embrace the prosthetic metaphor far too quickly mobilize their fascination with artificial and “posthuman” extensions of “the body” in the service of a rhetoric (and in some cases, a poetics) that is always located elsewhere—displacing and generalizing the prosthetic before exploring it first on its own quite extraordinary complex, literal (and logical) ground[.] (“A Leg” 20)

Meanwhile, Kurzman argues that “The major flaw with retroactively basing the prosthesis metaphor in artificial limbs is that it reinscribes the latter to support

the model. It misrepresents artificial limbs as semi-autonomous agents, which I do not believe reflects the reality of how amputees relate to or use artificial limbs in either individual or social senses” (378). Though useful in terms of unpicking the complex symbolism underpinning representations of prosthetics, studies such as Jonathan Carey’s book *The Violent Effigy* (1973), Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph’s article “Prefiguring the Posthuman” (2004), and Goldie Morgentaler’s essay “Dickens and the Scattered Identity of Silas Wegg” (2005) fall into a trap of considering the symbolic potentiality of literary representations of artificial limbs at the cost of considering what such representations might tell us about how prosthesis users experienced physical loss and the use of their prosthetic devices in this period. This thesis charts the complexity of prostheses identified by Warne: “Simultaneously material and symbolic, artificial legs are artifacts of a culture and its views on class, industry, technology, and disability, but they are also artifacts of the daily lives of disabled Victorians” (“Artificial Leg” 33). I also explore in further depth several tropes identified by Warne, such as the self-acting prosthesis and the prosthesis marriage plot, considering not just artificial limbs but other prosthetic devices as well. Unlike Warne, I also consider how deployments of these tropes challenged social constructions of disability and normalcy.

In addition to contributing to work on the literary aspect of prosthesis discourse, this thesis adds diversity to existing technological, cultural, and military histories of nineteenth-century prostheses.¹¹ A significant proportion of historical work on prosthesis focusses on military contexts and the provision of prostheses to veteran amputees. Another notable trend linked to such has been

¹¹ For histories of prostheses see Herschbach; Yuan; O’Connor, *Raw Material* 102-48 and “Fractions of men”; R. B. Rosenburg; Ott, Serlin, and Mihm; Ott, “Carnage Remembered”; Slavishak; Marquard Smith; Handley; Hasegawa; Youngquist 161–90; Gordon Phillips; Kirkup 155–72.

the focus on male users. This study draws from much of the rich detail provided by historians such as Katherine Ott, Neil Handley, and Steven Mihm but considers largely neglected areas such as domestic prosthesis users and female amputees. Furthermore, I consider artificial limbs and eyes, the prostheses best covered by historical studies, alongside false teeth and wigs, adding to what is a relatively underdeveloped area of study.¹²

A major way that my work differs from much historical work on prosthesis is in terms of attitude. A number of existing studies display an optimistic approach to prosthetic technologies. Studies by scholars such as Erin O'Connor, Edward Steven Slavishak, and Guy Hasegawa, for instance, are infinitely useful for the historical details that they bring to light about the discourse surrounding and the technological developments underpinning the growth of the prosthesis industry in the nineteenth century. However, these studies express somewhat idealistic views about artificial limbs, in particular legs, without fully questioning the problematic social mandate that, in part, brought about their development in the nineteenth century. Not quite going so far as to endorse the medical model, but certainly not challenging it in a manner that disability studies has shown is so important, these studies present the development of prosthetic technologies as philanthropic, utilitarian solutions to the crisis of bodily loss without considering the social and environmental factors that made life difficult for those who had lost body parts. I am not implying that there were not benevolent agendas at heart in the development of prostheses in this period. Rather, I believe that it is important to consider the ableist social forces underpinning the nineteenth-century demand for life-like prosthesis. In other words, I support Sarah Jain's observation that "the unspecified deficiency,

¹² See Woodforde, *False Teeth, False Hair, and The History of Vanity*; Ofek.

the generalized defect or absence seems to naturalize the general form of the prosthesis and of the body alike. If the prosthesis presumes an enhancement to the 'natural' body in this account, then bodies and prostheses are already naturalized rather than being understood as socially constructed" (39). It is important for historians of prostheses to interrogate the naturalising of physical loss as "deficiency" that Jain highlights. In adopting a social constructivist view of prostheses I do not wish to deny or overlook the physical difficulties, pain, and mental anguish occasioned by losing a body part, but I do wish to show that such issues are exacerbated significantly by social conditions that valorise physical wholeness and denigrate bodies deemed "incomplete".

To look at the examples listed, Hasegawa does a great job at showing how cynical and financially driven many of America's heroes of the prosthesis industry were, but his study does not go very far in considering why life-like prostheses were considered the best and only possible solution to the endemic of physical loss occasioned by the American Civil War. O'Connor, on the other hand, explains how "Victorian ideals of health, particularly of male health, centered on the concept of physical wholeness", arguing that "prosthetics engineered a fiction of physical wholeness in the interest of recuperating the laboring male body, symbolically resolving the problem of fractional men simply by making them seem to disappear" (*Raw Material* 104–5). But the author does not go very far in considering the extent to which this concept of prostheticising might be problematic from an ethical standpoint or the extent to which this notion was challenged both by the real-life users of such devices, who often chose not to use prosthetic limbs as they were often found more debilitating to use than go without, and the manifold literary stories that depicted them as highly problematic. Slavishak, meanwhile, provides a valuable local

commentary of prosthesis commerce in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Pittsburgh, arguing that “the therapeutic narrative of artificial limbs, in which civic problems had ingenious solutions, strong bodies had renewed power, and working men had an auspicious future before them” were garnered by city boosters, but the author does little to challenge such a problematic view from a disability standpoint (383). Such a view from the city boosters clearly endorsed a medical model understanding of disability that saw the straightforward mechanical supplement as a solution to the crisis of bodily loss, a position at odds to contemporary disability studies work.

Related to the history of prosthesis, this thesis contributes to an emerging historiography of “passing”—a practice that for the most part “refers to the way people conceal social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability and pass as ‘normal’” (Brune and Wilson 1). In spite of the clear links with prosthesis use, a kind of supplementing of the body underpinned by a medical approach to disability that attempts to materially efface the supposedly “fixable” issue of bodily loss, relatively little historical work on prosthesis considers the practice of passing. This thesis, invested in the extent to which this practice was simultaneously encouraged and critiqued by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary sources, bridges this gap in the field. Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson explain how passing is a contested practice in disability studies since it “can take a psychological toll [on those who attempt to ‘pass’] and can also reinforce—or, at least, fail to challenge—the stigma of disability” (4). They also, however, note that “Even when passing seems to reinforce the stigma of disability, it is more productive, and more just, to challenge the ableism that compels people to pass rather than blame the individuals who choose to do so” (5). I follow the lead of Brune and Wilson in

investigating the ableism that surrounds passing via prostheses using hitherto unexplored examples in this context such as nineteenth-century wigs, dentures, and artificial limbs. By exploring attitudes to passing through literature, I explore conflicting social attitudes to this mode of self-presentation, moving beyond the current (yet also important) penchant for investigating the personal perspective of the passing subject.

Another area of study that this thesis intersects with is thing theory. Contributing to a field interested in relationships between characters and things, this thesis provides original analyses of representations of devices that due to their proximity, function, and place within the cultural imagination engender more confusion between subject and object status than most other technologies. Thing theory was inaugurated by Bill Brown in 2001 as a challenge to the long-held notion that “thinking and thingness are distinct” (16). Quoting Brown, Katharina Boehm helpfully describes thing theory in the following manner:

Thing theory interweaves psychoanalytical and phenomenological approaches to ask how things “become recognizable, representable, and exchangeable to begin with” as well as “why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies”. It reads interactions between subjects and objects in relational rather than oppositional terms. (*Bodies and Things* 4)

John Plotz remarks that thing theory is at its best “when it focuses on [the] sense of failure, or partial failure, to name or to classify” (110). The intermediary state of things as neither wholly subject or object is a major point of focus in this field as are instances when subject-object relationships are brought into

immediate consciousness. Highlighting the centrality of failure and human-subject contact in terms of defining what “a thing” is, Brown suggests,

We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily. The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation. (4)

In terms of thinking about prostheses, then, in particular the ways that literary depictions of such devices challenge the hegemony of wholeness by debunking the process of prostheticisation that it encourages, the thingness of prostheses is very much at the centre. In the context of prostheses, devices central to medicalised discourse surrounding disability, their confounding and disruptive nature in fictional representations links thing theory to the “aesthetic nervousness” that Quayson shows us the disabled occasion in literary narratives. The thingness of prostheses is revealed in this thesis as I explore the ways that such devices are presented as striking, unpredictable, malfunctioning, confounding, and, sometimes, controlling.

In regards to this latter point, the thesis also overlaps with work on Victorian things and machines that has shown us how the Victorians often thought of objects and mechanical devices as having lives of their own. Unlike previous scholarship, I show that to the literary imagination this complex human-machine dynamic challenged not only subject/object binaries but also the cultural dominance of organic physical wholeness. Tamara Ketabgian, who uses the metaphor of prosthesis to discuss the complex subject-object relations between man and industrial machine, argues, “Victorian machines were not

simply soulless, lifeless, predictable, and unidimensional; not simply opposed to organic feeling and vitality; and not simply reductive material objects—if objects are ever so” (2). Elsewhere, Katharina Boehm’s edited collection *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (2012), which draws heavily on Brown’s work, presents the argument that the subject and the object were not always oppositional in the nineteenth century; instead they connected through “networked and processual relationships” (2). The work of Ketabgian and Boehm fits within what has been a growing trend in nineteenth-century studies scholarship for work on the interfaces and ontological overlaps of the human and the machine, the subject and the object.¹³ Adding to this field, this thesis draws needed attention to the prosthetic body part, a device that perhaps more than any other raises questions about where the subject ends and the object begins.

In terms of approach to the thing that is the Victorian prosthetic body part, I draw heavily on the method of Elaine Freedgood, whose monograph *The Ideas in Things* (2006) is seminal in the field of thing theory. Freedgood argues that the representation of things in fiction should be read beyond fetishisation or mere commodity; instead, the placement of objects reveals metonymic associations and extended material histories which, if understood, can help a modern reader to understand more fully what these objects signified to a contemporary audience. It is essential, according to Freedgood, to understand metonymic associations before making metaphorical ones. Bearing in mind the disability studies ethos that I employ, which sees the lived experience of disability as an important feature and the overuse of disability as metaphor as a

¹³ Also see Rabinbach; Seltzer; Sussman, “Machine Dreams”; Otis; Morus; Inglis; Coleman and Fraser; Kang; Kuskey, “The Body Machinic”, “Our Mutual Engine”, and “Math and the Mechanical Mind”.

sign of subjugation, Freedgood's method provides a versatile template for this study. Thinking more about method, I now turn to the methodology section of this introduction, which explains the important decisions made while writing this thesis.

Methodology

The first questions that I ought to address in this section concern the types of prostheses whose representations are explored in this thesis. Why consider artificial limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair together? Why are these the main devices considered? To answer the first of these questions, I must first acknowledge some distinctions between these devices. First, of the devices listed, artificial limbs are potentially the only ones that would be used by subjects whom we would today consider disabled. Most of us today would not consider someone missing hair, teeth, or even an eye disabled and yet I use a disability studies approach to consider each of these devices in this thesis. I certainly do not wish to homogenise the phenomenon of physical loss or suggest that physical losses such as baldness, are somatically, psychologically, or experientially akin to the amputation of limbs, but I do wish to expose that those missing hair, teeth, or an eye in the time period covered by this project were often subject to much of the same stigma that those missing limbs were. Part of the prejudice that those missing body parts faced stemmed from the cultural preference for physical wholeness, a penchant culminating from the rise of bodily statistics, the vogue for physiognomy, changing models of work, and a combination of other factors, all of which I discuss at length in Chapter One. The other focus of discrimination was the use of artifice itself, a practice that was seen as dishonest, deceitful, and, at times, fraudulent. Though it cannot be

denied that those missing limbs faced greater stigma in certain regards—they may, for instance, have experienced greater discrimination from potential employers when looking for work—those using what we might call primarily cosmetic prostheses, such as dentures, glass eyes, and wigs,¹⁴ were arguably more susceptible to stigma surrounding the use of these devices than a limb amputee might be for using an artificial arm or leg. The users of “cosmetic” prostheses, if discovered, were subject to scorn for duplicity for cheating popular methods of assessing character by looks and were often accused of vanity, a serious charge at the time.¹⁵ The users of artificial limbs were also subject to a degree of such stigma surrounding deception, especially if they were deemed to be concealing their impairments in order to better their social positions. The users of wigs, artificial eyes, and dentures, on the other hand, especially if single and female and/or “old”, were regularly and unashamedly mocked in public venues. Depictions of amputees, especially children and veterans, were often tinged with sympathy but wig users, for instance, were considered fair game for jests. In spite of complex nuances in terms of both lived reality of use and representation, there are overarching similarities in terms of nineteenth-century attitudes to different types of prosthetic body part

¹⁴ I use the modifier “primarily” here as ocular prostheses and dentures, though used mostly for aesthetic reasons, do also serve functional purposes. As popular mid-century ocularist Auguste Boissonneau explains, “When the atrophied globe no longer exactly fills the socket, the eyelids fall one over the other, and the irritating contact of the lashes with the palpebral mucous membrane gives rise to inflammation[.] . . . The adaptation of an artificial eye, by sustaining and separating the eyelids, and keeping them in their natural position, will prevent or cure such painful affections” (*General Observations* 7–8). Of the functional purposes of false teeth, “though adequate mastication could be achieved” with the hardened gums left after teeth and projecting stumps had departed, “over closing of the lower jaw sometimes brought on deafness” (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 87). A well-fitting set of false teeth could remove this risk.

¹⁵ Pamela Horn notes that vanity was associated with moral corruption and could lead to one’s fall from their social station: “Middle-class moralists feared that girls preoccupied with fashion might slip into prostitution in order to obtain the cash needed to appear stylish. William Acton, in discussing the cause of prostitution in the late 1850s, maintained that ‘vanity, vanity and then vanity’ was the prime factor” (45).

that makes the study of these devices together important for the history of disability.

Providing justification for the analysis of artificial limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair together, nineteenth-century discussions of artificial body parts often considered these technologies alongside one another. Commentaries on the expanding prosthesis trade in popular periodicals such as *Household Words*, *All the Year Round*, *Once a Week*, *Punch*, and *Tinsley's Magazine* often discussed different types of prostheses together.¹⁶ Drawing our attention to the medical model of disability that underpins the logic of prosthesis, William Blanchard Jerrold concluded in his 1851 *Household Words* article "Eyes Made to Order",

It is a wise policy to remove from sight the calamities which horrify or sadden; and, as far as possible, to cultivate all that pleases from its beauty or grace. Therefore, let us shake our friend with the cork-leg by the hand, and, acknowledge that the imitation is worn in deference to our senses, receive it as a veritable flesh-and-blood limb; let us accept the wig of our unfortunate young companion, as the hair which he has lost; let us shut our eyes to the gold work that fastens the brilliantly white teeth of a young lady, whose natural dentition has been replaced; and, above all, let us never show, by sign or word, that the appearance of our friend (who has suffered tortures, and lost the sight of one eye) is changed after the treatment invented by M. Boissonneau. (66)

For Blanchard Jerrold, all of these devices are linked in the way that they try to produce a "pleasing personnel" (66; original emphasis). Humorous items also often presented different kinds of artificial body part as interchangeable. For instance, a sardonic article in *Punch* encouraged readers to "give a friend in need, personal and pecuniary, a Christmas-Box in the shape of a set of artificial teeth, or the 'Guinea Jaw' of our friend the Dentist, or a glass eye, or a gutta

¹⁶ See, for example, "The Eyes of the World", Blanchard Jerrold, A. W., "Bodily Repairs", and "Wigs".

percha nose, or a wooden leg” (“Christmas Boxes for Beauty” 19). Later an ironic etiquette miscellany published in the *Sporting Times* in 1883 provided readers with the following tongue-in-cheek advice: “If you know that a man has a glass eye, or a wooden leg, or a wig, . . . always refer to the circumstance on every possible occasion” (“Etiquette” 1). Literary texts, meanwhile, often featured characters that used multiple prostheses, with notable examples including Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Man that Was Used Up” (1839), Mrs Skewton from Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (1846–48), and Mr Bashwood from Wilkie Collins’s *Armadale* (1866).¹⁷ In approach this thesis therefore reflects the nineteenth-century vogue for considering different artificial body parts alongside one another.

This thesis focusses principally on artificial limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair, rather than devices that we might consider assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs, eye glasses, and hearing aids, though these latter devices were also in circulation in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ While the general definition of prosthesis remains fairly loose—the *OED* defines prosthesis as “An artificial body part, such as a limb, a heart, or a breast implant” (“prosthesis, n”)—I choose here to focus specifically on devices that attempt to replicate the physical form or mimic the close appearance of the body part that they are being used to replace, though like Ott I recognise that “the line between assistive and prosthetic technology is more like a hyphen” (“Sum of its Parts” 21). Ott challenges the distinction often drawn between prosthetic and assistive technologies, writing, “Since all useful technology is assistive, it is peculiar that we stipulate that some devices are assistive while others need no qualification”

¹⁷ Also see Poe, “The Spectacles”; “Three Visits to the Hotel Des Invalides”; Thackeray, “The Notch on the Ax”; Verne; Twain, “Aurelia’s Unfortunate Young Man”.

¹⁸ See Stephens and Goodwin, Ealy, Sarli et al, Otter 40, and Devilliers 121–55.

(21). I endorse this sentiment, but this thesis focuses on devices that stand in visibly for missing body parts since the literary depictions of such technologies interact more with the social attitudes to the conspicuously aesthetic construction of physical wholeness that this thesis wishes to interrogate than devices that enhance diminished physical capacities—for example, spectacles and hearing aids. Though further work is needed that interrogates the historiographic tendency to categorise technologies as “assistive” or otherwise, considers how the use of “assistive” devices affected attitudes to dominant physical models, and provides due historical attention to such devices in order to add to our understanding of the social construction of physical normalcy, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider devices that do not attempt to stand in aesthetically for a lost part. The most important reason underpinning my decision to focus mostly on artificial limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair, and not other technologies that we might consider prostheses—including artificial noses, ears, and tympana, which were also developed in the nineteenth century—is because the former were the devices most commonly depicted in literary texts. Technologies such as artificial noses, tympana did not experience the same trade as devices such as artificial legs, glass eyes, and wigs during the nineteenth century, in part explaining their relative absence from literary texts.¹⁹

Next I must turn to my decision to select 1832 to 1908 as the historical scope for this study. Douglas Baynton’s oft-quoted observation that “disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it” (“Disability” 52) rings true when one glances at the growing number of disability histories that have appeared in recent years, covering a broad historical spectrum.²⁰ In spite of

¹⁹ For more on the popularity of artificial legs, see Mihm 283; on eyes, see Handley 102–3; on hair, see Ofek 37–8.

²⁰ See, for example, Rose, Eyler, Hobgood and Houston Wood, Turner, and Nielsen.

such recent work, there remains much to be said about disability across all time periods. However, such is not say that the time period selected for this study is random. Indeed, the period 1832 to 1908 has been chosen for several notable historical reasons. First, this period roughly maps the era in which arguably the most significant developments in artificial legs, eyes, and teeth were made.

Artificial limbs, in particular legs, saw significant transformation during the course of the nineteenth century. Before 1830 artificial limbs—as in devices that attempt to replicate both the appearance and function of a limb that has been lost—were relatively rare. Rudimentary peg legs, tapered wooden posts upon which users could rest their amputated stumps, had been in use for centuries and remained the most popular replacements for lost limbs. James Potts made what is often considered the first modern artificial leg in 1816 when he supplied Henry William Paget, Lord Uxbridge, with a prosthetic replacement for the leg that he famously lost in the Battle of Waterloo.²¹ Potts's prosthetic was hailed as a great success by Uxbridge, who was newly titled as the Marquess of Anglesey. The prosthesis came to be known interchangeably as both the Anglesey and the "clapper" leg—"so called because locomotion was accompanied by a clapping sound" (Paget 153). Paul Youngquist explains what made Potts's device special:

Unlike the familiar peg leg, whose crude artificiality materialized the blunt claims of patriotism on the bodies of commoners, Anglesey's leg was lifelike and elegantly sculpted. It embodied a much more intimate fit between man and nation. And it allowed greater ease of mobility, communicating enough limp to mark the hero, while concealing enough stump to confirm the gentleman. (184)

²¹ Potts patented an early version of this design in 1805 (Gordon Phillips 30).

Though certainly a major innovation, as Youngquist hints, the general circulation of the Anglesey leg was prohibited by its high cost. The Anglesey design was replicated and made slightly more affordable on both sides of the Atlantic after Potts's death, first by two of his apprentices, Frederick Gray and William Selpho, and later by their imitators, competitors, and entrepreneurial workers. It was not until the American Civil War in the 1860s, however, that such sophisticated prosthetic devices became more widely available.

Hasegawa's book *Mending Broken Soldiers* (2012) documents the complex process that led to state provisions being provided to veterans for the purchase of artificial limbs. Before and especially after the American Civil War, accountable in part by the large number of industry-related amputees that the nation faced, many of the century's major innovations in lower-limb prosthesis took place on American soil: in 1851 Benjamin Frank Palmer of Philadelphia won first prize at the International Exhibition of 1851 in London for his artificial leg, which used a spring in the foot to give firmness of step; in 1858 Douglas Bly developed what he called the "anatomical leg", which incorporated an ivory ball in a vulcanised rubber socket to provided polycentric ankle motion; in 1861 New Yorker A. A. Marks introduced the rubber foot, which simplified ankle joint manufacture and enabled a more life-like gait; in 1863, another New Yorker, Dubois Parmelee, pioneered using atmospheric pressure as found in a suction socket to attach above-the-knee artificial legs.²² The growth of the limb prosthesis industry in this period owed much to developments in surgical practice, hygiene, and pain relief. Innovations such as the introduction of the Syme's method of amputation at the ankle joint, the introduction of anaesthetics

²² For more on the technological developments of these devices in the nineteenth century, see Gordon Phillips 32–8, Kirkup 159–63, Hasegawa 8–20.

such as ether and chloroform in the late 1840s, and the gradual adoption of Listerian principals of prophylactic antisepsis from the 1870s meant that more patients survived amputations and more survived with serviceable stumps suitable for being fitted with prosthetics as the century progressed.²³

Developments in artificial arms were not nearly as impressive as the developments in artificial legs. 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” (2). Rudimentary hooks, available many years before the Victorian period, remained the most effective artificial hands up until and far beyond 1908—due to the limited availability of cybernetic artificial hands in our own time, one could even make the argument that devices of a very similar design remain the most effective replacements for missing hands today. 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. The improvements in artificial arms were 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 London; by the 1880s, there were eighteen (Gordon Phillips 34–5).

While major innovations in artificial arms failed to materialise, ocular prostheses, in a manner not dissimilar to artificial legs, saw major technological development over the course of the nineteenth century. Like the developments made in artificial legs, changes in ocular prostheses were brought about by a combination of medical and technological factors. In the 1840s, when the

²³ The histories of such developments are by no means straightforward, however. Much controversy surrounded each of the innovations mentioned, hampering their widespread adoption. See, for instance, Hamilton, Pernick, Fox, Lawrence and Dixey, Granshaw, Kirkup, and Wolf.

anatomy of the eye became more accurately understood, thanks to the work of ophthalmologists such as Amédée Bonnet,²⁴ surgeons developed a new, safer method of performing enucleation—the removal of the entire eyeball. By cutting the four rectus muscles, which control eye movement, surgeons effected easier and more practical methods for extracting of the globe. Later in the century, some ophthalmic surgeons developed procedures for implanting support spheres that would give a better outcome to the placement of the artificial eye. The Mule's operation was the most popular of such procedures (Ott, "Hard Wear" 155). The delivery of such procedures was of course made more practical by the introduction of anaesthesia and prophylactic antisepsis. In spite of such developments, artificial eyes had been in use in modern Europe from the sixteenth century when pioneering French surgeon Ambroise Paré fabricated a covered and painted metal plate that could be worn over the eyelid of lost eye. He used the Greek word *ekblepharon* to describe this device (Ott, "Hard Wear" 151).²⁵ In the 1700s the industry was dominated by Venice's talented glass blowers. But France returned as the global centre for artificial eyes following the Boissonneau family's production of the first enamel artificial eye in 1822 (Ott, "Hard Wear" 152). Auguste Boissonneau's eyes dominated the European market in the 1840s, '50s, and '60s. Such success, however, was

²⁴ Bonnet was an influential orthopaedic surgeon, who was a prominent figure at Lyon's Hôtel-Dieu Hospital. Crucially, Bonnet redescribed the Tenon's capsule in 1841, which though earlier identified by Jacques Tenon, proved an elusive aspect of the eye's anatomy up until this point (Ott, "Hard Wear" 166n9).

²⁵ In Greek, "blepharon" means "eyelid" and the prefix "ek" denotes origin, so "ekblepharon" literally means "out of" or "outside" the eyelid, signifying the position of the prosthesis, which was designed to rest on top of the eyelid. While there is little indication that this kind of prosthesis was used by living people before Paré's innovation, such devices were used in ancient burial practices. As is explained on the College of Optometrists website, "As far back as the 5th c. BC Roman and Egyptian priests were making eyes from painted clay, which were attached to a cloth and worn over and outside the socket, in front of the eyelids". "The eyes on those masks found associated with Egyptian mummies", the website explains, "often made of plaster-filled bronze, resemble cosmetic replacements but they were for dead, not living, patients, to help them 'see' in the next world" ("Early Artificial Eyes").

not long lived. German ocularists started using cyolite glass in the 1870s. This material proved easy to work with and “finished to a more lifelike, opalescent shine” (Ott, “Hard Wear” 153), leading to the dominance of German, in particular Wiesbaden, artificial eyes. Another important technological development spearheaded by German makers was the development of the “reform” or Snellen eye. Named after Dutch ophthalmologist Hermann Snellen, who called for artificial eyes suitable for enucleated sockets to be developed, the reform eye was created by the Müller-Uri family. As Katherine Ott writes, “Patients and ocularists preferred the Snellen design because it reduced the sunken appearance of the orbit and socket area of the face” (“Hard Wear” 154).

Artificial teeth also saw major development, especially in America, in the period 1832 to 1908. Again a combination of medical and technological factors contributed to their transformation over the course of the century. The introduction of anaesthesia in the 1840s meant that “Numerous people who had preferred tooth ache to the torture of extraction were now hastening to have rotten teeth cleared from their mouths” (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 88). Significant innovations followed, including, in the 1850s, the implementation of sulphur-hardened rubber—vulcanite—as a material for moulding bases. The use of this material significantly lowered the cost of false teeth inaugurating what dental historian M. D. K. Bremner has called the era of “false teeth for the millions” (107–11). Earlier in the century, springless upper and lower sets began to appear. Though not necessarily a new idea (influential eighteenth-century French dentist Pierre Fauchard made three upper sets able to stay in place without springs over the course of his career), in 1848 the United States Patent Office granted a patent on false teeth held in place by the pressure of the atmosphere to a Connecticut confectioner (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 72). The

first efficient porcelain crowns and bridges appeared in the final quarter of the nineteenth century following the inventions of the first satisfactory dental cement (an oxyphosphate of zinc) in 1869 and the foot-operated dentist's drill in 1871 (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 76–7).

Wigs, relatively simple devices, saw little change in terms of technological sophistication over the course of the nineteenth century. In fact the wigs of the nineteenth century were notably less elaborate than the great perukes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the popularity of artificial hair, in particular at the mid-century, was a phenomenon. As the fashion for wearing artificial hair trickled right the way down the social ladder, opposing the trend in the eighteenth century when a peruke was a sign of one's elite social status, Britain imported huge amounts of artificial hair from France in particular. According to Alexander Rowland, author of *The Human Hair* (1853), in 1851 England imported 10,862 pounds of human hair from France alone. The penchant for hair additions, including false fronts, chignons, and tresses, extended from the 1850s through to the 1890s, peaking in the 1860s. As discussed in Chapter One, the demand for artificial hair actually altered ideas surrounding physical wholeness. For women in particular, the whole body became one fully intact with the addition of artificial hair. At the mid-century especially, to lack artificial hair was to be physically "incomplete". And yet those whose use of artifice was too obvious were lambasted in cultural and literary texts. As with the other prostheses discussed, the discourse of physical completeness mandated those perceived as "lacking" to use artifice, but punished those who allowed the illusion of organic completeness to falter.

The developments listed above provide a contextual backdrop to the manifold representations of prostheses considered in this thesis. It is my

contention that the significant developments that occurred in the prosthesis industry during the course of the nineteenth century inspired many of the literary representations discussed here. While for the purposes of concision I have described relatively straightforward accounts of progress in the technologies described above, as revealed by the brief history of artificial arms provided, the developmental trajectories of these devices were complex. As I show, literature provided a medium through which the successes and failures of contemporary prostheses could be imaginatively interrogated. The perceived inability of prostheses to successfully circumvent issues related to bodily disintegrity was a source of attention for many literary texts that interrogated the dominance of physical wholeness.

Returning to the question of the historical scope of this project, representations of prostheses from 1832 through to 1908—beginning with Countess Morley’s narrative poem *The Flying Burgomaster* and ending with J. Stuart Blackton’s short film *The Thieving Hand*—are explored due to the period’s significant technological context; the concomitant interest in prostheses that was shown in contemporary literature and culture; the explosion of interest in categorising the body that emerged from the 1830s onwards; and the major developments in print culture, advertising, and marketing that distinguish the period. Above all, though, the period 1832 to 1908 has been determined largely by primary material. We can consider this period the golden age of prosthesis discourse. Not only did it see great technological and commercial development in prosthetic technologies, as exposed by the developments described above, but also a concomitant upsurge in discussions about and representations of prostheses in the contemporary periodical press. If we individually search the terms “artificial leg”, “glass eye”, “wig”, and “false teeth”—arguably the most

commonly used and recognised prostheses of the modern epoch—on the ProQuest resource *British Periodicals* (Collections I, II, and III), a similar graphic is produced by each search conducted:²⁶ mentions of the term pick up after 1830, increasing immensely in line with developments in the manufacture and circulation of that prosthesis towards the high-Victorian period, before reducing in number and eventually dropping off drastically after 1910. In addition to the developments in prosthetic technologies, we can read the rise in discourse surrounding these devices through the Victorian period in relation to the upsurge in print culture, advertising, and marketing that was witnessed during this period.²⁷ Factors such as the reduction of newspaper stamp duty in 1836 and the abolition of advertisement duty in 1855 created a dramatic expansion in newspapers and magazines, providing greater space for fictional narratives and advertisements for prostheses to appear. The increase in interest surrounding prostheses in the 1830s correlates with historical factors, such as the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and Lambert Adolphe Quetelet's 1835 construction of "the average man", which, as scholars such as Lennard J. Davis and Stoddard Holmes have shown us, had major consequences in terms of contemporary attitudes to disability. As I will discuss in depth in Chapter One, such events brought physical difference and the categorisation of physical ability to the fore like never before. Such attention was manifested in prosthesis narratives such as Morley's *The Flying Burgomaster*, Frederick Marryat's *Jacob Faithful* (1834), and Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839), which interrogated the growing mandate for physical wholeness.

²⁶ See "About *British Periodicals*" for further details regarding this resource.

²⁷ For more on the growth of advertising, see Thomas Richards, Nevett, and Church. For more on the development of Victorian print culture, see Altick, Sutherland, and Eliot. For more on the marketing of medical devices, see Digby, Jones, Haley, Richards, and Stark.

My decision for starting at 1832 and ending at 1908, rather than starting at 1830 and ending at 1910, is informed by my methodology for selecting sources, which I discuss in detail below. In short, I choose to analyse literary sources in which the prosthesis is central to the narrative. It therefore makes sense to begin and end this thesis with stories that feature prosthetic devices that are so prominent that they could be considered the protagonists or, at the least, the main villains of their respective stories—precisely how artificial limbs appear in Morley and Blackton’s narratives. Due to their shared themes of the automatus prosthetic and the battle of wills between organic “whole” and mechanical part, starting with *The Flying Burgomaster* and ending with *The Thieving Hand* provides a satisfying cyclical feel to the thesis. This cyclicity is itself revealing of the enduring motifs surrounding wholeness that underpin the prosthesis narratives that appeared across the period examined.

Representations of prostheses drop off in a significant way after 1908, providing a logical endpoint for this study.²⁸

The decision to end this thesis before the First World War makes sense not only due to the rapid reduction in prosthesis narratives that the 1910s witnessed. This conflict dramatically altered the Western consciousness concerning impairment and disfigurement. Over 247,000 Americans were disabled during this conflict, with many losing limbs (Elspeth Brown 263). 41,050 British servicemen lost one or more limbs (Anderson, *War* 45) and by 1918 over 400,000 were provided pensions as a result of being wounded (Koven 1188). Such unprecedented numbers, and the profound effect that such

²⁸ Other filmic representations of artificial limbs, such as Sigmund Lubin’s “A Cork Leg Legacy” (1909), D. W. Griffith’s “The Wooden Leg” (1909), and the Pathé short film “The Story of a Leg” (1910), appear after *The Thieving Hand* but such examples, in spite of their alluring titles, use prostheses as rudimentary plot devices rather than motifs through which to explore the complex issues relating to embodiment and wholeness developed in the other texts analysed in this thesis.

had on attitudes to and representations of disabled, disfigured, and prosthesis-using subjects, mean that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider literary representations post 1914. More work is needed that examines the extent to which Martin F. Norden's observations about changes in cinematic depictions of disability before and after the First World War run true for literary representations,²⁹ but such is beyond the scope of this project. It is due to the continuation of Victorian tropes of disability representation through the 1900s (a theme recognised in Norden's chapter "Emergence of an Impoverished Image" [14–48]) that informs my decision to investigate the Edwardian period.

Following in the footsteps of recent studies of nineteenth-century physical difference, such as Mitchell and Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis*, O'Connor's *Raw Material*, and Jennifer Esmail's *Reading Victorian Deafness* (2013), which explore both British and American contexts together, this study draws on sources from both sides of the Atlantic. I analyse texts from Britain and America in order to draw attention to the international nature of prosthesis discourse in the nineteenth century. As the brief technological histories above show, the development of prostheses was very much an international endeavour with America leading the field on several fronts. Especially with regard to the artificial limb and denture industries, links between Britain and America were strong in terms of both material goods and culture throughout the period under investigation. The successful artificial limb makers of the north, such as B. Frank Palmer and A. A. Marks—who benefited from being approved suppliers for the United States government's scheme to provide its maimed Civil War veterans with artificial legs—successfully marketed their devices to British

²⁹ Norden argues that the carnage created by the First World War altered cinematic portrayals of disability away from Victorian tropes of fraudulence and deceit towards optimistic depictions of cure and rehabilitation (49–73).

clients. Meanwhile, British limb maker Frederick Gray supplied artificial legs to Confederate officers during the 1860s (Hasegawa 50–1). Highlighting the transatlantic success of American artificial limbs even before the Civil War, as Gordon Phillips notes, Palmer legs were used by 1,200 amputees in Britain in the late 1850s (30). Similarly, the implementation of crowns and bridges, which became more popular replacements for lost teeth than partial dentures in the 1870s, became known as “American dentistry” in Britain, reflecting the superiority of American dental expertise in the second half of the century. Conversely, British writers, such as Dickens, influenced the works of American writers of prosthesis narratives, such as Poe.³⁰ British prosthesis narratives, such as the ballad “The Cork Leg” and Thomas Hood’s *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41) were so popular and iconic that they were mentioned and sometimes even recited in the prosthesis catalogues of prominent artificial limb makers, such as John S. Drake and A. A. Marks. There existed a two way dialogue across the Atlantic in terms of both the trade and literature of prosthesis in the nineteenth century. These conversations are reflected by the mixture of British and American texts under examination here.

One of the challenges faced in presenting the research undertaken for this project was in selecting which representations of prosthesis to discuss. The archive revealed a huge number of texts, many of which hitherto undiscussed, that present prosthetic body parts in a variety of ways. Upon examination, however, I discovered that many of these narratives used prostheses in relatively simplistic ways—for instance as identification markers of minor characters, aligning with Alex Woloch’s thesis,³¹ or as descriptive details for

³⁰ See Galván.

³¹ In *The One vs. the Many* (1998), Woloch writes, “the character’s presence (visually, affectively) is intricately linked to his or her simultaneous effacement (structurally, axiologically)” (129).

realist agendas. The selection of primary materials analysed in this thesis is therefore informed largely by two factors: first, the centrality of prostheses or prosthesis users, and, second, the extent to which prosthesis narratives are representative of larger representational tropes. In terms of assessing attitudes to physical wholeness and the process of prostheticisation, it was methodologically important to select texts that engage with the politics and perceptions surrounding prosthesis use. This thesis also takes into account the importance of popularity as a measure by which to assess social attitudes to prosthesis use. I therefore investigate a combination of texts from well-remembered, sometimes canonical, authors, such as Dickens, Poe, and Arthur Conan Doyle, in which prosthesis users are not always the main focus but are afforded significant narrative space, alongside today largely forgotten novels, poems, short stories, jests, comics, and other cultural texts in which prosthetic body parts are the focus. I assess a wide range of texts from male and female writers writing to various social groups. In this regard, I try to provide a broad and unbiased picture of Victorian attitudes to prostheses. Because many of the users and potential users of prostheses were not middle-class men, in order to provide a fuller picture of how prostheses and prosthesis users were presented, it has been important to consider representations pitched at more marginal social groups: women, the aged, and the working class.

Structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first two chapters set up several major themes for the thesis, which are examined through various hermeneutic lenses in the final three chapters. The first chapter explores the construction of the concept of physical wholeness, the way in which fears of

physical loss were perpetuated, and the extent to which prostheses were seen as solutions to the crisis of the “incomplete” body in literary and cultural texts. This chapter surveys nineteenth-century contexts, such as changing understandings of the human condition, new models of work, and changes in legislation, alongside the motif of the poor prosthesis, one of the most dominant tropes of prosthesis representation across the period in question. In order to draw attention to the prevalence of this trope, I provide analyses of its appearance in representations of all of the types of prostheses explored in this thesis: I investigate representations of cumbersome artificial legs, unfeeling artificial hands, inexpressive artificial eyes, harmful wigs, and hazardous false teeth. I argue that these narratives added to cultural anxieties surrounding bodily loss while also bringing into question the logic and efficacy of prostheticisation.

The second chapter focuses on the themes of agency and ability, examining the power play at work between person and prosthetic part. The human-machine relationship is thus a major sub-topic of this chapter. The chapter draws from contexts such as mechanical and materialist understandings of the human body, and attitudes to automatic machines in order to place the literary and cultural representations discussed within wider historical contexts pertaining to ability, autonomy, and wholeness. Exploring the extent to which artificial body parts were seen to enhance or assume the agency of the user, I argue that a number of prosthesis narratives produced transgressive prosthesis users or false body parts that threatened the dominance of the physically “whole”. To do such I investigate three representational tropes that interrogated notions that prostheses could recuperate physically “incomplete” subjects to normal society: narratives of

disabling, self-acting, and weaponised prostheses. Highlighting the enduring nature of such themes, I explore texts from across the historical scope of this project, from Morley's *The Flying Burgomaster* to Blackton's *The Thieving Hand*.

Building on the first two chapters, which set out the underlying themes for the rest of the thesis, the final three chapters investigate representations of prostheses in relation to social factors such as class, gender, and age. In Chapter Three, I concentrate on the intersections between prosthesis use and social mobility, challenging predominant utopian views regarding nineteenth-century prosthetics. Here I expose the social restrictions underpinning prosthesis use, while showing how several fictional writers challenged such a pattern. Centring on a case study of Dickens's popular portrayal of the villainous wooden leg user Silas Wegg in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), I show how certain Victorian writers drew from anxieties surrounding the social position of amputees by presenting wooden leg users as transgressive social climbers. I place Dickens's representation of Wegg in context with his other depictions of prosthesis users and those found in his journals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. I also consider the cultural legacy of Wegg. This chapter argues that stories such as Dickens's problematised the logic of prosthesis use. Such tales suggested that, in an age of dominance of organic physical wholeness, prostheses were defunct when they failed to accurately mimic the appearance and function of the lost body part, and yet were ironically associated with fraudulence when successful.

Chapter Four explores two popular genres that heavily feature physical loss and prosthesis use: the adventure story and the marriage plot—genres that distil gender ideologies, especially those pertaining to bodily presentation and

management. In investigating representations of physically “incomplete” subjects and prosthesis users from these genres, I show how representations of male and female prosthesis users often carried disparate messages to male and female readers. Such messages were intended to shape perceptions of how those who had lost body parts should act and which prostheses they should purchase. The chapter argues that in spite of the ableist discourse underpinning both genres, both highlight the instability of organic wholeness as a hegemonic bodily form. Pirate stories from the adventure genre present mobile and successful amputees who do not use life-like prostheses thus providing norm-defying role models of sorts. The marriage plots, on the other hand, drew attention to the paradox that female prosthesis users in particular were attacked for using prostheses even though society encouraged them to do so.

The final chapter of this thesis, about ageing and prosthetics, shows that the cultural association of cosmetic prostheses (including wigs and false teeth) with ageing stems, at least in part, from satirical sources that paradoxically both bulwarked and mocked the hegemony of physical wholeness and youth.

Highlighting the extent to which preferences for youth were intertwined with demands for physical completeness, this chapter shows how the dominance of these two physical states was undermined by stories that either ridiculed the process of concealment for elderly users or presented unlikely prostheticised heroes in unconventional ways. In terms of source material, this chapter draws from enduring representational tropes containing ageing prosthesis users. Such tropes include representations of grotesque aged characters almost entirely made up with prostheses; youthful prostheses displayed on ageing bodies; ageing users losing their wigs; and unlikely ageing, prostheticised heroes. In

this regard, I draw from genres, such as the Gothic, sensation fiction, and imperial adventure fiction, genres that in different ways were invested with constructions of bodily norms and deviances. I argue that, in spite of their generic differences, the depictions of ageing prosthesis users discussed in this chapter challenged the dominance of physical wholeness and youth by laughing at the absurd results that such demands effected.

Language

In writing about prosthesis in “Prosthetic Body Parts”, I had to make loaded decisions about terminology. In order to position my work alongside that of scholars and activists who challenge the medical model of disability, I primarily use the term *disabled* when discussing those with missing limbs. Often I use the more specific term *amputee*. It is true that *disabled* was used infrequently to describe people with physical impairments prior to the First World War,³² but this term is more neutral than the alternatives used in Victorian times. I avoid using terms such as *afflicted*, *defective*, *infirm*, and *cripple* unless writing from the perspective of someone from the nineteenth or early twentieth century. When I do use these terms, they appear in quotation marks to show that these words are not my own. However, because this thesis does not deal with disability alone—one cannot call those missing hair, teeth, or even an eye disabled in spite of the stigma, and, at times, the functional losses accompanying such physical conditions—I tend to use provocative terms such as *incomplete* and *disaggregated* to describe those missing body parts. Though these words were not commonly used in the period under discussion, they

³² For more on the etymology of this term and the politics of employing it in historical studies, see Durbach 16–9.

encapsulate the problematic attitude to physical loss exhibited in contemporary sources. These terms are certainly unsettling and it is important to note that the attitude that they express regarding bodily loss is a socially constructed one, based on the notion that the *normal* or *physically complete/whole* body is the dominant paradigm. The term *whole*, which was often used during the nineteenth century when describing the *normal* body (also a social construction), is used alongside its synonym *complete*—a term less commonly deployed in such context in the nineteenth century—for linguistic variety. *Physical integrity* is another variation that I employ to avoid repetition. In identifying the dominant social position of those who were deemed to exhibit *wholeness*, I also occasionally borrow Garland-Thomson's provocative term *normate*. As Garland-Thomson herself explains,

This neologism names the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries. The term normate usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings. Normate . . . is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them. If one attempts to define the normate position by peeling away all the marked traits within the social order at this historical moment, what emerges is a very narrowly defined profile that describes only a minority of actual people. (*Extraordinary Bodies* 8)

The concept *normate* therefore aptly encapsulates the hegemonic yet constructed identity held by those believed to display *wholeness*—in reality a minority, whose very state of *completeness* was ever subject to change. The fact is that even today, over one hundred years of medical progress forward, relatively few remain entirely *whole* all their lives. The vast majority of us lose at least a part of ourselves over the course of our lifespans. In the nineteenth century, hair, teeth, fingers, toes, and eyes were among the body parts most at risk.

1 Constructing and Complicating Physical Wholeness in Nineteenth-
Century Britain and America

“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).

Published at the *fin de siècle*, Ernest G. Henham’s short story “A Human Bundle” (1897) is a text that in hyperbolic terms perpetuates fears about physical loss, anxieties central to nineteenth-century Western bodily discourse. 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 reveals what the loss of body parts meant ontologically in the nineteenth century. For the medical student, the patient is neither human nor useful but rather “nothing better than a human bundle” (58). The student’s harsh assessment is partly justified by the extremeness of the amputations undertaken, but such raises the question, how was bodily loss viewed more generally in the nineteenth century? If the patient’s body in this story is “incomplete” then what did a “whole” body look like? What constituted a physical “loss”? If the losses that Henham’s character experience render him less than human and “useless” then what did it mean to lose just a leg, or an eye, or one’s hair in this period? What historical factors underpin a privileging of physical wholeness and a fear of incompleteness?

This chapter will show that as the concept of physical “normalcy” became increasingly reinforced as culturally dominant (the Self) those who were missing body parts were marginalised (rendered Other). Buttressed by a post-Enlightenment belief that medicine and the emerging sciences could “fix” the

issue of bodily loss, prostheses came to the fore as devices that could 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 able/disabled, such devices also complicate the hegemony of organic wholeness. Their very production was mandated by preferences for physical wholeness, 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. As I argue in this chapter, fictional representations of prostheses simultaneously reinforced and complicated the hegemony of physical wholeness. Such stories perpetuated fears of physical disaggregation while also bringing the very impulse to prostheticise into question.

The history of human attitudes to physical difference has garnered increased interest in recent years as disability studies has infiltrated mainstream scholarship. Lennard J. Davis’s seminal book *Enforcing Normalcy* (1995) shows us how the concept of “normalcy”, the “positive” against which the “negative” of disability is defined, was constructed in the age of industrialisation, in particular as a result of the rise of bodily statistics and the corollary concept of the average man. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson draws from Davis’s work, coining the term “normate”, which “names the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate’s boundaries” (*Extraordinary Bodies* 8). Though not a disability studies scholar per se, Sander Gilman shows us that images of disease (a different but linked kind of bodily difference to disability) invoke a process of boundary construction between the “healthy” observer, physician, or layperson, and

“diseased” patient (1–17). Such a process, according to Gilman, helps to “localize” and “domesticate” disease, dissipating the fears of “collapse” that disease threatens. Binary logics and social constructivism link the work of each of these important theorists. These works show us that physical difference is not an inherent problem in and of itself but is articulated as such in societies that construct and perpetuate images of “normalcy”. The following contributes to debates surrounding the social-construction model of disability. I show that physical wholeness was a major constituent of “normalcy” that was articulated in ways that buttressed the power of the normate. However, I also show how prosthesis narratives complicated such a process by presenting prosthetic body parts as faulty devices unable to effect an impression of a wholeness. In this sense, prosthesis narratives expose the demand for wholeness as a logical fallacy; physical completeness is an ideal, one which is unattainable for many and unsustainable for the vast majority.

Recently, literary historians such as Ruth Bienstock Anolik and the contributors to her edited collection *Demons of the Mind and Body* (2010) have shown how literature interrogates binaries between healthy and ill, able and disabled, self and other. Highlighting the complex relationship between Gothic literature and post-Enlightenment bodily discourse, Bienstock Anolik writes, “Gothic texts that categorize human disability as a frighteningly inhuman deviance, tend conversely to interrogate cultural preoccupations with definition and categorization—in other words, with diagnosis” (6). Elsewhere, highlighting disability’s disruptive potential, Ato Quayson uses the term “aesthetic nervousness” to describe how in literature disability causes “suspension, collapse, or general short-circuiting of . . . dominant protocols of representation that may have governed a text” (26). Lillian Craton, on the other hand, analyses

both literary and performative displays of bodily difference in the nineteenth century, arguing that “the spectacle of human oddity” was representative of both a “new emphasis on body reading as social regulation” and a “rebellious, socially transformative” aspect of the folk carnival (35). An increasing amount of attention has therefore been paid to the transgressive potentiality of disability in literature and culture. This chapter adds nuance to this growing area of interest by focussing attention on the transgressive nature of prosthetic body parts in literary texts. In the representations that I explore, prostheses are not successful medical cures to physical difference; instead they are devices that encourage the reader to question the logic of prostheticising as a solution to physical loss.

In order 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 two ways. The first part of this chapter surveys the historical factors underpinning the rise of the normate; the chapter then briefly explores the way that prosthesis makers (prosthetists) exploited the mandate for physical wholeness before turning to the transgressive representations of prostheses hitherto mentioned. Here I explore one of the dominant tropes of prosthesis representation: the comically faulty and/or unconvincing prosthesis.

Constructing Wholeness

The history of Western society’s privileging of normalcy over physical difference is a contested one. Critics including Lennard J. Davis and Katherine J. Kudlick assert that the privileging of normalcy at the expense of physical difference is a post-Enlightenment phenomenon. Davis, for instance, asserts

“disability was not an operative category before the eighteenth century” (*Bending over Backwards* 50–1). However, others, such as Quayson and Bienstock Anolik argue that the privileging of normalcy is more longstanding: Bienstock Anolik states, “The impulse of Western culture to define the human norm by the physical ideal and to construe the non-normative as dangerously close to the non-human actually predates the Enlightenment by millennia, as does the tendency to prioritize the norm and ignore the non-normative” (4); Quayson writes, “as can be shown from an examination of folktales from all over the world, the plot of physical and/or social deformation is actually one of the commonest starting points of most story plots” (20). Either way, what cannot be disputed is that the scientific and medical discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries buttressed, and sought to legitimise, boundaries between the normate and the physically aberrant.

As disability studies has shown us, the concept of the normal body is a social construction.¹ Among the most important and well-covered factors contributing to the rise of normalcy in the nineteenth century was the development of bodily statistics. Lennard J. Davis and Craton provide useful commentaries on this topic,² but it is worth providing a brief summary here in order to illustrate how wholeness was constructed as a major constituent of the emerging discourse surrounding the “average” man. Belgian mathematician, statistician, astronomer, and sociologist Lambert Adolphe Quetelet came up with the concept of “*l’homme moyen*”, or the average man, in his influential 1835 text *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*. As Craton summarises, “Quetelet calculated the mathematical norms for a range of

¹ As Lennard J. Davis states, “the idea of a norm is less a condition of human nature than it is a feature of a certain kind of society” (*Enforcing Normalcy* 24).

² See Craton 32–5 and Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 23–49.

physical and social categories everything from head circumference to age of marriage to criminal tendency in order to draw a detailed portrait of the human norm” (32). For Quetelet, his average man constituted a kind of paradoxical ideal: “an individual who epitomized in himself . . . all the qualities of an average man, would represent at once all the greatness, beauty and goodness of that being” (qtd. in Porter 102). Quetelet’s notion of *l’homme moyen* became popular in England in the 1830s. It was well received by intellectuals and “spurred the development of the contemporary disciplines of social science” (Craon 33–4). The implications of Quetelet’s work on non-normative bodies is concisely defined 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” (*Enforcing Normalcy* 29).

While the concept of physical wholeness is not evoked directly in Quetelet’s concept of *l’homme moyen*, it is clear that his average man has two eyes, two arms, two legs, two arms, etc.—in other words, that he is physically “complete”. Associating health with the average and illness/deformity with those who deviate from averages, Quetelet writes,

If the average man were completely determined, we might, as I have already observed, 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. (99)

Such a view provides evidence for Bruce Haley’s observations about the Victorian notion of health, which centred on the concept of wholeness. He suggests that “No topic more occupied the Victorian mind than Health” (3), and that wholeness, along with functionality and vitality, was a key component of

what constituted health. As Haley states, “health is a state of functional and structural wholeness. In an organism the two are related, for a structure becomes functional when viewed as part of a living whole” (20). An implication of such a view of health was that those who exhibited even the slightest hint of incompleteness were rendered “unhealthy”—a label that, as I show, had severe implications.

Another significant context that contributed to the stigmatisation of physical incompleteness, and deviance more widely—which intersects with Quetelet’s work in terms of the classification of physical difference—was the popularity of the science of physiognomy. The philosophy that one can ascertain the moral qualities of another by assessing his/her appearance, in particular his/her face, had existed since classical times.³ But such a system was codified and popularised in the late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth century by the work of Swiss pastor Johann Kaspar Lavater, whose influential *Essays on Physiognomy* were first published in German between 1775 and 1778. As a result of rapid population growth, urbanisation, and changing social dynamics, physiognomy became an important tool in the nineteenth century: “physiognomy provided a new code for conformity as people became concerned not just with judging others, but with how others were judging them” (Pearl 33). Thomas Holcroft’s cheap English translation of Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy* was reissued eighteen times from the late 1780s through to the late 1860s alone, indicating the popularity of physiognomy in Victorian England (Hartley 74).⁴

³ See Berland.

⁴ John Graham notes that Lavater’s essays were published 156 times before 1940 (562).

With regard to physical wholeness, Lavater's work and subsequent texts that drew from his philosophies reinforced prejudices against physical loss and asymmetry developed in the Bible. For instance, in 1805, Richard Payne Knight, a reputed British arbiter of taste, commented on the peculiar but nonetheless naturalised prejudice against animals that have non-normative facial features: "if we were to meet with a beast with one eye . . . we should without inquiry, decide it to be a monster, and turn from it with abhorrence[.] . . . [T]he Creator having formed the one regular, and the other irregular, we habitually associate ideas of regularity to the perfection of the one, and ideas of irregularity to the perfection of the other" (199). This passage recalls the biblical correlation between ocular aberrance and moral corruption. For instance, in the Old Testament it is asserted that to "the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock[,] . . . his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened" (*The Christian's New*, Zech. 11.17). Here the loss of an eye is seen as an apt punishment for or mark to distinguish negligent character. A similar sentiment is echoed in the New Testament gospel of Luke: "when thine eye is single [good, healthy, or clear], thy whole body is also full of light; but when thine eye is evil [wicked, bad, or diseased] thy whole body is also full of darkness" (11.34). The latter passage was quoted and reiterated by Lavater, who added, "It is as physiognomonically true, also, that when nothing is oblique, sinister, dark, rough, incongruous, heterogeneous, in the body, then is all health and harmony, and every object bright" (318).⁵ Lavater aligned his view on eyes with George

⁵ In spite of Lavater's use of this quote as support for his physiognomical treatise, such a stigmatised view of one-eyedness is not entirely consistent in the Bible. There is a famous verse in the Gospels where Christ exhorts his followers to gouge out an eye if it causes them to sin, concluding with "better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matt. 18:9). Here the verse relegates one-eyedness to purity or virtue, which is significant as Jesus is arguably overturning the injunction in Leviticus that prohibits the blind (and otherwise impaired) from entering the Temple.

Daumer, who in 1702 claimed that “The eye appertains more to the soul than any other organ” (qtd. in Lavater 386). It is suggested that to display two healthy eyes is to display good character. Though he ambiguously distances his readings of eyes with those quoted, Lavater also cites Paracelsus, who applied the following traits to “Small, and deep sunken eyes . . . bold in *opposition*”: “not discouraged, intriguing, and active in wickedness; capable of suffering much” (qtd. in Lavater 388; emphasis added). For Lavater and his followers, those who deviated from the standard, conspicuously “whole”, body created by God manifested visibly an aberration that ran much deeper. Such views placed additional pressure on the notion of self-presentation. Those with physical aberrations were forced to conceal their differences in order to avoid negatives physiognomic assessments—to use current terminology, they were encouraged to “pass”.⁶

Linked to Quetelet’s drive for standardisation, another event of the 1830s that contributed much to anxieties surrounding physical difference in the nineteenth century was the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. The Amendment Act introduced a centralised system to manage administering relief to the poor. The new system was brought about, at least in part, in response to fears from social reformers that the decentralised parish-based system of poor relief implemented by the Elizabethan poor laws was inconsistent and, at times, misused. The new system sent able-bodied men seeking relief to the workhouse while providing limited out-relief to those deemed deserving—i.e. those unable to work, including the young, the old, and the disabled. Despite

⁶ “Passing” is a term that for the most part “refers to the way people conceal social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability and pass as ‘normal’” (Brune and Wilson 1). Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson explain how passing is a contested practice in disability studies since it “can take a psychological toll [on those who attempt to ‘pass’] and can also reinforce—or, at least, fail to challenge—the stigma of disability” (4). For more on how this thesis intersects with emerging work on passing, see Introduction.

this tightening of the law, as Martha Stoddard Holmes reveals, fears of abuse remained. Much discourse surrounding the extent to which the unwaged disabled were deserving of relief perpetuated as a result (109–22). This context is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, which considers anxieties about physical completeness alongside social mobility, but it is worth noting at this point that the act brought public attention to the ability of aberrant bodies, the classifying of such bodies, and an association of physical difference with mendicancy.⁷

Changing meanings of work further exacerbated links between physical difference and an inability to work, a factor that had particular implications for men—the primary breadwinners in this period. Influential texts such as Thomas Carlyle’s *Past and Present* (1843) and Samuel Smiles’s *Self Help* (1859) propounded the importance of industriousness and renounced idleness. John Tosh plots the rise of this ideology between the Reform Acts of 1832 to 1884 when suspicions surrounding privilege gained momentum and faith in the idea of individual autonomy took its place (96). Such an emphasis on autonomy and industry meant that those exhibiting physical loss 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” (*Raw Material* 104). 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 loss was seen

⁷ The politics of deservingness and the association of physical difference with mendicancy in the nineteenth century is explored in detail in the following works: Stoddard Holmes; Mitchell and Snyder, *Cultural Locations of Disability*; Schweik.

as an indicator of a subject's inability to work. Such was the case on both sides of the Atlantic. "Nowhere is the disabled figure more troubling to American ideology," writes Garland-Thomson, "than in relation to the concept of work" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 46).⁸ As O'Connor shows, contemporary prosthetists sought to cash in on such prejudices by producing devices that could enable disabled men to return to work. I will show in Chapter Four how A. A. Marks, one of the leading manufacturers of artificial limbs in the nineteenth century, marketed his devices in such a way.

While physically "incomplete" men were seen as unable to work, women missing body parts were represented as unmarriageable and thus not "useful" in terms of procreation or social obligations—they were seen as part of the "superfluous women" problem.⁹ Because marriage and motherhood were considered the ideal ends for women in this period and because contemporary medical science increasingly linked physical aberrance to hereditary illness and deformity, women exhibiting physical losses were often excluded from the arena of marriage. Stoddard Holmes discusses this topic at length in her important monograph *Fictions of Affliction* (2004; 34–73). I explore such contexts and how anxieties surrounding disabled women were exacerbated by literary depictions in Chapter Four.

⁸ Garland-Thomson observes elsewhere that the ability of amputees to perform the most mundane of tasks became a source of public spectacle: "the 'Armless' or 'Legless Wonders' who performed mundane tasks like sewing, writing, riding a bicycle, or drinking tea [in freak shows] were at once routine and amazing, both assuringly domestic and threateningly alien" ("The Beauty" 191).

⁹ As Nan H. Dreher explains, "Redundancy, the social and economic marginalization of middle-class single women, was one of the 'social evils' addressed by mid-Victorian reformers and highlighted by the periodicals". "It stemmed", she explains, from two causes: "First, British censuses from 1851 on revealed a statistical surplus of women. Second, and more importantly, middle-class cultural ideology forbade women to support themselves through paid work. The existence of these unmarriageable, unemployable and ideological intolerable women provoked a vehement public outcry" (3).

In a manner not dissimilar to the champions of Lavater and the proponents of the related science of phrenology, such as Franz Joseph Gall, who linked physical features (of the human cranium in particular) to behavioural traits (linking the external to the internal), a number of scientists, philosophers, and physicians began to controversially break down Cartesian boundaries between mind and body. The impact of such, as I will show, further solidified the premium on physical completeness. From the 1830s onwards, a physiological model for understanding the human form emerged, which often highlighted the reciprocal rather than the previously assumed independent natures of the mind and the body. Studies of the body, the physiology of the brain, and the nervous system thereby took on increased significance. Highlighting the importance of the body in 1835, popular English physician and sanitary reformer Thomas Southwood Smith demanded that physiology should be the basis of all study of humankind:

The mind is dependent on the body: hence an acquaintance with the physiology of the body should precede the study of the physiology of the mind. The constitution of the mind must be understood before its powers and affections can be properly developed and directed, hence a knowledge of the physiology of the mind is essential to a sound view of education and morals (1).

Alexander Bain's 1855 book *The Senses and the Intellect* reawakened attention in the link between mind and body. As he suggested, "Although Subject and Object (Mind and Matter) are the most diametrically opposite facts of our experience . . . there is a concomitance or connection between mind and a material organism" (10). He would later reaffirm,

Instead of supposing that mind is something indefinite, elastic, inexhaustible,—a sort of perpetual motion, or magician's bottle, all expenditure, and no supply, we now find that every single throb of pleasure, every smart of pain, every purpose, thought, argument, imagination, must have its fixed quota of oxygen, carbon, and other materials, combined and transformed in certain physical organs. ("Common Errors" 160)

Contemporaries who supported the links made between mind and body included evolutionary biologist Herbert Spencer, German physiologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt, the anatomist T. H. Huxley, and the mathematician and philosopher W. K. Clifford. Together, these figures contributed to a new tradition in the sciences that we might usefully call "psycho-physiology". While all of the above, as Roger Smith, Lorraine J. Daston, and Rick Rylance have observed, trod a fine line between attempting to create a characteristically psychological discipline for analysing the mind and downplaying accusations of materialism, implicit in each account was an attempt to collapse Cartesian dualism. William A. Cohen pays testament to the cultural influence of such work in his 2009 monograph *Embodied*. Here he goes so far as to claim that "embodiment came to be the untranscendable horizon of the human" (xii).

In terms of the relationship between physical difference and mental state, pre-eminent psychiatrist Henry Maudsley, another key figure in the psycho-physiology movement, bolstered the links between body and mind carved out by Lavater in his 1874 work *Responsibility in Mental Disease*. Here he wrote,

There is not an organ in the body which is not in intimate relation with the brain by means of its paths of nervous communication, which has not, so to speak, a special correspondence with it through internuncial fibres, and which does not, therefore, affect more or less plainly and specially its function as an organ of mind. It is not merely that a palpitating heart may cause anxiety and apprehension, or a disordered liver gloomy feelings, but there are

good reasons to believe that each organ has its specific influence on the constitution and function of mind[.] (17)

For Maudsley, the brain was not the only physiological matter that could influence the mind; for him, other parts of the body could affect the temperament of a subject in many different ways. Associating physical deviances with particular moods and behaviours, Maudsley implied that those who display physical difference are often mentally aberrant therefore legitimising the work of Quetelet, who claimed that the “normal” body was the healthiest in all regards. Most severely, Maudsley asserted, “Multitudes of individuals come into this world weighed with a destiny against which they have neither the will, nor the power to contend; they are the step-children of nature and groan under the worst of all tyrannies—the tyranny of a bad organisation” (*Responsibility in Mental Disease* 43). Endorsing a theory that suggested physical and mental degeneration are passed on over several generations by a process of atavism, Maudsley endorsed a deterministic understanding of the human condition that stigmatised physical difference.¹⁰

Criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso “celebrated the penetration of a quantifying materialism” (David G. Horn 8). He buttressed the links forged by the psycho-physiologists between mind and body as he sought to demonstrate empirically a correlation between monstrosity and criminality. As David G. Horn explains,

For Lombroso, what truly distinguished the modern era from all that had come before was the triumph of “the number” over the “vague opinions, prejudices, and vain theories” that had circulated from the folk to the learned community and back again. Among

¹⁰ As Neil Davie notes, such a view was not consistent with Maudsley. By 1895, he accepted the key role played by social habits and surroundings (n. pag.).

these was the conviction—shared by the masses and the greatest physiologists and psychologists—that there was an “immeasurable abyss” between the world of “life and intelligence” and the world of “brute materiality”. But numbers, he observed in a volume on weather and mental illness, had been able to bridge the abyss, entering “with their marvellous power” even into the “mysterious world of life and the intellect”. (8)

The influences of physiognomy and phrenology on Lombroso’s thinking are fairly obvious and were recognised by the criminal anthropologist himself, but the impact of Quetelet’s use of social statistics was even more profound (David G. Horn 12–3; 59–86). Given the influences of these three popular concepts, it is unsurprising that Lombroso’s work was so influential in the late nineteenth century even though his most famous book *Criminal Man* (1876) has still yet to be translated fully into English.¹¹ Britain and America were, after all, already primed for empirical inquiry into the link between physical difference and criminal behaviour as the association was already a popular one in literary texts many years before Lombroso’s *Criminal Man* was published—as attested to in studies by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, and Quayson.¹² Neil Davie shows us that in spite of an explicit resistance to Lombroso’s theories exhibited by many British criminologists, the theories were met with a favourable reaction by a number of notable British writers on psychology, including not only Galton and Havelock Ellis but also asylum-based psychiatrists on the margins of the criminal justice system, such as Thomas Clouston of the Edinburgh Royal Asylum, Samuel Strahan of the Northampton County Asylum, and Alfred F.

¹¹ For more on the international breadth of Lombroso’s work, see Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter’s introduction to their edited version of *Criminal Man* (2006) as well as Horn’s introduction to *The Criminal Body* (2003). Gibson and Rafter explain that before their edited version, which provides excerpts of all five editions of Lombroso’s text, only two texts “claim any relationship to Lombroso’s classic”—Gina Lombroso-Ferrero’s *Criminal Man* and the volume *Crime: Its Causes and Remedies* (both published in 1911)—and both versions radically oversimplify Lombroso’s theory (3–4).

¹² See Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*; Quayson.

Tredgold, author of a widely-read textbook on the subject of “feeble-mindedness” entitled *Mental Deficiency* (1908). Though Lombroso’s theories were certainly controversial, they were very much part of the social consciousness at the *fin de siècle* in both Britain and America. The deviant body became an increasingly centralised topic as anxieties about the physically aberrant 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 folklore views that saw the aberrant body as a potential threat to normative society. Drawing on disability theorist Tobin Siebers’s framework of the “evil eye event”—a dynamic in which “accusation exaggerates” physical and mental differences “until they take on a supernatural dimension” (27; qtd. in Schweik 153)—Susan M. Schweik shows how late nineteenth-century unsightly begging laws sought to protect the normate, in particular women, from bearing witness to physically aberrant, often dismembered, beggars. Schweik reveals that fears proliferated that seeing physically disabled people could have pathological effects on women, producing symptoms such as “seizures, hysteria, or ‘conniption’” (153).¹³ Fears of “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”—also thrived in this period. As Jan Bondeson shows us, 170 articles on maternal impression appeared in US scientific journals between 1839 and 1920 (158). Highlighting the intolerance of Western society to witnessing physical difference in real life, Schweik shows us how a number of American

¹³ Also see Ryan 69.

cities criminalised the display of “ugliness” in public spaces during the late nineteenth century. Though such abominable legislation did not appear in Britain in the period covered by this thesis, similar fears existed there. Stoddard Holmes explains that amidst an environment in which many conflicting theories arose, “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” (63). The sheer variety of explanations listed by Stoddard Holmes reveals the level of anxiety that surrounded the risk of becoming physically disabled in Victorian Britain.

Grounded by research into the intimacy of mind and body, in particular the role of the nervous system as the joining matter between the two, the arrival of phantom limb syndrome into the public arena further exacerbated fears of bodily loss. Coined in 1871 by the American neurologist and fiction writer Silas Weir Mitchell, phantom limb syndrome describes the common sensation whereby, when a limb has been amputated, “the sufferer does not lose consciousness of its existence” (“Phantom Limbs” 565). Weir Mitchell’s coinage stands to this day as the recognised term used to describe this condition. According to Weir Mitchell, phantom limb sensations were so frequent that only five per cent of amputees did not experience them (“Phantom Limbs” 565). Weir Mitchell suggested that this condition could manifest itself in several ways. It could cause a feeling that a lost limb was still attached and functioning, intense pain at an extremity no longer there, itchiness of a lost extremity, a feeling of “perpetual . . . automatic activity”, and a sensation of the “shortening of the

absent member” (“Phantom Limbs” 567–68).¹⁴ While some of these symptoms were known to medical practitioners long before Weir Mitchell’s work on the topic—he himself notes that Ambroise Paré, a sixteenth-century pioneer of amputation and prosthetics, referred to these kinds of sensation in his work on limb loss (“Phantom Limbs” 564)—it was the doctor’s own fictional account of a quadruple amputee in 1866 that brought public attention to this medical topic. Prior to Weir Mitchell’s coinage, other nineteenth-century medical practitioners, like Wilhelm Gottfried Ploucquet, Jeremais David Reuss, François Xavier Swediaur, Gabriel Valentin, Thomas Young, Godofredus Theodatus Rhone, Johannes Müller, and Charles Bell, all wrote about phantom limbs.¹⁵

Published anonymously, Weir Mitchell’s “The Case of George Dedlow”, a sketch about a man who lost all four of his limbs during the American Civil War, humorously explored some of the neurological, psychological, and ontological implications of amputation. Much to Weir Mitchell’s amazement, this sketch, which poses itself as a kind of medical report, was considered factual by many readers. According to Weir Mitchell, “Inquiries were made as to the whereabouts of the sufferer, and in an interior county of New York a subscription was actually started for the unhappy victim” (“Phantom Limbs” 564). While Weir Mitchell was careful to distance himself from this short story by providing a corrective to “The Case of George Dedlow” in his later medical article “Phantom Limbs”, there remain significant parallels between the

¹⁴ As Weir Mitchell explained, “Since the stump is the lowest *visible* point where pain or touch is felt, the sensorium or central organ of feeling gradually associates in place the lost hand or foot with the stump, the most remote existing part, impressions on which are referred to the lost limb”. “Hence arises a notion of shortening in the absent member”, he explained—“an idea which is more and more faintly contradicted by previous knowledge, and more and more reinforced by present subjective sensations” (“Phantom Limbs” 567). In other words, Weir Mitchell suggested that the visual and feeling senses become confused as a result of nerve damage to the severed limb, leading to a sensation whereby an outer extremity becomes associated with the end of a stump.

¹⁵ See Finger and Hustwit.

symptoms described by George Dedlow, who narrates his tragic story in the former, and Weir Mitchell's medical explanation in the latter. Though Dedlow does not define the condition that he describes as "phantom limb" syndrome, his observations of the limb consciousness that he and the other inpatients at the Stump Hospital (Nashville, TN) experience, in combination with the various sensations described—itching, pains, and cramps ("The Case" 131)—bear uncanny resemblance to those described in more detail in Weir Mitchell's later essay. In a slightly more figurative way than in "Phantom Limbs", using Dedlow as a mouthpiece, Weir Mitchell ventriloquially explains the neurological phenomenon of phantom limbs in layman's terms, using a simile of a bell-wire to explain why a sensation of a lost limb remains after it has been removed. As Dedlow suggests, a severed nerve present in a stump is like a bell-wire in that it can be stimulated at any part of its course and still produce a signal at its extremity. Weir Mitchell makes the same point in "Phantom Limbs", using the more immediate example of the sensation experienced when we hurt our "crazy-bone" (now known in the UK and US by the colloquial term the "funny-bone") to articulate this point. While Weir Mitchell's later essay explains phantom limb pain in a more intricate, medicalised way, the two pieces describe many of the same neurological symptoms of limb loss. In fact, the only aspects arising from "George Dedlow" that Weir Mitchell really refutes in his later article are: first, the possibility of surviving quadruple amputation; second, the fact that phantom limb pain only occurs in poorly formed stumps; and, third, that such extreme psychological states can be produced by amputations—Dedlow experiences delight while believing that he is united with his missing limbs at a spiritualistic séance before slipping into a dreary state of unhappiness.

The very symptoms of phantom limb pain described by Weir Mitchell reaffirmed beliefs in the importance of embodied wholeness. Weir Mitchell's texts revealed to relatively ignorant nineteenth-century medical and literary readers that losing a limb resulted not only in the loss of function of that part but also in severe and debilitating neurological symptoms—such came as a result of ruptured nerves, structures that were newly understood to link mind and body. Losing a limb took on greater meaning as it represented a disruption of the overall structural unity of the body. Highlighting the existence of muscular memory, something that O'Connor suggests allowed artificial limbs to function, Weir Mitchell's research into stump pathology suggested that phantom limb pain was a result of the body's refusal to accept dismemberment, again highlighting both the nervous link between mind and body and the perceived importance of physical integrity. However, complicating the premium placed on physical wholeness, often stumps had to be reamputated to cure some amputees of severe phantom limb symptoms. Weir Mitchell describes an example whereby this course of action was required in *Injuries of the Nerves* (1872).

O'Connor draws our attention to the feminising implications of the pathological stumps associated with phantom limb disorder (106–17). Revealing the gendered medical view of contemporary practitioners, O'Connor quotes John Erichsen, who in his 1854 treatise *The Science and Art of Surgery* associated “pathologically constituted stumps” with “feminine susceptibility” (O'Connor 107). According to Erichsen, most serious cases of intense stump pain and twitching arise “from constitutional causes, and invariably occurs in females, more particularly in those of the hysterical temperament, and who are subject to neuralgic pains elsewhere” (87; qtd. in O'Connor 107). As O'Connor argues,

The notion that stump pathology is not only feminine, but female, had far-reaching consequences for medical and social understandings of the male amputee, whose manhood was thereby implicated in an effeminate pain pattern. Altering the body in ways that were as psychically threatening as they were physically therapeutic, amputation raised the possibility that cutting off a man's limb could cut a man off from himself. (107–8)

It is clear that O'Connor's concern is the male amputee. It is true that "jumpy stumps" presented a feminising threat to male amputees, but the implications of such on female amputees should not be overlooked.¹⁶ Jane Wood has noted how hysteria was a condition "whose clinical criteria could be modified in order to diagnose all the behaviours which did not fit the prescribed model of Victorian womanhood" (12). Female amputees were rendered even further from ideals of womanhood by neurotic stumps. The spasmodic and wild behaviour of such stumps exhibited the negative traits against which ideal womanhood was defined, providing an additional symptom of loss that female (as well as male) amputees needed to conceal in order to pass. The exposure of phantom limb syndrome to public audience therefore exacerbated fears of limb loss to both male and female readers.

In addition to works such as Erichsen's, which show that pathological stumps were part of medical consciousness before Weir Mitchell's work on the topic, literary texts, such as Frederick Marryat's *Jacob Faithful* (1834) and Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), exhibited the curious and confounding behaviour of amputated stumps. Though published before Weir

¹⁶ G. Martin Huggins echoes Weir Mitchell's observations about stump pathology in a section of his book *Amputation Stumps* (1918) entitled "Jumpy Stumps". According to Huggins, a jumpy stump is "a certain type of neurotic stump which jumps whenever the surgeon approaches to examine it" (149; qtd. in O'Connor 109). For work on stump pathology in the First World War, see Julie Anderson, "Jumpy stump".

Mitchell's nuanced work on the topic, these stories fostered fears of bodily loss as they presented stumps as unruly and perplexing. Marryat's *Jacob Faithful*, a popular bildungsroman for children, features a character called Old Tom, a double amputee naval veteran who lost his legs fighting in the battle of Trafalgar during the Napoleonic Wars. While Old Tom can be considered an archetypal "good" prosthesis-using navy veteran—alongside later fictional examples such as Dickens's Captain Cuttle from *Dombey and Son* (1846–48) and Gruff and Glum from *Our Mutual Friend*—what is unique about Marryat's character is that he makes manifest not only the functional limitations of primitive prostheses, which were the vogue for Greenwich Hospital amputees, but also the nervous peculiarities that so often accompanied limb loss. Much to his son, Tom, and the eponymous protagonist, Jacob's, surprise, Old Tom reveals that despite being amputated above both knees, his toes give him periodic discomfort. "[S]ometimes I feel them just as plain as if they were now on, instead of being long ago in some shark's maw", Old Tom reveals, "At nights I has the cramp in them till it almost makes me halloo out with pain. It's a hard thing when one has lost the sarvice of his legs [sic], that all the feelings should remain. The doctor says as how its nervous" (sic; 178). Here, then, Old Tom reveals his own excruciating experience of what would later be labelled by Weir Mitchell phantom limb pain. Marryat presents Old Tom's curious, painful, and neurotic stumps as medical curios evoking the nineteenth-century fascination with bodily abnormality exhibited in freak shows.¹⁷

Dickens's depiction of Wegg has previously been linked to Marryat's characterisation of Old Tom. Michael Cotsell, for instance, highlights the

¹⁷ For more on this fascination, see Craton; Durbach; Garland-Thomson, *Freakery* and *Extraordinary Bodies*; Tromp.

affinities between the two characters' propensities to alter the words of songs to fit the occasion (50). The most significant likeness in terms of the cultural construction of wholeness, however, is that both characters display phantom limb symptoms. While reading various accounts of misers to Mr Boffin in Chapter Six of Book Three in *Our Mutual Friend*, the amputee Silas Wegg becomes increasingly excited. His excitement is signified by the prodding and elevation of his wooden leg: he repeatedly "peg[s]" his comrade (513–15), Mr Venus, and his leg "start[s] forward under the table , and slowly elevate[s] itself as he read[s]" (515). Though these impulsive movements could be read to display self-action on the part of his prosthesis, as Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph's argument implies,¹⁸ or just Wegg's comical absurdity, such neurotic behaviour could also be read as the twitching of a stump occasioned by phantom limb or jumpy stump syndrome. The involuntary movement of Wegg's leg eventually results in him losing balance and "dropp[ing] over sideways" onto Venus (515). The automatous behaviour of Wegg's peg, powered by what seems a pathologised stump, bears resemblance to the "curious spasmodic maladies" described by Weir Mitchell in his later essay on phantom limbs ("Phantom Limbs" 564). Wegg is himself described as "spasmodic" when he attempts to pick himself up off of the floor (515). The clear phallic resemblance of this unconscious behaviour—a body part becoming erect before reaching a violent climax and ending with the subject left in a "pecuniary swoon" (515)—is undermined by the feminine, hysterical undertones of Wegg's actions. His lack of self-control and compromised position at the end of this

¹⁸ In their essay "Prefiguring the Posthuman" (2004), Sussman and Joseph argue that "the oscillation in Dickens's work between representing characters as self-acting 'things' and as 'people,' (i.e., as nineteenth-century liberal subjects moved by ethical will), registers a Victorian discursive practice wherein the boundary between the machine and the human tends to dissolve" (617).

scene—where he lies on Venus in a swoon-like state—highlights his unmanned condition as an amputee in a problematically humorous fashion. This scene is clearly intended to be humorous. It was not uncommon for Dickens to use physical difference for comic purposes. For instance, in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), the author encourages the reader to laugh at the villainous one-eyed schoolmaster Wackford Squeers’s mishaps that are brought about by his lack of full peripheral vision. With regard to Squeers, Philip Hobsbaum writes that the “Jonsonian” humour of Squeers’s representation makes tolerable what would otherwise seem an intolerable “rhetoric of indignation” towards Yorkshire schoolmasters (52). In a similar fashion, Dickens uses grotesque comedy to lighten what would otherwise be a frustrating story about a duplicitous “cripple” who almost upsets the cultural applecart by climbing the social ladder (explored further in ch. 3). His depiction of Wegg’s out-of-control stump, however, also exacerbates anxieties about physical loss. For Dickens, the amputee is at once fascinating, confounding, and suspicious.

In addition to the anxieties that perpetuated fears about the loss of limbs, including those who detailed the behaviours of neurotic stumps, the idea was also prevalent that physical wholeness comprised a full head of hair and a complete set of teeth. Regarding the importance of hair, Galia Ofek notes how it “became increasingly significant to the formation of self-image since the growth of the European city and the ascendance of the bourgeoisie in the early stages of mercantile capitalism” (2). During the nineteenth century, Ofek writes, “among the middle classes in Victorian England, women’s hair turned into a salient focal point as fashion dictates and social mores prohibited bare hands, legs, and other parts which were covered for modesty’s sake, thereby turning hair, neck, and shoulders into the ‘focus of sexual interest’ which substituted ‘for

all the rest” (3). This explains, to some extent, the significance of hair among females, but what about its significance for men? It is true that men’s haircuts grew shorter and less ornate during the nineteenth century. But displaying a full head of hair was still important for men as baldness signified physical decline, something that men were keen to ward off. In Kay Heath’s chapter about male midlife anxieties in her book *Aging by the Book* (2009), she uses an advertisement for the Edwardian “hair grower” Tatcho in which maker George R. Sims challenges British men with the headline, “Bald, grey, or sparse of Hair: what are your chances in life?” (qtd. in Heath 25). Quoting the advertisement, Heath writes, “baldness ‘is a touchy subject with most men,’ because age can be determined by hair rather than years: while a shiny pate makes one ‘old at thirty,’ ‘with a good head of hair’ a man ‘may look young at fifty’” (25). As Heath shows us, in a time when “concepts like occupation and physical prowess replaced traditional notions of privilege to determine the measure of a man” (25), it became less desirable for men to display signs of old age in public spaces.¹⁹

The demand for a full set of clean, healthy teeth gained purchase in the nineteenth century as urbanisation and the promises of capitalism encouraged individuals to “cultivate good surface impressions” (Halttunen 42–3). M. D. K. Bremner has noted that the demand for perfect teeth was first cultivated in modern society in early eighteenth-century France: “High society developed a pagan view of life. Beauty became the dominant note of the age. Well-to-do people sought health, comfort and good looks and tried above all to retain their youth. Since a toothless face can look neither young nor beautiful, there was great demand for dentistry” (55). Pioneering dentist Pierre Fauchard reaped the

¹⁹ For more on this, see ch. 5.

rewards of such a culture, but it was not until the 1840s that dentistry began to professionalise more widely across Europe and North America—rather late compared to other branches of science and medicine, such as anatomy and physiology.²⁰ The rise of dentistry at this time shows the impact and prevalence of physiognomy in the early to mid-Victorian period. As Karen Halttunen notes, advice manuals published between 1830 and 1850 implored readers to take care of their personal appearances: “Surface impressions were essential to success in the world of strangers . . . because appearances revealed character” (40). The desire for good teeth was exacerbated by the sheer volume of advertisements for teeth-related products that potential consumers in Britain and America were bombarded with—in particular following the Great Exhibition of 1851.²¹ M. Cox et al observe that “Patented tinctures and powders proliferated . . . particularly in response to periodontal disease and the removal of calculus” (595). Peter A. Reichart meanwhile draws attention to the prevalence of the Areca nut in popular tooth pastes and powders. Stimulated by major developments in dentistry—including the introduction of anaesthesia and the use of vulcanite, a cheap and easy material to work with in the manufacture of false teeth—the mandate for good teeth was so great that by 1877 one journalist wrote,

Natural teeth, clean, sound, and perfect, are essential to the comeliness of any human face. Defective teeth mar the handsomest features and cause us to turn away our gaze with a kind of disgust from a countenance otherwise faultlessly beautiful.

²⁰ Before this time, in particular in England, dentistry was amateurish and replete with charlatanism. Its reputation was very poor and it served primarily as a relief of pain service (N. David Richards 139).

²¹ Thomas Richards argues that out of the Great Exhibition, the 1887 and 1897 Jubilees of Queen Victoria, and the various Imperial Exhibitions of the 1890s “came all of the familiar imperatives of modern commodity culture, with its emphasis on status, exoticism, health, and female sexuality” (71). Richards plots the rise of advertising against these public spectacles while also considering the importance of illustrations, which were printed more cheaply following developments in printing technologies.

Sound teeth not only add to the comfort and personal appearance, but contribute largely to the health of all, hence special and scrupulous attention should be paid to them daily, from early childhood, from the time when the first permanent tooth makes its appearance about the sixth year. ("The Teeth" 305)

In order to make a good first impression in a world where cultivating an appearance of physical wholeness was more important than ever before, a good set of teeth was a fundamental requirement.

As this brief survey has shown, various factors, including the rise of empirical models of understanding the body, debates surrounding the mind-body relationship, and changing gender models, contributed to the coming of age of physical wholeness as the dominant bodily form in the nineteenth century. The concept of physical wholeness, as its label would suggest, encompassed all aspects of the "normative" human body, including full heads of hair and full sets of teeth. Despite the support that normalcy gained from so many echelons of society, the analyses of prosthesis narratives that appear later in this chapter show how literary representations of prostheses simultaneously endorsed and critiqued the emerging hegemony of wholeness. Such stories reflect the binary-breaking potential of prostheses themselves—prostheses undermine binaries of Self/Other, organic/artificial, real/fake, and able/disabled.

Reconstructing Wholeness: The Prosthesis Market and Demands for Physical Completion

Before we turn to fictional representations of prostheses, it is worth considering the position that the emerging prosthesis market assumed amidst the culture described so far in this chapter. Aligning with the trends in patent

medicine described by historians such as Thomas Richards, Claire L. Jones, and Jamie Stark, prosthetists of all types, including makers of limbs, eyes, teeth, and hair, capitalised on growing anxieties about the body and health, in particular the growing mandate for physical wholeness.²² As O'Connor has shown us, the notion of wholeness and rebuilding maimed amputees to such a condition was commonly evoked by artificial limb makers. American prosthesis firm A. A. Marks, one of the most famous and 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 legs and who were brought in by attendants" (qtd. George E. Marks 154; emphasis added). 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" (qtd. in George E. Marks 232). Limb makers like Marks were keen to assert to potential users the abilities of their devices to "recomplete" "disaggregated" bodies. Testimony pages, such as the ones from which the quotes above are extracted, were important locations where makers could communicate the quality of their devices to potential consumers without attracting the quack stigma that patent medicine makers received for more blatant advertisements.²³ Chapter Four will explore the gendered rhetoric of Marks's notion of "recompleting" amputees.

²² Also see Young and Digby.

²³ As Claire L. Jones writes, "The inclusion of testimonials in the form of extracts from reputable medical journals, such as the *Lancet* or *British Medical Journal*, or from books, meant that companies could distance themselves from disreputable conduct in the eyes of their practitioner readership" (38).

Artificial limb makers were not the only ones to draw from the hegemony of wholeness in their advertisements. French artificial eye maker Auguste Boissonneau, who brought his highly rated enamel artificial eyes to Britain and Ireland in the early 1850s drew directly from a number of the cultural factors described above that contributed to the stigmatisation of those missing body parts. An advertisement printed in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* in 1852 read,

Mr. Boissonneau has succeeded in removing the physionomical defect, which is the consequence of such a loss, by his newly-devised Artificial Eyes, which patients can apply themselves with the greatest ease. The movements of the artificial substitute are so admirable that it is hardly possible to distinguish nature from art. The use of these eyes is fully appreciated by those who are aware how much irregularities of the face mar a man's career (Auguste Boissonneau, front page).

Drawing from prejudices against one-eyedness, including those brought about by physiognomy and concepts of work that equated "unhealthy" bodies with ineptitude, advertisements such as this also buttressed such discrimination by presenting it as an unquestionable reality in public forums. Sources like this also pandered to the demands of this rhetoric by providing a means with which to occlude physical difference from public view. For Boissonneau and his contemporaries, prejudices against physical incompleteness were what made their work viable in the competitive marketplace.

Advertisements for false teeth sold by firms such as Field and Co., Mr P. B. André, and the Holborn Dental Institute meanwhile highlighted the completeness of their devices as replacements for lost teeth. Each of these firms guaranteed that their teeth "answer[ed] to the purpose for which they are intended, viz: Mastication, Articulation, and Natural Appearance" (Holborn

Dental Institute). False teeth were thus pitched as prostheses that could replace both functionally and aesthetically the body part(s) that they replaced. As we see later in this chapter and in Chapter Five, not everyone was convinced by such claims.

Wig makers were often much bolder in their assertions, claiming that their devices could in fact enhance the “natural” body. An advertisement for one seller read,

The natural grace and adornment of these,
 Can't fail to delight, but are certain to please.
 No sooner, in fact, are they worn by the fair,
 Than at once they outrival the natural Hair.
 'Tis suprising to notice how much they're worn!
 If a fair-one is seen at a play or a ball,
 Such 'Fronts' are admired by each and by all;
 And if the good Lady should chance to be *single*,
 She'll shortly be hail'd by the *marriage-bells' jingle!* (Professor F.
 Browne)

This poem highlights the demand for full heads of hair but also shows how, unlike the other prostheses discussed in this thesis, artificial hair was not just used as a supplement for loss. False fronts and trusses were popular adornments for women, in particular in the 1860s when the fashion for artificial hair was at its height.²⁴ The popularity of artificial hair at the mid-century actually shifted accepted standards for women's hair. The prevalence of additional hair pieces meant that, temporarily, the concept of completeness enveloped an expectation that women would have more hair than most were naturally

²⁴ Hair enhancers and replacements, like false fronts, false chignons (artificial curls), wigs, toupees, and other hair pieces became so popular that in 1849 6,200 pounds of human hair—which was the most popular manufacturing material for these adornments—was imported to England from France alone (Rowland 164). From 1855 to 1868, sales of false hair went up by four-hundred per cent, highlighting the increasing popularity of artificiality (Ofek 37). By 1880, London alone was said to annually consume over 100,000 pounds of human hair (Leonard 9).

adorned with. Although, as Ofek has shown us, artificial hair was a technology treated with suspicion even when it was at its most popular, its prevalence at the mid-century meant that the “whole” body upon which the concept of the “normal” body was based temporarily became one with more hair than most could grow naturally. Such reveals the arbitrary and constructed nature of physical “norms”, a point made elsewhere by Lennard J. Davis, Garland-Thomson, and others.²⁵

The way that prostheses were marketed as devices that could remove the visual presence of physical difference is of course problematic and it is worth drawing attention to such before moving on to explore the way that literature responded to the technologies advertised by prosthetists. We can consider the process of prostheticising the aberrant body in order to enable it to pass as “normal” a kind of rehabilitation process, a concept that irks many disability scholars and activists. Rehabilitation seeks to remove physical difference from sight. As Henri-Jacques Stiker explains, “rehabilitation marks the appearance of a culture that attempts to complete the act of identification, of making identical. This act will cause the disabled to disappear, dissolve them in the greater and single social whole” (128). I do not wish here to dismiss the reality of impairment or undermine the importance of creating technologies that make the lives of people with impairments easier or less painful but it is a undoubted historical trend, evidenced by the marketing ploys described above, that the production of prostheses has often supported ideological—eradicating the visual presence of difference—rather than ameliorative purposes.

²⁵ See Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*.

Poor Prostheses: Lambasting or Legitimising the Demand for Wholeness?

The relationship that literature had with 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. On the other hand, depictions tended to mock attempts at replicating the natural form of the human body thereby problematising the social investment placed in occluding physical difference from public view. One of if not *the* most popular trope in prosthesis narratives was the comically faulty prosthesis. As the rest of this chapter shows, this trope simultaneously drew from both aspects of representation sketched out above. The faulty prosthesis in Victorian fiction was not simply a throw-away humorous motif but was a representational trope that revealed the complex and contradictory attitudes that encompassed responses to contemporary prostheses. The following will investigate a particular sub-trope of the comically faulty prosthesis trope for each type of prosthesis investigated in this thesis. If we consider the use of prostheses inspired by a “medical model” of physical difference, the following provides examples of Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky’s claim that the “‘medical model’, powerful though it has been in shaping the life experiences of people with disabilities, has never gone uncontested” (259). Since they are the most common prosthesis discussed in Victorian literature, I shall begin by looking at artificial legs.

The cumbersome lower-limb prosthesis is one of the most easily found devices in Victorian literature. Of the nineteenth century’s most well-remembered fictional prosthesis users, Silas Wegg from Charles Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), Captain Ahab from Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851), and Jonathan Small from Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* (1890)

are all artificial leg users. Many remember Robert Louis Stevenson's Long John Silver as a wooden leg user, but the author makes it explicitly clear in *Treasure Island* (1881–82) that the sea-cook-turned-pirate is a crutch rather than wooden leg user.²⁶ Of Wegg, Ahab, and Small, all three of these characters experience very conspicuous difficulties with their prosthetic limbs. Ahab is impacted throughout *Moby-Dick* by the awkwardness of his ivory prosthesis, a device that he demands to be made out of such an impractical material to remind him of the beast responsible for causing his loss. The limitations of Ahab's prostheses are revealed best by the adaptations required to his ship, the *Perquod*. As I show in Chapter Two, Melville's representation questions the efficacy of and very concept underpinning prostheses, endorsing instead (to a degree, at least) an accessible-environment model for dealing with disability. Wegg is well-remembered for the ungraceful manner by which he walks or, rather, "stumps". He is affected more significantly by the inefficacy of his wooden leg when traversing the deceased John Harmon, Sr.'s dust heaps in the hope of beating Noddy Boffin and his allies to the discovery of a more recent version of the former's will. In Chapter Three of this thesis, I discuss Wegg's difficulties in more depth, considering such in relation to distinctions between peg and artificial legs, and in relation to class mobility. At the end of the century, Conan Doyle depicted Small as an unlikely but surprisingly athletic villainous amputee who is ultimately failed by his wooden leg in a climatic chase scene, leading to his capture by Sherlock Holmes. After his capture, Small recalls how his wooden leg served better as a weapon than a prosthesis in a sub-narrative that emphasised the inadequacy of artificial limbs. His narrative flipped the premium on wholeness on its head by presenting a threateningly transgressive,

²⁶ See Sweet, "Pirates and Prosthetics".

weaponised amputee. Together these narratives, in addition to less-well-remembered prosthesis narratives, such as Thomas Hood's *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41), Henry Clay Lewis's "The Indefatigable Bear Hunter" (1850), and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) perpetuated fears of physical loss as they detailed the struggles of amputees while reinforcing negative prejudices—for instance, that which associated physical loss with villainy. However, these representations can also be read as critiques of prostheticisation, a process mandated by the privileging of wholeness that is shown to be ineffective.

Artificial hands and arms are certainly less pronounced in nineteenth-century literature than artificial legs. While hook hand users, including, most famously, Captain Cuttle and Captain Hook, were occasionally represented, artificial hands—as in the prostheses that attempt to replicate the appearance of the lost limb rather than just its functions—were few and far between in literary texts from this period. Those who are portrayed in texts such as Robert Williams Buchanan's "Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand" (1862) and T. Lockhart's "Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring" (1895) bring to fore the haptic differences between organic and artificial hands. In "Lady Letitia's Lilliput Hand", a sensational tale about a mysterious woman with conspicuously dainty and highly attractive hands, the eponymous protagonist's icy cold left hand stimulates a lover's discovery that it is in fact artificial. This revelation brings with it a sensational tale that explains the loss of Lady Letitia's organic hand and provides a heartrending back story of deception. In Buchanan's story, it is the sensory difference of Lady Letitia's prosthesis that is 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 the tale. Adding to such an

aesthetic, there is a scene where 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 different to an organic one in that it both feels different to others and is unable to feel itself. In aesthetic terms, the hand acts as a Gothic prop, a kind of uncanny vestige of the past that works as a sensational plot device.

The unfeelingness of an artificial hand functions in a similar fashion in Lockhart's "Prince Rupert's Emerald Ring". The plot of this story centres on a valuable ring that goes missing following a wedding party. As it is revealed, 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. Early on 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" (301). The hand is even shown to possess some advantages over his real hand: first, his false fingers are more slender than those of his real hand, which are too gouty for the ring to fit; second, when he trips over, 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 prosthetics revealed. The timing of this particular story, at the end of the nineteenth century, is particularly interesting since at this time prosthetics were often heralded as particularly lifelike. One testimonial in A. A. Marks's 1888 treatise on prosthetics stated, "The arm I ordered off 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" (Snipes qtd. in George E. Marks 377). Because of the mimetic capacities of contemporary prosthetics, we might consider Lockhart's story an

ontological critique of prosthetics. For Lockhart, for a part to be considered of the body, it must be a feeling entity. Thus the story suggests that while false parts may look and even function like real hands, they remain an appendage rather than a part of the structural whole since they cannot harmonise with the nervous system of the body. The ablest premium on physical wholeness is again brought to the fore.

Similar to Buchanan's short story where the uncanniness of a prosthesis, its simultaneous verisimilitude and deadness, causes a rupture or turning point in the narrative, the appearance of artificial eyes attracted similar attention in cultural and literary texts. Novels containing individuals who had lost eyes, such as Anthony Trollope's *The Bertrams* (1859) and George Du Maurier's *The Martian* (1897), presented glass eye users as having particularly disconcerting appearances. The glass eye user of Trollope's novel, Miss Ruff, is said to look as sinister in appearance as she is in character: "She has a way of looking with that fixed eye of hers that is almost worse than her voice" (260). Du Maurier meanwhile describes a man with a fixed eye in the following manner, emphasising the unfavourable appearance that glass eye users were thought to have: "He was not an Adonis, and could only see out of one eye—the other (the left one, fortunately) was fixed as it were made of glass—perhaps it was—and this gave him a stern and rather forbidding expression of face" (66). The 1890 *Pick-Me-Up* sketch "The Man with the Glass Eye" took criticisms of the appearance of artificial eyes to another level, suggesting that they resemble the eyes of dead people. In this sketch, a man goes to the dentist to have a molar removed. He is placed under anaesthetic for the procedure. After the tooth is removed, a medical student raises the patient's eyelid to find that his pupil is not dilated as it should be. Panic ensues but, thankfully, the patient eventually

comes round. Upon awakening, he reveals that the eye that the student checked is artificial. On the one hand, this story draws our attention to the impressive verisimilitude that ocular prostheses had achieved by the 1890s, but, on the other, suggests that the fixed stillness of such eyes gave an uncanny impression. According to the story, there was a deadness to the appearance of a glass eye, which in certain scenarios could be concerning.

Literary representations of wigs often dwelt upon the showy nature of such appendages. However, drawing from a growing interest in both the hygiene of hair and holistic medical models, some representations depicted artificial hair as something that could corrupt the mind of a user. J. Crawford Scott's 1889 *Gentleman's Magazine* short story "The Flaxen Wig", for instance, was a tale that drew directly from the contemporary association of wig use with detrimental physical symptoms. The story documents how an overheated scalp can lead to several undesirable consequences. Scott's story follows the attempts of Brodrick Adrian, a wealthy forty-nine-year-old bachelor, in his late quest to find a suitable wife with whom to share his supposed fortune. Taking a more "particular" interest in his personal appearance (106), Adrian purchases an expensive, high-quality flaxen wig to cover his bald head. The wig is shown to have a profound psychological impact on the wearer. A highly acclaimed French doctor destroys the device in order to restore the sanity of its user.

The idea that a wig could drive someone insane seems ridiculous today, but this story drew from genuine fears about wig use. In her book *Fashion and Eroticism* (1985), Valerie Steele suggests that some conservative critics of women's fashion saw artificial hair as potentially contaminated with disease (126). The depravity of hair-growers was often acknowledged in the medical

treatises about hair that proliferated from the mid-century.²⁷ As late as 1880, for instance, hair doctor C. Henri Leonard wrote, “As a rule, the hair-growers are a degraded race of people, filthy in their habits, living in low mud huts, and wearing but excuses for clothes” (11). Though few conclusions were drawn from the link between the spread of hair diseases and the popularity of wig use, as early as 1849 it was suggested that covering the head with wigs, caps, bonnets, or other headwear could impede hair growth and damage existing follicles. The artificial part, then, was seen to possess the potential to further break down the already compromised wholeness of the user. James Stokes argued that “There is no part of the body which suffers more from heat and pressure than the head—no one, therefore, which requires to be kept cooler and less encumbered; neither of which important requisites are sufficiently obtained, in the male sex particularly, by the hats and caps now in fashion” (14). Later, in 1887, George Thomas Jackson supported this claim and more assertively discouraged wig wearing: “The wearing of wigs and false hair is bad for whatever hair remains, and should not be practiced. . . . Wigs heat the head and sweat the hair. False hair by its weight drags upon the feeble hair it is designed to fortify” (56).²⁸ Such anxieties were hyperbolised by Scott’s text. “The Flaxen Wig” reaffirmed preferences for the natural as it lambasted artifice. But such a rebuttal reveals how complex and paradoxical such bodily discourse

²⁷ See, for instance, Stokes, Deville, Perry, Beigel, Godfrey, and Leonard.

²⁸ In addition to the fear of overheating the scalp, the foreignness of artificial hair was also a concern to a number of social critics. Comically critiquing Queen Victoria’s efforts to encourage British women to only purchase fashion goods produced in their home nation, in 1873 *Punch* asked the provocative question, “What is a chignon but a foreign decoration; . . . much of the false hair probably comes from foreign prisons and hospitals” (“A Woman’s Question” 123). See Ofek 33–102, 215–16. While these Victorian hair doctors may not have been right in identifying the reason why artificial hair use could stimulate hair loss, twentieth-century research corroborates their claims about headwear causing hair loss. In his 1980 instructional book *Baldness and Hair Care*, D. J. Drabble suggests that the friction caused by wearing “unsuitable headwear” can lead to baldness (27).

was in this period since the decision to wear a wig was encouraged by the cultural dominance of physical wholeness.

In a not dissimilar way to how the flaxen wig is presented in Scott's short story, elsewhere dentures were also revealed as physically threatening devices. Indeed, of all the prosthetic devices available to Victorians who had lost body parts, false teeth were the most dangerous on the market. These artificial replacements were hazardous for a couple of reasons. First, false teeth often became loosened by wear, damage, or accident, which could lead to an artificial tooth, part of a plate, or the whole denture being swallowed or inhaled. There was an inherent risk that the prosthesis could compromise its own state of physical integrity thereby putting the health, and thus the wholeness, of the user in jeopardy. A surgical procedure to remove a stray tooth or part of a denture would further compromise the physical integrity of a user. Second, vulcanised rubber, a material often used to make false teeth, was found to cause illness if not processed correctly.²⁹ Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, in both British and American dental and medical periodicals, numerous articles were published that highlighted the apparent dangers of these prosthetics.³⁰ The potential risks of wearing false teeth were so great that some

²⁹ As David Genese suggested in his 1889 article for the journal *Annals of Hygiene*: "it is not in the metallic oxides used in preparation of rubber that danger lies (as the percentage of rubber sore mouths is so small—1 in 50,000)". Instead, he proposed that "in the vulcanization itself, which instead of converting the prepared rubber as received from the depots into vulcanite can be, by carelessness, converted into a porous plate, containing hundreds of thousands of minute holes". Genese's theory was that each hole could "absorb and retain the fermentation from food products, and by its presence constantly against the tissues of the mouth cause blood poison" (119). Genese also noted that gold and silver plates could be dangerous as they were often soldered with "inferior metals", which could cause illness (120). Other medical men, like Ephraim Cutter, argued that the mercury—an element now known to be extremely toxic—which was used to colour vulcanised rubber plates was the cause of denture-related mouth and throat illnesses. See Cutter.

³⁰ A select sample of medical and dental articles that deal with these risks: James Duncan, "Case of Fatal Hemorrhage from Perforation of the Arch of the Aorta, by False Teeth Impacted in the Œsophagus" (1844); "Lodgement of False Teeth in the Œsophagus" (1864); "The Singular Accident Which Compelled a Man to Starve to Death" (1879); "Two Cases of Swallowing False Teeth" (1886); "Poisoning from False-Teeth Plates" (1889); R. H.

dentists even discouraged patients from using them on a daily basis. Writing in *The American Journal of Dental Science* in 1858, W. C. suggested that dentures should only be used when they are needed, like a “pocket handkerchief” (426). According to the author, limiting the use of false teeth reduced risks of “all accidents of breath, of sleeping with the teeth in, or wearing them when at work, or at boxing” (427).

Others suggested that, if made from the correct materials, dentures could help to heal throat ailments. Ephraim Cutter, for instance, argued that vulcanised rubber, gold, and silver denture plates could cause throat disease but suggested that silicon teeth plates could cure throat infections since they “agree perfectly with the oral tissues, are cleanly and comfortable” and remove “reflex irritation, oral and otherwise” (388). A note in the *Boston Journal of Health* in 1890 went even further, claiming that the use of false teeth had increased the average age at death by four to six years (“False Teeth Lengthen Life” 72).³¹ It was also a running joke that swallowing false teeth could improve digestion.³² In spite of these tall claims, fiction tended not to agree with the ameliorative prophecies of optimistic dentists, instead highlighting the dangerous disfunctionality of false teeth.

The motif of false teeth falling out was a popular one in cultural and literary representations. As Chapter Four shows, short stories such as “Too Hard upon my Aunt” (1863) and “Kitty the Careless” (1883) advised female readers against selecting certain types of false teeth prone to malfunction—

Rozenzweig, “False Teeth Swallowed” (1891); John A. Wyeth, “Esophagotomy for the Removal of False Teeth” (1905).

³¹ The article suggests that denture-use enables people to eat healthier diets for longer thus enabling them to live longer: “Men of seventy no longer either look or feel old, because they are not deprived of nourishing food at the time when they need it most” (“False Teeth Lengthen Life” 72).

³² See “A Pittsburg, Pa.”.

such as springless partial plates. In “Too Hard upon My Aunt”, a woman’s set of teeth fail her during a meal, causing her to feign illness in order to avoid embarrassment. In “Kitty the Careless”, an otherwise attractive young woman’s false teeth fall out, frightening a potential suitor into fleeing. Drawing upon this theme, a distasteful 1881 *Fun* joke read, “The poor lady who was found suffocated in bed the other morning through swallowing her false teeth ought to be a warning to others, *by gum!*” (“Curt Comments” 187; original emphasis). In the 1879 *Fun* cartoon “Retributive Justice” (1879), a denture-wearing woman is hit with a snowball, which dislodges and locks her teeth fast shut (Figure 1.1). F. C. Phillips emphasised the unreliability of such devices in a literary article for *Pick-Me-Up* in 1893. In this article Phillips wrote, “There is no doubt that artificial teeth are very erratic in their behaviour; they are pleasant company enough, so long as they keep tight, but when they get ‘on the loose’ they ‘jar’ on one. And they are slippery customers; sometimes they will explore your internal regions, and a tooth-pill is not beneficial to the constitution” (352). Though, as we will see in Chapter Two, false teeth certainly were not the only types of prosthesis imagined as a physical threat to humans in the nineteenth century, their malfunctioning did provide inspiration for a significant body of material. These depictions cultivated fears about losing real teeth, thereby strengthening the hegemony of wholeness, while mocking the vanity that made consumers succumb to such temptations. Even though false teeth literally were killers, they remained popular to the end of the nineteenth century and beyond. The fact that so many continued to use false teeth in spite of the risks of embarrassment or, worse, choking that such devices presented was an absurdity that humourists were keen to exploit. Falsely permitting an impression of dental completeness, dentures risked disrupting the physical integrity of users, both literally and

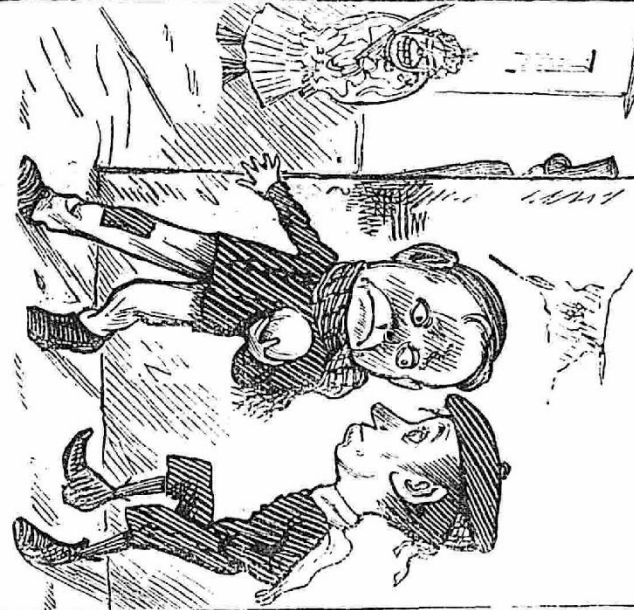
Mar. 5, 1879.]

FUN.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.



H. L.
Mrs. McGubbins (who perceives her landlord on her track): "Here, boy, here's a penny. Snowball that old man coming round the corner."



He who received the penny (having looked round the corner): "Oh, Bill, did yer see the old swindle give me a penny to snowball an old man, and blowed if it ain't my grandfather. Give it her hot."



The snowball that hit Mrs. McGubbins disarranged her artificial teeth, so that she couldn't close her mouth, and, thinking she had look-jaw, she sat down in the snow and screamed horribly.

Figure 1.1 A comical cartoon of an old lady who is struck by a snowball, disarranging her false teeth. From *Fun* 29 (1879): 93. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals* (Series 1).

figuratively, meaning that they often appeared at the crux of literary interrogations of the mandate for physical completeness.

As this chapter has shown, the nineteenth century witnessed the codification of a social system that privileged physical wholeness and marginalised those who displayed physical loss. A number of historical factors encouraged and strengthened this situation. Such factors included the rise of bodily statistics and the concept of the “normal” man; the popularity of physiognomy as means by which to negotiate urban modernity; changes in legislation that encouraged the categorising of bodies as either fit or not; changing models of work that saw the vigorous body as the foundation for success; scientific developments that further broke down the boundary between the mind and the body, and suggested that interiors could be accessed by exteriors; the publicity of bewildering symptoms of bodily loss, such as phantom limb syndrome; changing fashions and standards of decency meaning that the hair took on increased value; increased emphasis on self-presentation and the emergence of medical interest in the mouth, which led to a demand for good teeth. In such a society, prosthesis makers, whose businesses during this time benefited from a growing knowledge of the human body, technological developments, and innovations in hygiene and surgical procedures, cashed in on such demands for physical wholeness by providing devices that they claimed could conceal physical loss from public view, thereby allowing users to pass as “normal”. In contrast, fictional representations of prostheses held a complex relationship with the emerging hegemony of wholeness. The trope of the poorly functioning prosthesis, which as the above shows was a popular way of displaying prosthetics in fictional texts, coextensively endorsed demands for physical wholeness by perpetuating fears of physical loss while critiquing the

very devices whose existence was underpinned by such discourse. Chapters Three, Four, and Five show how this complex negotiation with the concept of wholeness played out in relation to representational factors such as class, gender, and age. The next chapter, however, showcases how certain prosthesis narratives problematised the contemporary hegemony of physical wholeness by imaging powerful non-normative and non-human alternatives.

2 “The infurnal thing”: Autonomy and Ability in Narratives of Disabling, Self-Acting, and Weaponised Prostheses

Steve Austin, astronaut, a man barely alive. Gentlemen, we can rebuild him. We have the technology. We have the capability to make the world's first bionic man. Steve Austin will be that man. Better, stronger, faster.
—Opening monologue to *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1974–78).

The Six Million Dollar Man, a sci-fi television series that aired on British and American screens from 1974 to 1978, has been interpreted by recent critics as mirroring the “real-world context” of the 1970s, which was “marked by the corresponding headlines scientists were then beginning to make by producing such real prostheses as the first artificial heart” (Telotte 17). The series depicted the OSI (Office of Science Intelligence) missions of Steve Austin, a former astronaut, who, following a life-threatening accident, was rebuilt using newly-invented sophisticated biotechnologies. Timothy Moy suggests that 1970s television programmes like *The Six Million Dollar Man* were symptomatic of a realisation of a “technological utopianism not prevalent since the beginning of the twentieth century” (211). Similarly, Lincoln Geraghty contends that “The cybernetic implants and appendages used to give Austin new life and new powers were not seen as a threat to human freedoms and individuality, as shown in the films of this period, but rather were seen as the inevitable outcome of our continued experimentation and mastery over technology” (63). *The Six Million Dollar Man* is certainly technophilic in its portrayal of prosthesis, but the faith in artificial body parts that it invokes raises questions about the longer fictional history of prostheses. How did we arrive at this apparent acceptance of the splicing of man and thing? How do the representations of prosthesis from the nineteenth and early twentieth century—another period that witnessed significant technological development in prosthetic technologies—compare with

the utopian displays of prostheses that were made visible in the 1970s, a decade that benefited from the technological developments accelerated by the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War? ¹ To what extent do prostheses from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, as represented in fiction, enable the user autonomy? What, if any, agency do the devices themselves have?

This chapter will investigate nineteenth- and early twentieth-century representations of prosthesis in relation to the concept of autonomy. By placing representations of devices such as artificial legs, arms, eyes, and teeth in context with contextual factors that brought understandings of human and machine agency under the spotlight, I argue that many prosthesis narratives problematised the contemporary hegemony of physical wholeness (explored in the previous chapter) by imaging powerful non-normative and non-human alternatives—human-machine splices that are enhanced by technology and prosthetic devices. These parts challenge the autonomy of the host, the body rendered “whole” by the use of prosthesis. In this sense, then, this chapter unveils a paradox: stories that focus upon prosthetics—devices underpinned by an ableist medical-model understanding of bodily difference, which are used to “normalise” deviant bodies—often bring into question the very philosophy that brings about the use of prosthetic devices. Such tales mobilise bodily alternatives that compete with hegemonic norms. In this sense, then, this chapter both develops and contrasts Erin O’Connor’s argument in *Raw Material* (2000) that “at the body-machine interface lies a ‘prosthetic territory,’ a frontier of potential resistance whose liberatory effects derive, paradoxically, from a strategic complicity with and dependence on machines” (106). I show how

¹ As Steve Fuller suggests, “The Cold War was largely fought by proxy in various ‘science races’, resulting in what may have been a Golden Age for publicly funded science” (111).

prosthetics were imagined as both liberating and restricting devices, and how, in many cases, the human-machine splice that the use of such devices engendered was shown to be a threat to the organic body. In each case, I argue, the autonomy of prosthesis-using subject (a seeming “cyborg” in certain instances) or the powerful prosthetic device challenges the preference for physical wholeness by showing the results that such pressures were imagined to bring about: life forms more potent than the normal human subject.

Scholars including Vanessa Warne, Steven L. Kurzman, and Vivian Sobchack call for investigations of prostheses to go beyond the realm of metaphor in order to consider the complex lived realities of prosthesis users.² Sobchack, herself a prosthesis user, as well as a scholar interested in phenomenology of the body,³ writes with gusto,

the primary context in which “the prosthetic” functions literally rather than figuratively has been left behind—as has the experience and agency of those who, like myself, actually use prostheses without feeling “posthuman” and who, moreover, are often startled to read about all the hidden powers that their prostheses apparently exercise both in the world and in the imaginations of cultural theorists. Indeed, most of the scholars who embrace the prosthetic metaphor far too quickly mobilize their fascination with artificial and “posthuman” extensions of “the body” in the service of a rhetoric (and in some cases, a poetics) that is always located *elsewhere*—displacing and generalizing the prosthetic before exploring it first on its own quite extraordinary complex, literal (and logical) ground[.] (“A Leg to Stand On” 20)

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, this project is invested in exploring the lived experience of physical loss and prosthesis use in the Victorian period, but it should be noted here that the primary material that this thesis explores,

² See Warne, “Artificial Leg”; Kurzman; Sobchack, “A Leg”; Jain.

³ See, for instance, Sobchack, “Living a ‘Phantom Limb’”.

literature, does not always provide a clear lens through which to explore real life. In negotiating the complex relationship between fiction and reality with regard to his theory “aesthetic nervousness”, Ato Quayson writes, “To say that the literary model [of aesthetic nervousness] provides an analogue to reality does not mean that it is the same as reality. The epistemological effect of representation is quite different from the emotional effects of misunderstanding and stereotyping in the real world” (35). However, as he also writes, “literary representations of disability are not merely reflecting disability; they are refractions of that reality, with varying emphases of both an aesthetic and ethical kind” (36). This chapter explores several representations of prosthesis that were clearly not intended to be realistic but rather explored particular concepts related to the phenomenon of prosthesis use: the human-technology relationship and wholeness as the dominant mode of human embodiment. Though clearly hyperbolised, we can see the representations explored in this chapter as refractions of real prostheses and prosthesis users. It is my contention in this chapter to show how the hegemony of physical wholeness was undermined by representations that imagined human-machine splices or prosthetic parts as threats to the dominance of physical integrity.

In terms of its engagement with Victorian prostheses, devices routinely imagined as machines of sorts in the literature of the era, this chapter agrees with Tamara Ketabgian’s assertion that

Victorian machines were not simply soulless, lifeless, predictable, and unidimensional; not simply opposed to organic feeling and vitality; and not simply reductive material objects—if objects are ever so. They lead such a rich figurative life, yielding a broad literary array of habits, feelings, communities, and subjectivities. As science and technology studies have shown, these engines served as coordinated dynamic networks, with systems of

complex interdependence that formatively shaped physiological and thermodynamic models of life. (2)

Indeed, I explore the perceived autonomy of the mechanical device—specifically the prosthetic part—in this chapter, particularly in the section where I analyse the self-acting prostheses that appear in Countess Morley’s *The Flying Burgomaster* (1832), the popular song “The Cork Leg” (published by John Ashton in 1888 but in circulation for many years before), and J. Stuart Blackton’s short film “The Thieving Hand” (1908). In these instances, the representation of the prosthetic body part echoes Jacques Derrida’s warning about the linguistic “supplement” writing, a signifier that he calls a dangerous since it “claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself” (144). As Derrida claims, “It is the addition of a technique, a sort of artificial and artful ruse to make speech present when it is actually absent” (144). The supplement is dangerous as it “threatens to subvert and supplant the whole by questioning the whole’s structural integrity” (Ketabgian 19). The same supplement-whole dynamic can be seen in nineteenth-century prosthesis narratives. In literary representations, users are often either rendered less human by using primitive forms of prosthesis or are made slaves to the will of hyper-sophisticated devices.

Contexts

The anxieties relating to prosthesis and autonomy that are explored in this chapter conflate a number of nineteenth-century cultural anxieties surrounding human-machine and mind-body relationships, machine autonomy, and ontology. As a number of critics—including Herbert Sussman, Nicholas Daly, Laura Otis, Ketabgian, and Roger Smith—have observed, a significant

amount of nineteenth-century cultural attention to these topics revealed fears about a loss of human agency in light of the materialist “disenchantment” of life and the unrelenting forward march of technology.⁴ The emergence of self-acting machines, such as the Jacquard loom and Charles Babbage’s Difference Engine, encouraged contemporaries to reconsider the subject/object binary. The use of newly fashioned self-feedback loops to produce automatic processes made machines appear to look more life-like, while, thanks to a number of influential evolutionary and materialist theories, humans increasingly became to be understood as almost machine-like—as “conscious automata” as psycho-physiologist Thomas Henry Huxley would argue in 1874.⁵

Many were optimistic about the rise of empirical science and in particular about the productive potential of new, self-acting technologies. Scottish professor Andrew Ure, a figure that many consider to be the chief apologist of nineteenth-century machinery, was a notable example. In *The Philosophy of Manufacture* (1835), for instance, he raved about a self-acting mule (a machine invented in the late eighteenth century for more efficient spinning of yarn), which he claimed was “a creation destined to restore order among the industrious classes, and to confirm Great Britain in the empire of art” (367). Babbage was similarly sanguine about the utilitarian benefits of machinery. In “An Essay on the General Principles which Regulate the Application of Machinery to Manufactures and the Mechanical Arts” (1827), he talked highly of the reparative capacity of man’s fusion with technology: “a less general use of tools for human hands, is to assist the labour of those who are deprived by nature, or by accident, of some of their limbs. . . . These triumphs of skill and ingenuity

⁴ See Sussman, *Victorian Technology* 39–51; Daly 10–33; Otis 9–10; Ketabgian 51–4; Roger Smith 1–8; Martin Willis 98–114.

⁵ See Huxley.

deserve a double portion of our admiration when applied to mitigate the severity of natural or accidental misfortune” (6). For technophiles like Babbage, the industrial machine offered an alternative solution to this crisis of physical loss. Mobilising a framework of human-machine splicing, Babbage’s optimistic view was linked to but different from the dominant “fix” for physical loss that involved the employment of concealing prostheses. Concealing physical losses in order to look “able” would no longer be necessary if industrial machines could be operated by non-normative bodies.

In addition to the voices of technophiles, like Ure and Babbage, who encouraged the rise of intelligent machines, theories also emerged that sought to redefine the human body in mechanical terms. The growth of the new science of thermodynamics, the branch of physics that dealt with the relationship between heat and other types of energy, led to a radical reconceptualisation of the active human as fundamentally an engine. Jenny Uglow suggests that such theories hark back to Julien Offray de La Mettrie’s *L’Homme Machine* (1747), which attempted (partly provoked by René Descarte’s definition of animals as “automata”) to “restate the problem of the mind as physical, not meta-physical—to define man as a mechanical entity in which perception, emotion, understanding, foresight and thought were produced by organic causes” (16). In a similar way to how Ure and Babbage talked about intelligent machines, as Anson Rabinbach explains, scientists also linked the understanding of humans as machines to a drive for progress: “If the working body was a motor, some scientists reasoned, it might even be possible to eliminate the stubborn resistance to perpetual work that distinguished the human body from a machine” (2). Such a drive for progress was also promised by contemporary psycho-physiologists, the forerunners of modern psychology,

who from the 1870s onwards encouraged a reconsideration of the mind-body relationship, suggesting that, like the body, the mind is subject to causes and actions instigated by changes in force and matter. As several critics have observed, this materialist philosophy proved controversial as it questioned the existence of both human free will and divine agency, suggesting instead that human action is determined by evolutionary, environmental, and physical causes.⁶ While proponents of psycho-physiology, such as Herbert Spencer, Alexander Bain, Henry Maudsley, William Kingdom Clifford, and Huxley, recognised the possible ethical and religious implications of undermining the existence of human free will—they often posed dualistic theories that sought to encourage a materialist understanding of the mind while simultaneously encouraging readers to respond ethically to the determining forces of nature—many remained resistant to this philosophical position, which seemed to render humans equivalent to machines in spite of each theorist’s careful treatment of the concept of the free will.

The most extreme resistance to “the rise of the machine” occurred earlier in the century, during what was called the Luddite movement. While the actions of this group responded less to the philosophical dehumanising of humanity than it did to the physical implications and social injustices caused as a result of technological innovation, agency was nonetheless a major concern to these revolutionaries; to these radicals, technology was robbing them of their freedom as machines began to take the place of people in the industrial workplace. As a direct response by workers against the technological unemployment created by the rise of self-regulating machines, like the Jacquard loom, working-class men involved in the movement—who claimed to be led by the mythical King Ludd—

⁶ See Daston, Rylance, Roger Smith, and Shuttleworth and Bourne Taylor.

broke into factories and destroyed machinery. At least one factory owner was killed in these violent protests. This technological resistance lasted roughly from 1812 to 1817, but the legacy of technophobia endured for many years afterwards. Even today, technophobes are occasionally described as “Luddites”.

After the Luddite movement subsided in 1817, a cultural resistance to the rise of science and technology remained prominent. One year after the Luddite movement ended, Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, a story that is widely held to deliver “a powerful anti-science diatribe that still reverberates as a quintessential parable of the dangers unleashed by technological creation and irresponsible scientists” (Dinello 41). In later cultural representations of human interaction with new technologies, like the steam engine, a more complex relationship was often displayed. As Nicholas Daly reminds us, a great number of plays premiered in the 1860s, including Dion Boucicault’s *After Dark* (1868), which relied on a “cultural imaginary in which the impact of the machine, or industrial modernity more generally, on the human is a source of trepidation, or even terror, though also of fascination” (1). Along similar lines, Charles Dickens was another powerful cultural figure who displayed an acute awareness of the potential negative effects of new technology. He was “exhilarated by speed and novelty” of the railway, but “remain[ed] sceptical about the social consequences of applied technology on this scale” (Plunkett et al 274). Dickens’s mixed feelings towards the railway are exemplified in *Dombey and Son* (1846–48) and in his famous ghost story “The Signal Man” (1866). Cultural anxieties about the forward march of technology were again brought to the attention of the reading public by a series of science fiction novels written by H. G. Wells in the 1890s, including

The Time Machine (1895), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *When the Sleeper Awakes* (1899). Each of these novels depicts the potentially dystopic results of scientific experiment or technological development gone wrong. The anxiety in many of these cultural portrayals of technology centres on a fear relating to human and machine agency. The worry for many was that the increasing intimacy between man and machine, which saw a rebalancing of the user-technology hierarchy, could lead to the technological part usurping the human user or rendering him or her mechanical. Enmeshed in debates surrounding the rise of technology and an increasing understanding of the human in materialist terms, this chapter explores fictional responses to the literal joining of man and thing. As I will show, the rise of the machine, as manifest in the prosthetic body part, embodied a threat to the physical hegemony of organic wholeness.

In order to survey the variety of fictional responses to concepts of prosthesis and autonomy, this chapter is split into three thematic sections, which each include analyses of texts from across the period that this thesis explores. Building on the work of the previous chapter, the first section explores representations of devices that either enable or inhibit user agency. Here I focus closely on two texts that simultaneously reveal and dismiss the extent to which technological apparatuses can provide physical autonomy to their users: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839) and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). As I show, these texts, despite presenting entirely contrasting prostheses in terms of sophistication, in varying ways problematise the demand for prostheses encouraged by a society that privileges wholeness. Prostheses are depicted interchangeably as dehumanising and ineffective. A specific example of a character who uses a non-normative prosthesis to provide himself

with authority in *Moby-Dick* provides a segue to the next section of the chapter that explores prosthetic technologies that are imagined to transgressively enable their users in surprising yet non-standard ways. Here the dominance of physical wholeness is challenged more directly by stories that present also ineffectual replacements for limbs that ironically provide users with violent means with which to assert themselves. This section explores in detail the enduring motif of prosthesis as weapon, providing close readings of a variety of texts including Thomas Hood's *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41) and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890). Thinking in further depth about threatening machine agencies, the final section explores the self-acting prostheses of Countess Morley's *The Flying Burgomaster* and J. Stuart Blackton's short film "The Thieving Hand" (1908) among others. Overall, then, this chapter considers the extent to which prostheses and prosthesis users were imagined in ways that defied hegemonic bodily "norms".

Enabling Devices

In O'Connor's study of nineteenth-century amputation and lower-limb prosthesis, she argues that "Mechanizing the amputee in order to naturalize him, the discourse of prosthesis redistributes the qualities of personhood across an economy of body and machine" (*Raw Material* 123). In an optimistic manner she shows how artificial limb makers—a conspicuously invested group—asserted the abilities of their devices to "rehabilitate recalcitrant bodies", enabling male amputees to return to work, thereby restoring the masculinity jeopardised by losing a limb and returning him to a state of autonomy (125). Despite invoking literary texts such as Charles Dickens's novels *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65) and *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37) and Anthony Trollope's *He*

Knew He Was Right (1869), O'Connor provides limited evidence that contemporary literary depictions of prosthetics supported the utilitarian ideal espoused elsewhere in discussions of prosthetics. As this section shows, imaginative engagements with the topic complicate the view that O'Connor draws our attention to.

In support of the “utilitarian essentialism” view of prosthetics identified by O'Connor, a small number of fictional tales supported the enabling potential of contemporary prosthetics. For example, an 1872 sketch for *Kind Words* called “A Romance of War” tells the story of a maimed war veteran thought dead, who thanks to the use of an artificial leg and patent arm is able to become a successful grocer. He's also able to remarry his wife, who because she thought her first husband had been killed in action had married another man. In the 1874 *All the Year Round* short story “Peg-Legged Bob”, a maimed navy is bought a well-made artificial leg, which, though not good enough a substitute to enable him to return to manual work, allows the narrator-protagonist to become a contractor. Such technophilic depictions of artificial limbs are no doubt linked to the air of optimism and achievement surrounding such devices in the wake of the American Civil War, a conflict that many historians hold accountable for major historical developments in the artificial limbs industry.⁷ In 1864 famous American poet and physician Oliver Wendell Holmes boasted, America “has bestowed upon you and all the world an anodyne which enables you to cut arms and legs off without hurting the patient; and when his leg is off, she has given you a true artist's limb for your cripple to walk upon, instead of the peg on which he has stumped from the days of Guy de Chauliac to those of M. Nelaton” (“The Human Wheel” 324). Concerning ocular prostheses, in M. E.

⁷ See, for instance, Herschbach, Yuan, Mihm, and Hasegawa.

Francis's 1900 short story "A Rustic Argus" a one-eyed man is convinced by the sister of his lover to wear a glass eye. He heeds her advice and wears a prosthesis with profound effect. He even claims that it enhances his eyesight. Though clearly hyperbolic, this representation followed major developments made in artificial eyes. Indeed, in the 1890s, the Snellen, or "reform" eye as it was sometimes known, was developed by the Müller family in Wiesbaden in response to ophthalmologist Hermann Snellen's call for more suitable prostheses for enucleated eye sockets to be produced. These devices of a double shell design better filled the cavity left after enucleation, removing the sunken appearance that previous designs affected (Ott, "Hard Wear" 153–4).⁸ In 1900, Pache and Son of Birmingham were makers to the principal hospitals in the United Kingdom and could provide the "reform eye" ("Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Prostheses").

Simultaneously aligning with the optimistic view of prosthetics outlined in the stories above while also exposing anxieties regarding the potentially dehumanising effect of a human-machine splice, Edgar Allan Poe's 1839 story "The Man That Was Used Up" is one literary source that O'Connor gives particular attention to (*Raw Material* 132–35).⁹ In Poe's narrative, which is framed as a kind of detective story, the narrator tries to find out the secret

⁸ Also see Tonkelaar et al.

⁹ In 2002 Robert A. Beuka lamented that Poe's short story had "garnered relatively scant attention from scholars over the years" (30). While Beuka's essay suggests that Poe's text offers a critique of the racial politics of Jacksonian manhood, a number of studies relating to the portrayal of the human-machine relationship in "The Man That Was Used Up" appeared both prior to and after the publishing of this study, including work by Joan Tyler Mead, Daniel Hoffmann, Klaus Benesch, James Berkley, Vanessa Warne ("If you should ever"), and, of course, O'Connor ("Fractions of Men" and *Raw Material*). While Tyler Mead, Hoffman and Benesch posit Smith as a kind of human cyborg, Berkley goes a step further, suggesting that the captain is in fact a proto-posthuman figure. Warne, on the other hand, reads Poe's tale through a disability studies lens, suggesting that bodily loss serves as a form of narrative prosthesis through which the author critiques 1830s American market economy. Paying more attention to the historical source of Smith's representation, Elmer Pry suggests that Poe took inspiration for his prosthesis-enabled character from American folktales in which soldiers remove false body parts in order to scare and bewilder Indian enemies.

behind Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith, a figure who is at once mysterious and striking in appearance. As it is revealed in a grotesque dressing scene, the veteran of the Bugaboo and Kickapoo campaign is a maimed man almost entirely made up of prosthetics. Due to his impressive appearance when fully assembled, Smith's is shown to use devices that (not dissimilar to Steve Austin's biotechnological body parts) not only conceal his bodily losses but appear to improve upon nature. The narrator is peculiarly awestruck by Smith's appearance during their first encounter: "His head of hair would have done honor to a Brutus"; his teeth were "the most entirely even, and the most brilliantly white of all conceivable teeth"; his eyes were "of a deep hazel, exceedingly large and lustrous"; his bust was "unquestionably the finest" that the narrator ever saw; his arms were "altogether were admirably modelled"; and his lower limbs were the "*ne plus ultra* of good legs" (315–16). Even Smith's apparent stiffness, an early sign of his artificial composition, is perceived by the narrator in a positive light:

There was a primness, not to say a stiffness, in his carriage—a degree of measured, and, if I may so express it, of rectangular precision, attending his every movement, which, observed in a more diminutive figure, would have had the least little savor in the world, of affectation, pomposity or constraint, but which noticed in a gentlemen of his undoubted dimensions, was readily placed to the account of reserve, hauteur—of a commendable sense, in short, of what is due to the dignity of colossal proportion. (317)

Smith's devices are notable for their mimetic capacities, but are all the more noteworthy for enabling the severely maimed subject both a degree of physical autonomy and an impression of grandeur.

However, as the title of the story suggests, despite the impressiveness of Poe's prostheses, the story as a whole is less concerned with the imagined

ameliorative capacities of prosthetics than it is with the effects that a human-machine splice has ontologically. When a man is more machine than human what does such mean in terms of his personhood? Who is in control? Him or his devices? It is significant that Smith is described as “*the man that was used up*” (325; emphasis original), rather than “the man that was *made up*”. James Berkley notes that in the nineteenth century “used up” could mean “not only ‘to expend’ or ‘to exhaust’ (its normal meaning today) but also ‘to debunk’ or ‘to critique’” (372). The title of the story thus describes both a man who is physically reduced, and a man whose very personhood is put into question; its passive verb construction implies that the man is not a user but an object of use by someone (or something) else. Smith has been “used up” by a life of military duty and, in some way perhaps, by his increasing reliance on prostheses. Drawing our attention to the extent to which Poe’s autonomy is compromised by his reliance on technology, O’Connor argues, “‘The Man That Was Used Up’ . . . celebrates the constitutive powers of prosthetics as a means of taking them to task. Centring on a man who has more artificial parts than authentic ones, Poe’s story critiques the logic of prosthesis by turning it inside out” (*Raw Material* 132). In Smith’s case it is unclear what is part and what is “whole”. Mr Pinto from William Makepeace Thackeray’s 1862 short story “The Notch on the Ax”, is another character from nineteenth-century fiction who is heavily supplemented and whose prostheses bring to the fore questions about who or what is in control.

Though Poe’s story is by no means a realistic portrayal of nineteenth-century prostheses, precisely because the devices presented are far more sophisticated than those that were available even at the end of the century, the story does anticipate the boom in prosthesis manufacture and distribution that

occurred during and after the American Civil War (1861–65). Highlighting the correlation between conflict and prosthesis development, Katherine Ott reveals that “The Civil War in the United States and the Napoleonic Wars in Europe initiated the first large-scale attention to prosthetics and their design and use” (“Sum of Its Parts” 26). Applying this technological narrative of progress to “The Man That Was Used Up”, Warne notes that “Poe’s story anticipates [the developments in the design, manufacture, and marketing of prosthetic body parts], accurately envisioning the commercialism, technological character, and normalizing goals of post-bellum America’s response to disabled war veterans” (“If you should ever” 104). The narrator’s horror at witnessing Smith being literally reassembled by his black slave, Pompey, at the end of the narrative is comically contrasted with Smith’s recommendations of prosthesis makers. Smith’s championing of certain brands of prosthesis, including Thomas’s cork legs, Bishop’s artificial arms, Pettitt’s shoulders, Ducrow’s bosoms, Bonfanti’s palate, De L’Orme’s wigs, Parmly’s dentures, and Dr Williams’s sight-enabling false eyes, brings to mind a popular feature of contemporary prosthesis treatises, publications that promised potential clients that prosthetics could enable the same degree of autonomy afforded to the able-bodied in wider society.¹⁰

¹⁰ A familiar component of the pamphlets, books, and other advertisements published by prosthetists on both sides of the Atlantic in this period was the testimonials section, or “letters pages” as it was sometimes labelled. In this popularly deployed section of the nineteenth-century prosthesis treatise, the testimonials of named or anonymous users, medical professionals, or technology experts were printed together. Occasionally these were divided into subsections depending on the age, gender, profession and disability of the writer. In all cases, these letters would laud the capabilities of the products produced by the advertised prosthetist, and occasionally they would disparage the devices of other makers. In Douglas Bly’s 1859 text *Description of a New, Curious, and Important Invention*, a report by A. P. Sigourney, Chairman of New York State Fair Committee, compared the maker’s artificial legs to rival prosthetist Benjamin Franklin Palmer’s devices: “We are unanimous in the opinion that the Leg presented by DR. BLY is the best, and that it possesses advantages over the ‘Palmer Leg’ very desirable to the user, and creditable to its maker” (6; emphasis original). In his privileging of the devices of certain makers over those made by other—for instance, he recommends Thomas’s cork legs but suggests that Bishop makes superior artificial arms—Smith pre-empts the kinds of debates that would occur within the rhetorical literature published by prosthesis makers from the 1850s

While Poe's narrative on the one hand sanguinely imagines a future in which the most physically damaged bodies can be recuperated and made "whole" again by prostheses, it is fairly typical of nineteenth-century prosthesis narratives in that it does not fully support prosthesis in either conceptual or practical terms. "The Man That Was Used Up" makes fun of a prostheticised physical aesthetic while challenging the contemporary preference for organic physical wholeness in a couple of ways. In practical terms, Poe's narrative critiques prostheses in two ways: first, in spite of their impressiveness at first glance, Smith's adornments produce a curiously rigid aesthetic, which invites curiosity—though the narrator is initially wowed by Smith's appearance, he nevertheless notices Smith's rigidity thereby stimulating an investigation. The second practical aspect of Smith's prosthesis use that is comically mocked concerns the user's assembly process. Because such devices are not fully integrated with the subject and thus need to be removed at certain times of the day—before bed, for instance—there are periods when the prosthesis user is rendered reliant on others. Smith's rudeness towards his slave, who helps him to attach his various prostheses, reveals a frustration at such a compromise. Though presented in a grotesquely ableist fashion, which makes a spectacle of the disabled body, Poe's narrative therefore problematises prostheses as a complete solution to the crisis of physical loss. In conceptual terms, Poe's critique of physical wholeness is also twofold. On the one hand, the hegemony of organic wholeness is challenged by a prostheticised figure, someone who is neither fully organic nor physically "whole", whose appearance when fully constructed is more impressive than physically normative subjects. On the

onward. As Kevin J. Hayes identifies, "each of General John A.B.C. Smith's prosthetics is identified with a specific brand name; put together, they virtually turn him into a walking advertisement" (458).

other, the very drive to construct an appearance of wholeness is rendered absurd as we witness a subject go from a state equivalent to Ernest George Henham's "A Human Bundle" (1897),¹¹ to a shape that is imposingly impressive though decidedly mechanical. The falseness engendered by prostheses is taken to a hyperbolic extreme. The remainder of this chapter exposes other ways in which the notion of protheticising the body is challenged and the hegemony of wholeness distorted in nineteenth and early twentieth-century prosthesis narratives.

Disabling Devices

While Smith is, to a degree, remarkably enabled by his use of prosthetics, a number of contemporary and later representations focus on the inabilities of such devices to grant users autonomy. For instance, as I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, Silas Wegg, the famous peg leg user from Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, is a figure whose mobility-restricting wooden leg ultimately leads to his downfall. Earlier in the century, before even Poe's story was published, a tale called "Wooden Legs" was printed in *The Court Magazine and Belle Assemblée* that mocked the efficacy of sophisticated artificial legs, devices made at an increasing rate in Britain and America at the time following the success of James Pott's famous Anglesey leg (more on this later). In this story, a Napoleonic War veteran mistakenly puts on a friend's expensive patented artificial leg after a heavy night of drinking. The combination of his drunken state with a device that was earlier shown to be tricky to use results in his falling over repeatedly, creating a cruelly comical scene.¹² Also

¹¹ See the intro to ch. 1 and Sweet, "A Human Bundle".

¹² Such cruel humour mirrors Simon Dickie's observations about physical difference remaining an accepted topic for jests up until the mid-nineteenth century (18).

contemporaneous with Poe's story, Thomas Hood's popular satirical poem *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41) mocks a pompous amputee who demands an artificial leg made of solid gold. Unsurprisingly, her device is shown to be cumbersome, heavy, and impractical. While the artificial leg in Hood's poem is undoubtedly, as Vanessa Warne suggests, a symbol through which the mismanagement of money is explored ("To invest a cripple"), the poem also exposes contemporary anxieties about the weight of artificial legs and was used in contemporary prosthesis advertising as an example of how limb prostheses should not be constructed.¹³ In the second half of the nineteenth century, a period heralded by popular historian Guy Woodforde as "the era of false teeth for the masses" due to technological developments that made the manufacture of such devices cheaper (*False Teeth* 87–92), numerous stories and jokes appeared that mocked the propensity of false teeth to malfunction. Published in *All the Year Round* in 1863, "Too Hard upon My Aunt", for instance, tells the story of the narrator's aunt who suffers a mysterious "illness" after eating boiled-beef in the company of a love interest. As is revealed, she is a false teeth user. Her dentures broke during the meal, hence her feigned illness. Hyperbolising the inability of wigs to stay attached to their users' heads, a popular topic explored in Chapter Five of this thesis, the 1895 *Illustrated Chips* cartoon "The Wig Wouldn't Work like the Natural" (Figure 2.1) shows how representations of ineffective prostheses continued late into the century. In each of these stories the autonomy of a subject is affected by the use of an artificial body part. The very employment of such devices, which was encouraged by contemporary pressures to conform to emerging standards of normalcy, was therefore

¹³ For more on this, see ch. 4.

THE WIG WOULDN'T WORK
LIKE THE NATURAL.



1. He was a comic artist, and he tugged and tore at his hair so frequently that at last he had to buy a wig.



2. But he soon forgot the new wig, and went to tear his hair with a wild, mad tug—



3. With the result that all his hair came off together, and very much sooner than he expected. It quite upset his balance.

Figure 2.1 A light-hearted poem shows that it is a mistake to treat artificial hair as though it is real. From *Illustrated Chips* 10.248 (1895): 3. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals Online* (Series 1).

critiqued since prosthetic devices were shown to cause rather than cure issues for the user.

A famous example of a prosthetic body part that is disabling rather than enabling is Captain Ahab's ivory leg in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. This story questions the notion that prostheses provide a medical "fix" or "cure" for physical loss, instead recognising the virtues of building a more inclusive and accessible environment. In this respect the novel projects a fairly forward-thinking treatment of physical disability. The novel's treatment of Ahab's psyche, however, as David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder have observed, is typically ableist in tone and representative of "narrative prosthesis".¹⁴ Ahab is granted a degree of physical autonomy in what would normally be a particularly inaccessible workspace thanks to a number of adaptations made to his ship, the *Pequod*. Such developments compensate for the limited autonomy enabled by the amputee's ivory prosthesis, a device that further injures him, "all but pierc[ing] his groin", late in the novel (538).¹⁵ Countermanding the limitations of Ahab's ivory leg, the *Pequod's* adaptations serve as a kind of extension of the

¹⁴ "Narrative prosthesis" refers to the way that disability has been deployed historically for representational power. In terms of Ahab's representation, Mitchell and Snyder write, "Ahab's dismemberment and 'incomplete' physicality—now simulated with a whalebone substitute—supplies Melville's characterization with both a personal motive and an identifying physical mark. These two aspects function in the novel as a deterministic shorthand device for signifying the meaning of Ahab's being" (*Narrative Prosthesis* 123).

¹⁵ Ahab's reliance on the adaptations of his ship are revealed most lucidly when the "crippled" (510) captain attempts to board Captain Boomer's vessel in the hope of finding out Moby Dick's whereabouts: "Ahab had forgotten that since the loss of a leg he had never once stepped on board of any vessel at sea but his own, and then it was always by an ingenious and very handy mechanical contrivance peculiar to the *Pequod*, and a thing not to be rigged and shipped in any other vessel at a moment's warning" (506). Here, then, Ahab's physical incapacities are strikingly revealed. Without the various contrivances of the *Pequod*, the captain is unable to perform an everyday whaling task—scaling the side of a boat. As Ismael explains, "it is no very easy matter for anybody" to perform such a feat, "except those who are most hourly used to it, like whalers" (506). It is only after two sympathetic officers of the other ship bethink that the "one-legged man must be too much of a cripple to use their sea bannisters" that they (humiliatingly) lean over the railing to assist Ahab, resulting in him eventually being hauled aboard on a "massive curved blubber-hook" (507). Lifted to the deck the same way that whale blubber would be, the "crippled" captain is temporarily lowered to the exploited, abused, and marginalised status that whales occupy throughout Melville's novel. The difficulty of climbing the ship's "sea bannisters" is exacerbated by Ahab's one-leggedness, and it is undoubtedly not helped by his use of a peg-shaped prosthesis.

captain's prosthetic device. Ahab's leg literally attaches to the deck of the vessel, simultaneously enabling him while also revealing the limitations of his ivory leg.

The *Pequod* is both an add-on to Ahab's prosthesis and a further physical manifestation of the captain's monomaniacal obsession—the leg made of the same species of animal that fuels his obsession being a related example. Ahab's peg directly joins him to his vessel. As Ismael, the narrator of Melville's story, tells us, "Upon each side of the *Pequod*'s quarter-deck, and pretty close to the mizen shrouds, there was an auger hole, bored about half an inch or so, into the plank. His bone leg steadied in that hole; one arm elevated, and holding by a shroud" (144). Here then, the *Pequod* is literally *pegged* to Ahab. As we learn, like Ahab's leg, the destiny of the ship, and its crew, is firmly attached to the captain's obsessive agenda: to "dismember [his] dismemberer" (197), the white sperm whale Moby Dick. As Mitchell and Snyder have observed, "Each of the innovations and inventions" used by Ahab on the *Pequod*, including not just the auger hole and shroud but also the "iron banister" (Melville 147) that he grips, the winch and saddle that carries him up to the ship's rigging, and the "spare boats, and spare lines and harpoons, and spare everythings" (Melville 114) that Ismael exhaustively describes are "paraded not as evidence of Ahab's resourcefulness, but as proof of the extent to which he will go to fulfill his 'singular' quest" (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 122). The ship is also marked by Ahab's monomania. The deck is all over dented "like geological stones, with the peculiar mark of [Ahab's] walk . . . the foot-prints of his one unsleeping, ever-pacing thought" (187). Here, then, the leg is a direct extension of Ahab's will, not just of his body. Like Ahab, the *Pequod* is also said to exhibit signs of physical abnormality: "She was a ship of the old school, rather small if

anything; with an old fashioned claw-footed look about her” (82). Also resembling the captain, the vessel is adorned with the teeth of spermaceti, hence why it is described as the “ivory Pequod” (270). Emphasising the affinities between Ahab and his ship, at the end of the narrative it is even said that “the rushing Pequod . . . seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander’s soul” (492). As we can see from these convergences between Ahab and his ship, everything on the *Pequod* is unified in its purpose—in this case to enable the captain to complete his obsessive mission. Like Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith’s prosthetic parts, which are unified in their purpose—to effect the veteran’s robustness and dauntlessness of character—here the ship’s modifications work together to enable the disabled user. Also like Poe’s narrative, Melville’s novel invites attention to the limitations of prostheses while condoning a prejudiced view of disabled subjects: Poe projects Smith as an object of grotesque spectacle while Melville endorses a view that links physical disability to moral corruption. However, in terms of attitude to the dominance of physical integrity, the representation of Ahab resists the prostheticising-in-order-to-conceal impulse that such a cultural preference effects, instead presenting a character who uses alternative—though obviously prosthetic—methods to enable himself physically.

Another amputee character in Melville’s novel, who also makes manifest a dubious link between physical loss and violent intentions is Captain Boomer, another victim of *Moby-Dick* who is adorned with a prosthetic device that is specially designed to act as a weapon. In addition to reinforcing this prejudice view, Boomer’s depiction also challenges the hegemony of physical wholeness but in a remarkably different way. Here a prosthesis user is provided with a device that extends his abilities. Like a fighting cock adorned with a metal spur,

Boomer is provided a prosthesis that makes him more powerful, therefore challenging physical hierarchies that placed the disabled below the able-bodied. Despite the Captain's objections, it is quite apparent that violence was his intention when he ordered the device. As the captain's doctor describes, "he ordered the carpenter to make it; he had that club-hammer there put to the end, to knock some one's brains out with, I suppose, as he tried mine once. He flies into diabolical passions sometimes" (511). Here we learn that the captain's prosthesis is designed especially to fit not just his body but also his violent temperament. The prosthesis, then, is an extension of the captain's volatile character as much as it is a replacement for his severed arm. In a similar but not identical way to Ahab, Boomer is revealed to be mentally unhinged, once more suggesting that psychological trauma is an inevitable consequence of physical loss. But, unlike Ahab, Boomer is not interested in seeking vengeance. After admitting that he has seen the whale twice since his arm was lost, when asked by Ahab if could not "fasten", Boomer retorts, "Didn't want to try to: ain't one limb enough? What should I do without this other arm? And I'm thinking Moby Dick doesn't bite so much as he swallows" (512). Boomer later contemplates that "There would be great glory in killing him, I know that; and there is a ship-load of precious sperm in him, but, hark ye, he's best left alone" (512-13), suggesting that, unlike Ahab, Boomer's motives lie in glory and financial reward rather than revenge. Regardless of his reluctance to pursue "the white whale" and his differing motives to Ahab, Boomer's club-shaped prosthesis is represented nonetheless as a physical manifestation of his own mental instability, one that ironically empowers the amputee over his able-bodied crew.

As we learn, Boomer went against the advice of his ship's doctor, Bunker, by having such a crudely shaped device fitted. "I had no hand in shipping that ivory arm there", Bunker states; "that thing is against all rule" (511). The rules that Bunker speaks of undoubtedly refer to the intended concealing capacities of prosthetic devices. Such a commitment to the mimesis of the organic body part is revealed by George E. Marks in his 1888 treatise on the artificial limbs produced by his family's firm A. A. Marks. Here Marks describes the social expectations that surrounded prosthesis design in the mid-century: "The demand for artificial limbs was noticeably increasing; the field was growing larger; the cry for something more durable and more approximate to nature came from every quarter" (9). In spite of such directives, some prosthesis users did fashion devices designed for violent purposes. For instance, British artificial limb and orthopaedic appliance maker Henry Heather Bigg made an artificial hand furnished with a dagger for a furs collector working for the Hudson Bay Company. The device was produced upon request as the amputee wished to be able to defend himself against wild animals (*On Artificial Limbs* 73). In Melville's story, Bunker is clearly not a fan of Boomer's prosthesis, in part because of the captain's violent past—Bunker suggests to Ahab that the captain gave him "bowl-like cavity in his skull" (511). While Boomer strongly refutes this claim of physical abuse, his very denial conjures an image of violence and possibly contains a subtle threat: "Oh, you solemn rogue, you—you Bunker! was there ever such another Bunker in the watery world? Bunker, when you die, you ought to die in pickle, you dog, you should be preserved to future ages, you rascal" (511). Boomer clearly attempts to sound jocular in this instance, but his over-emphatic tone and use of morbid imagery suggests that his character is questionable. Equally though, we find out little more about

Boomer, his vessel, or crew after Ahab's brief encounter with the captain and his doctor, meaning that it is possible that the dent in Bunker's skull is congenital, as Boomer suggests. Either way, the shape and form of Boomer's club-like prosthesis cannot be doubted: the false limb is designed purposefully as a weapon. Bunker's prosthesis challenges the hegemony of the "normal" body in two ways: first, the club-shaped prosthesis defies social and medical expectations that prosthetic devices should look and function like real human body parts; second, in the violent form of his club arm, Boomer is provided a bargaining chip that in one respect provides him with a physical advantage over the able-bodied therefore challenging physical hierarchies. Boomer can thus be read to anticipate violently equipped amputees of the modern epoch, such as Paul Verhoeven's Robocop, who has a pistol concealed in his robotic leg; Merle Dixon from the popular AMC series *The Walking Dead* (2010–present), who like Bigg's patient has a prosthetic bayonet arm; and Cherry Darling from Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* (2007), who has an assault rifle (complete with grenade launcher) in the place of an artificial leg.¹⁶ As the next section of this chapter shows, in addition to imagining prostheses specifically designed for confrontation, quotidian prosthetics, such as wooden legs were represented as devices that could be used in threatening ways.

Prosthesis as Weapon

Since the "turn to users" (Oudshoorn and Pinch 4) that was inspired by the work of Ruth Schwartz Cowan in the late 1970s, Science and Technology Studies (STS) scholars have shifted their attention from investigating the impact

¹⁶ Other examples of weaponised prosthetics include Ash's chainsaw hand in Sami Raimi's *Evil Dead II* (1987); Big Louie's meat cleaver hand attachments in *UHF* (1989).

of inventors and designers to focus on the user.¹⁷ Most recently these scholars have focused on “how users consume, modify, domesticate, design, reconfigure, and resist technologies” (Oudshoorn and Pinch 1). While we cannot be certain that the fictional portrayals of prosthesis explored in this chapter directly informed the modifications made to artificial body parts by contemporary prosthetists, we can be sure that such portrayals drew from and informed social and cultural views of prosthesis design and use. By exploring the non-normative uses of prosthetic devices in fictional accounts, I highlight how prosthetic body parts were conceptualised as devices that were not necessarily capable of restoring the appearance and function of a lost body part but were able to provide their user with a close-to-hand deadly weapon. The logic of prostheticising the body in order to simply “recomplete” it was therefore complicated by literary characters who provided a powerful challenge to the hegemonic “normal” body.

Prosthesis use often had little to do with restoring bodily wholeness. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and film we see prostheses fulfil a number of unusual and often comical purposes. For instance, *The Satirist* published a story in 1845 that encouraged women to use wigs for making lockets to send to lovers so that they can entertain multiple partners without going bald (“The Use of a Wig—a Hint to the Ladies”). In “The Lame Landlord’s Story” (1867), a wooden leg is made into a cupboard that stocks sweetmeats, a pipe, and tobacco (131). In Mark Twain’s *Roughing It* (1872), a vagabond sneakily uses a cork leg to obtain brandy. After an “awkward express employé” (403) drops a one-hundred-pound brick on the man’s foot, the victim falls to the ground clutching his foot. When a “sympathizing crowd” come to the man’s aid

¹⁷ See Cowan.

and attempt to remove his boot, he screams louder, calling for “Brandy! for Heaven’s sake brandy!” (403). Having rejected the offer of having a doctor called, the vagabond asks for more brandy and is given two bottles in addition to the half pint he had already consumed. As it turns out, the man is not hurt since the brick fell upon his cork leg. The man merely pretended to be in pain in order to obtain liquor. An 1895 cartoon for *Illustrated Chips* demonstrates how well adapted peg legs are for turning fields (“How He Turned It with His Wooden Leg”; Figure 2.2). In a 1904 article for *Judy*, a contributor comically extols the multitudinous tasks that a set of false teeth can perform:

False teeth can be used for letter clips, clothes pegs, and several other useful purposes. They can be fitted with a spring and placed on the floor to act as a trap for burglars. The burglar generally creeps about noiselessly in his stockinged feet, and when he incautiously places his foot upon one of these traps, which have been left in the room or upon the stairs for that purpose, he lets out a yell which awakens the inmates and gives them and him the alarm. (“The Advantages of Having False Teeth” 664)

In a similarly comical fashion, Arthur Copper’s 1903 short film *Blind Man’s Bluff* depicts a supposedly blind and one-legged beggar who strikes a passer-by with his wooden leg after he is given a bogus coin. This film is not only revelatory of the association between disability, prosthesis use, begging, and imposture (discussed in depth in ch. 3), but it also reveals a common trope in the representation of human prosthesis in the long nineteenth century: that is the portrayal of the prosthetic weapon.

Across the century, we can find examples of the artificial limb-as-weapon trope. In “The Lame Landlord’s Story”, the one-legged narrator describes how he gave his wooden leg the affectionate nickname “the club” on account of “the pleasant meetings it gave rise to” (131). While the nickname “club” in this

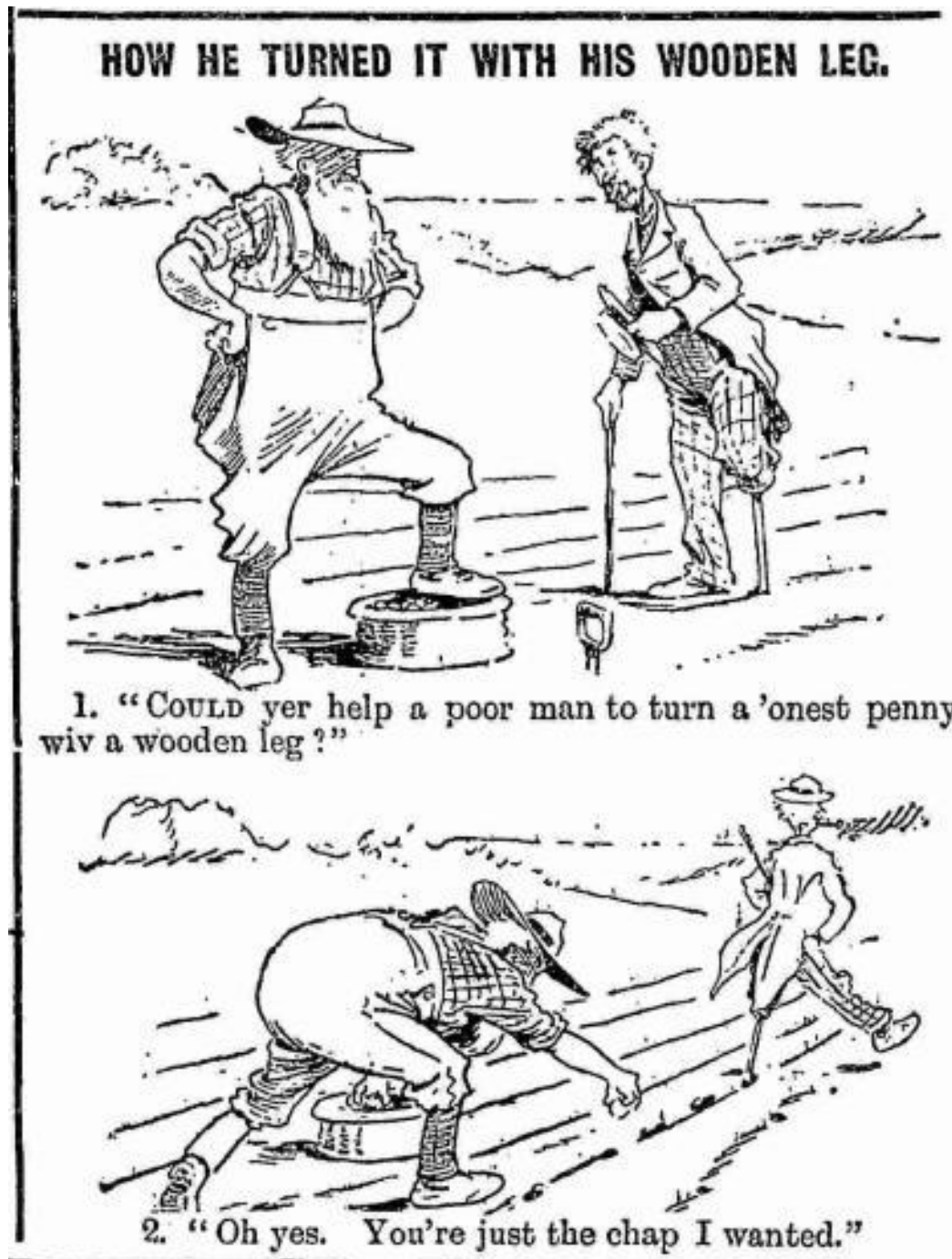


Figure 2.5 A cartoon humorously explores the potential unusual benefits of using a peg leg. From *Illustrated Chips* 10.258 (1895): 5. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals* (Series 1).

instance refers to that which the prosthetic supposedly inspires—i.e. “A meeting or assembly at a tavern, etc. for social intercourse”—elsewhere in the literature of this period we see false limbs used in ways that align the devices closer with another meaning of the word: “A heavy stick or staff for use as a weapon” (“club, n.”). Prosthetic legs being used as improvised bludgeons appeared in number of stories in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including in Thomas Hood’s popular poem *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg*, Henry Clay Lewis’s short story “The Indefatigable Bear Hunter” (1850), Robert Michael Ballantyne’s “Why I Did Not Become a Sailor” (1864), D. B. McKean’s “A Wig and a Wooden Leg” (1886), and Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes story *The Sign of Four* (1890). In 1899, the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* printed a short report on a wooden leg user who had been charged for assaulting a railway officer with his wooden leg (“New Use” 4). Similarly, in 1904, the *Daily Mail* reported another real-life account of such an incident in which an individual called John Feenan used his limb as a “shillelagh” when intoxicated (“Wooden Leg as Weapon” 3).¹⁸ In the rest of this section, I examine three of these sources, Hood’s poem, Lewis’s short story, and Conan Doyle’s novel, to show how this trope encompassed a variety of complex attitudes to contemporary standards of prosthetics, the human-technology relationship more broadly, and the extent to which the power of the normate could be challenged by the violent potential of lower-limb prosthetics.

To begin first with Hood’s poem, a verse text well known in its time and popular throughout the nineteenth century,¹⁹ we see a violent representation of

¹⁸ A similar scene was also depicted in the 1903 film *Blind Man’s Bluff* as previously noted in this chapter.

¹⁹ For more on *Miss Kilmansegg*’s popularity, see Warne, “To invest a cripple” 95–6. A search of the *Proquest British Periodical Collections* (I, II, and III) using the term “Miss Kilmansegg” for the period 1840–1899 produces 140 results. Meanwhile, the same search on the National

a golden leg that while absurdly humorous became a popular paradigm for how false limbs should not look or function. In Hood's poem, Miss Kilmansegg is brutally murdered by an avaricious Italian count whom she marries. The count clubs his wife to death with the very item that he wishes to possess: the countess's golden artificial leg. While the golden leg displayed in Hood's poem is by no means a realistic portrayal of a nineteenth-century prosthetic device, its representation as a weapon nonetheless reveals some of the anxieties that surrounded prosthesis design in this period. One reason why Miss Kilmansegg's leg makes such an excellent club is because of its weightiness. The countess's prosthesis is made of "Gold—solid gold throughout" (782) and is said to be "As solid as man could make it" (785). Considering the density of gold, it is not surprising that the device is so heavy. The hefty and cumbersome nature of Miss Kilmansegg's prosthesis is revealed by the descriptions of her noisy gait:

When slow, and heavy, and dead as a dump,
They heard a foot begin to stump,
Thump! lump!
Lump! thump! (1042–45)

The noisiness of the device becomes a nuisance to Miss Kilmansegg's murderous husband, who tries to convince his wife to exchange her golden leg for a wooden one, in part because of "the unbearable thumping" (2211) that the device makes—the other reason, of course, being so that he can sell the golden leg to pay off his gambling debts. Here the efficacy of the artificial body part is questioned, since the device clearly does not enable its user to pass as

someone with two natural lower limbs; its obnoxiousness, both visually and audibly, brings its presence to the fore. Miss Kilmansegg's leg does precisely the opposite of what good artificial legs were supposed to do: it invites rather than evades attention. The device thus works in opposition to the social demands, brought about by a preference of physical wholeness, for silent artificial limbs that do not call attention to themselves. Her leg is not only unhelpfully heavy but so ostentatious as to attract the unwanted attention of a suitor with murderous designs.

Due to its weight and clumsy design, Miss Kilmansegg's leg is shown to be more effective as a weapon than as a functional replacement for a leg. The cumbersome inertness of the leg, which is not articulated, compromises the mobility of the user, but makes for an excellent weapon. In several instances the device is displayed as an impractical appendage. While the stiffness of Miss Kilmansegg's prosthesis makes her leg look like "the leg of a *Figuranté*" (1156) at "Her Fancy Ball" (944–1224), practical activities, such as walking and climbing over obstacles, are made difficult by her choice of prosthesis. As the poem's speaker notes, "She hated walking in any shape, / And a country stile was an awkward scrape" (1933–34). In contrast to these difficulties, the leg is shown to be an excellent bludgeon by her barbarous husband. The rigid and weighty prosthesis makes short work of the hapless Miss Kilmansegg:

'Twas the Golden Leg!—she knew its gleam!
 And up she started, and tried to scream,—
 But ev'n in the moment she started—
 Down came the limb with a frightful smash,
 And, lost in the universal flash
 That her eyeballs made at so mortal a crash,
 The Spark, called Vital, departed! (2353–59)

This scene makes explicit the power of the artificial part. In the violent collision between flesh and gold only the latter survives, revealing the impressionable, delicate nature of the former and the hard, uncompromising form of the latter. The prosthesis is rendered other to body by its material properties, which so drastically contrast that of the body. That the prosthetic can smash skull, haemorrhage brain, and ultimately kill so effectively—in one blow—makes manifest the discrepancy between the natural and the artificial. Here, then, the prosthetic part, a device designed to make the body “whole” again, does quite the opposite as it not only further damages its intended user but is actually used to kill her. In this way, the prosthetic impulse, an inclination buttressed by a culturally enforced desire to present oneself as physically “whole”, is challenged in two ways: on the one hand, the false part is shown to be dangerously incongruous to the natural body; on the other hand, echoing real-life anxieties about the prohibitive price of top-of-the-range artificial limbs,²⁰ the false part is valued more greatly than human life.

Articulating prosthesis as weapon in a more sanguine manner, Lewis’s “The Indefatigable Bear Hunter” effectually unites the user and device. Following the loss of his leg in a hunting accident, the bear hunter referred to in the title (Mik-hoo-tah) continues to hunt against the advice of his doctor. After a hunting session goes wrong and he is forced into a fist fight with a bear, Mik uses his wooden leg to beat his furry foe to death. Though brutal, such a use of a wooden leg brings about a more intimate relationship between the hunter and his prosthetic device. The relationship between user and device did not begin on such strong footing, however. Prior to and even during his fight with the bear,

²⁰ British mid-century artificial limb maker Frederick Gray, former apprentice of James Potts, maker of the Anglesey leg, wrote regretfully in 1855 that “from the expense entailed by their elaborate construction”, top-of-the-range artificial limbs, such as his own “are not within the reach of the poorer class of sufferers” (107). For more on this topic, see ch. 3.

Mik is revealed to be rather discontented with his prosthetic limb. Mik did not want to lose his organic leg (despite its mangled condition) in the first place: as the doctor reveals, Mik “opposed [amputation] vehemently” (235). Similarly, after the doctor convinces Mik that amputation is the only fit course of action, and the life-saving procedure is promptly performed, the hunter falls into a state of depression, losing a considerable amount of body mass—the doctor remarks “I have never seen anyone fall off so fast” (238). When the doctor asks Mik if he has contracted consumption, the hunter reveals that his physiological state is tied to his disability and, possibly, to his use of a rudimentary prosthetic: “Doc, it’s grief, poor sorrur, sorrur, Doc! When I looks at what I is now and what I used to be!” (sic.; 238). In the heat of the battle Mik curses his peg leg a number of times for getting stuck in the uncompromising swamp terrain, referring to it as an “infurnal” and “d[amne]d thing” (242). Despite his reservations, after he successfully slays the bear using his prosthesis, Mik celebrates his success. “I hollered”, Mik reveals, “I had whipped a bar in a fair hand to hand fight—me, a old, sickly, one-legged bar hunter!” (244; sic.). It is significant that Mik considers the bout with the bear “a fair hand to hand fight”, entirely forgetting the fact that he used a weapon (albeit an unusual one) to bludgeon his opponent—he clubs the bear so hard with his wooden leg that its “flesh giv in to the soft impresshuns of that leg” (sic; 244), before finishing off his unconscious adversary with a second, more conventional weapon, a knife. By considering the encounter a fist fight, Mik unwittingly reveals his acceptance of the prosthetic device as a part of his anatomy.

Revealing to the doctor his triumph over the bear, Mik also ironically praises “the mederkal perfeshun for having invented sich a weepun!” (sic; 244). To Mik the prosthetic limb is noticeably more effective as a weapon than it is a

substitute for an organic limb. This line of thought is not surprising when one compares Mik's locomotive immobility with the devastating efficacy of his prosthesis as a club. Mik explains that he had "*only one leg that cood run!*" (241; emphasis original), suggesting that his only option with the bear was to fight rather than flee. Mik's frustration at being rendered static by his leg's inability to function on soft terrain is mitigated by the bear hunter's very use of the prosthetic as a bludgeon. Though we learn relatively little about the design of Mik's prosthesis—other than the fact that it is crafted by the Swamp Doctor narrator himself—we can safely assume that, since the device was not made by a prosthesis specialist, it is of a fairly rudimentary design. This prosthetic most likely resembles a peg rather than an artificial leg. Indeed, the narrator at no point claims to be an expert in prosthesis manufacture. He elsewhere reveals the extent to which doctors in his position are forced to improvise when he describes the equipment used to amputate Mik's leg. After listing implements including "A couple of bowie knives, one ingeniously hacked and filed into a saw, a tourniquet made of a belt and piece of stick, a gun screw converted for the time into a tenaculum, and some buckskin slips for ligatures", the Swamp Doctor provides the following message to more affluent practitioners: "The city physician may smile at this recital, but I assure him many a more difficult operation than the amputation of a leg has been performed by his humble brother in the swamp with far more simple means than those I have mentioned" (236). Like the amputation itself, which, as shown by Mik's subsequent bout of illness and weight loss, is by no means a complete success, the doctor's prosthesis is certainly not perfect. Assuming that it is of a rudimentary, peg-like design, it is not entirely surprising that the prosthesis functions better as a club than as a false leg. Indeed, unlike real legs, peg legs were predominantly

unarticulated, rigid, and occasionally rather weighty thus making them ideal instruments for bludgeoning. That the false leg is better used as a weapon than as a practical and ameliorative replacement for a real leg highlights the otherness of primitive forms of prosthesis to real legs. Furthermore, the fact that the device is used as a club, an extension of the arm that in the words of Harvey Green, “multiplies the force of the hand and arm because the far end travels much faster than the end in one’s hands” (316), signifies that it ironically enhances the capabilities of its user. The false leg is effective to Mik as a tool rather than as a body part. The device enables the user but only in a way that compensates for its inability to grant full physical functionality. Though hardly an archetype for a new technologised bodily model, Mik’s non-normative bodily image and functionality challenges the hegemony of physical wholeness as it imagines a prosthesis user that resists passing. Mik instead uses his artificial body part in a manner that arguably makes him more dangerous or capable of defending himself than an able-bodied person. The wooden leg, though not an effective prosthesis in the traditional sense, is shown to be a physical extension of the character’s violent persona—recalling Captain Boomer from *Moby-Dick*. Together, Mik and his wooden leg embody a robust alternative to physical wholeness. Lewis’s tale imagines a scenario in which by losing a leg one can gain a deadly weapon.

With the aptness of peg legs for such uses, it is perhaps unsurprising that Conan Doyle’s wooden-legged villain Jonathan Small, in *The Sign of Four*, is revealed to have used his prosthesis in act of cold-blooded murder. While Small’s false leg, like Mik’s, is shown to be fundamentally flawed in terms of its use on soft ground—while attempting to escape from the authorities, he is caught by Sherlock Holmes after his peg bores itself into a muddy river bank—

the efficacy of a wooden leg as a weapon is once again lauded. After his capture at the hands of Holmes, the able-bodied “calculating machine” (13), Small reveals his history, including an incident in which he battered a prison guard to death using his wooden leg. Like Mik, Small used his prosthesis as a kind of improvised club. Small explains to Holmes how he managed to escape from a prison on a tropical island. As Small recalls, having made plans with his comrade Tonga to be collected by boat from a nearby wharf, the only guard that stood between Small and freedom happened to be, in the words of the one-legged man himself, “a vile Pathan who had never missed a chance of insulting and injuring me” (100). Revealing his bloodthirsty nature, Small exacted his revenge:

I looked about for a stone to beat out his brains with, but none could I see.

Then a queer thought came into my head and showed me where I could lay my hand on a weapon. I sat down in the darkness and unstrapped my wooden leg. With three long hops I was on him. He put his carbine to his shoulder, but I struck him full, and knocked the whole front of his skull in. You can see the split in the wood now where I hit him. (100–1)

While the guard in question puts up somewhat less of a fight than the enraged bear that Mik bludgeons with his prosthesis, there remain similarities between the two disabled characters’ uses of false limbs as weapons. First, in both cases the wooden leg is used in an act of improvisation, i.e. when more conventional weapons could not be used. In Mik’s case, he only reverts to using his leg as a club after the bear survives being shot, having the stock of Mik’s rifle broken over its head, and being hit by the severed barrel; after all alternative options are exhausted, and the barrel of his rifle is knocked out of his hand, Mik turns to his wooden leg. Similarly, Small uses his false leg as a

weapon only after he cannot find a suitable stone to pummel the guard with. The fact that the prosthesis is a last resort is ironic since it is undoubtedly the weapon that is “closest to home”. In both cases, the efficacy of the wooden leg as a weapon cannot be doubted. Indeed, in both accounts, those on the wrong end of the prosthesis are despatched with relative ease, revealing the discrepancy between flesh and wood. While both narratives show that the rudimentary design of peg legs make them poor replacements for human legs—as both wooden-legged men get quite literally “stuck in the mud”—here their hardness and inhumanity are drawn attention to. In this sense, then, both stories provide a subtle critique of primitive lower-limb prostheses, suggesting that they are better adapted to being used as weapons than as substitutes for missing legs. In this sense, these stories challenge contemporary demands for amputees to prostheticise by showing that peg legs, the artificial limbs within the price range of the masses, can barely enable users to walk let alone pass as “normal”. The treatment of prosthesis as weapon is rather comical in both stories—in *The Sign of Four*, for instance, the police officer that eventually arrests Small jokes, “I’ll take particular care that you don’t club me with your wooden leg, whatever you may have done to the gentleman at the Andaman Isles” (103)—but both tales make a serious point about the inefficacy of nineteenth-century peg legs as devices that can replicate the physical capabilities of a real leg. However, what these limbs lack in motor function they make up for in handiness as killing devices. Such representations therefore mobilise an alternative model of physical incompleteness: the users of artificial limbs are shown to be conspicuously lacking in locomotive capacities but enhanced when it comes to hand-to-hand (or leg-to-leg) combat. Wooden leg users are shown to use their non-normative bodies effectively in non-normative

ways, challenging the physical hierarchies that placed the conspicuously “incomplete” below those who were deemed physically “whole”.

The use of prosthesis as weapon does, however, also reveal an ableist anxiety about the disabled user. To use terminology borrowed from Madeleine Akrich, while murderers such as Small do not correspond with the “projected user”²¹ (209) envisaged by the makers of prosthetic limbs, amputees and disabled people in general were subject to a number of stereotypes that often equated physical incompleteness with moral deficiency. Discussing the portrayal of disability in Western literature and film in general, Jenny Morris has identified that “beauty—and goodness—are defined by the absence of disability . . . ugliness—and evil—are defined by its presence” (93). In more nuanced work on the subject, Mitchell and Snyder suggest that in the nineteenth century

The disabled body became an important means of artistic characterization, for it allowed authors to visually privilege something amiss or “tragically flawed” in the very biology of an embodied character. While disability had historically provided an outward sign of disfavor or monstrous inhumanity, the nineteenth century shifted the emphasis to a more earthbound principle of moral decrepitude and individual malfunction. (*Narrative Prosthesis* 135)

Along similar lines, highlighting once again the long-held belief in the link between physical trauma and a propensity to violence, David A. Gerber notes that “societies have long been haunted by fears of the violent potential of veterans with unpredictable mental states” (36). As James Marten identifies,

²¹ “Projected users” are created by and shape the work of designers of technology. As Christina Lindsay describes, “Projected users are defined with specific tastes, competencies, motives, aspirations, and political prejudices”. “The innovators”, Lindsay explains, “then inscribe this vision or script about the world and about the users into the technical content of the object, and thus attempt to predetermine, or prescribe, the settings the users are asked to imagine for a particular piece of technology. The prediction about the user is thus built into, or scripted into, the technology” (31).

statistics arising from the American Civil War in fact supported these fears: “In Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a postwar increase in crime was fuelled largely by returning veterans, who committed nearly half of all offenses, especially ‘moral’ and property crimes” (325).²² In this sense, then, one can consider Small’s missing leg as a physical signifier for his villainy and violence. The loss of a limb is not too different from an “anomaly”, an abnormal facial feature that Cesare Lombroso suggested indicated that an individual “may display profound moral maladjustment” (*Criminal Man* 164). While Small very much embodies the villainous stereotypes that surrounded disabled people, Mik is not too far from this typecast either. Like Small, Mik displays an evident inclination towards violence and, if anything, is more blood-thirsty in his “indefatigable” hunting of bears than the opportunistic villain of Conan Doyle’s story. In one sense, then, Mik and Small are rendered further abnormal by their uses of prostheses as weapons. Their cyborgian adoption of such technologies provides a comically treated but nonetheless culturally loaded challenge to contemporary bodily hierarchies.

Self-Acting Prostheses

In addition to prosthesis being used as a weapon, another trope from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and film that conceptualised the dangerous potential of false body parts while mustering a challenge to preferences for organic wholeness was the portrayal of the self-acting

²² Significantly, though, Marten identifies the link between alcoholism and crime in these veterans, suggesting that a combination of exposure to trauma and a number of social and economic conditions drove many to drink. As Marten states, “Damned by wounds, by well-meaning government policies, by the nature of the Gilded Age economy, to live unusual, dependent, and unproductive lives in place and a time that prized convention, independence, and productivity, many turned to the fleeting distractions of the bottle, the shallow and temporary communities of barrooms, and the slippery degradation of alcoholism” (342).

prosthetic. A number of stories revealed a fear regarding the volition of mechanical prosthetic devices. Such stories asked the question, what happens if prosthetics, devices imagined to be more physically robust than human flesh, possess agency of their own? Countess Morley's narrative poem *The Flying Burgomaster* and the popular song "The Cork Leg" tell more or less the same basic story about a wealthy member of the upper echelons of society that loses a leg and purchases a false limb that turns out to be so sophisticated that it literally walks its user to death. While a comical reviewer writing in *Judy* in 1904 joked about the jovial nature of prosthetics, jesting that "Smiling teeth may be purchased by the set without extra charge for the smile" ("The Advantages of Having False Teeth" 664), here self-acting prostheses were presented in a more threatening light.²³ In addition to Morley's poem and "The Cork Leg", a number of other fictional stories imagined unruly prosthetics, including *Chambers's Journal's* refashioning of "The Wandering Jew" legend (1862), *All the Year Round's* "Bolderoe's Widow" (1876), Allsopp Æsop's "The Wooden Leg and the Ungrateful Pensioner" (1878), *Every Week's* "A Wooden Leg That Knows a Thing or Two" (1895), Frank Crane's "Willie Westinghouse Edison Smith" cartoons "Willie Westinghouse Invents an Automatic Arm" (1904) and "Willie's 'Handshaker' Gets Papa into Trouble" (1907), and J. Stuart Blackton's

²³ The notion of self-smiling false teeth was also alluded to in a joke published in the same journal three years earlier: "I called on Miss Holder yesterday. How much better she seems! She was in capital spirits—laughing the whole time.' 'Oh I daresay. She's just had her false teeth fitted'" ("I called on Miss Holder yesterday" 137). Ironically, false teeth were probably the most dangerous prostheses available in this period. On numerous occasions these devices were reported to have become dislodged and were either swallowed or inhaled by the unwitting user. An article in *Reynold's Miscellany* published in 1862 reports the story of "The wife of an innkeeper in Derbyshire" who awoke one morning to find that "she had partially swallowed a plate and four false teeth, which she had omitted to take from her mouth before going to bed" ("Artificial Teeth" 183). A cruel jest published in Thomas Hood Jr.'s journal *Fun* in 1872 made light of a similar situation, joking "The most natural way of inserting false teeth:—Gum them in, to be sure!" ("The most natural way" 12). Despite the danger of false teeth, fictional writers tended to investigate the pathologising potential of prosthetics through the portrayal of unruly arms and legs. More so than teeth, representations of these false body parts allowed writers to explore machine agency on a greater and more threatening scale.

The Thieving Hand (1908). These stories either present self-acting devices that malfunction—prostheses that refuse to stop at the command of the user—or display intelligent devices, whose desires are often at odds with their users. Focusing specifically on Morley’s poem and Blackton’s film, I argue that such representations drew from contemporary anxieties relating to technological developments while presenting powerful non-human and physically “incomplete” “subjects”, which challenged the dominance of the normate.

In Morley’s poem, following the amputation of his leg, the comically named protagonist, Wodenblock, is delighted to learn of “The great mechanic” Turningvort’s artificial leg, which is described in the following way: “a cork leg of such perfection; / So firm, yet steady, that it stood, / Walked, danced, and ran, like flesh and blood”. Wodenblock, then, is attracted to Turningvort’s prosthesis precisely because of the device’s ability to mimic not only the appearance but also the function of a real leg. He thus has no qualms about ordering the prosthesis. In fact, he pays a rather large sum to acquire the device—enough to pay for Turningvort’s daughter’s marriage dower. Initially, the protagonist’s new prosthesis appears to be a success. The device is so well formed that it is said to make the burgomaster’s other leg look feeble in comparison:

Once more a biped—Wodenblock
 Stands firm and steady as a rock—
 Complacently the limb he eyed,
 And thought the old one by its side
 Looked'd thin and shabby—truth to tell,
 It boasted not the graceful swell
 Or taper ancle [sic] of the other,
 But seemed a starving younger brother.

Though the device is clearly impressively made, that the artificial limb makes his other look out of place straight away implies that there is a discrepancy between

the device and the user. Unlike the contemporary representations of peg legs, here the user's body is insufficient compared to the prosthesis rather than vice versa. The false part is shown to be an improvement on nature. There are hints that the desire for prostheses that can enable one to pass has gone too far. The false part fails to conform to the demands for physical wholeness, inverting preferences for the organic.

Perhaps fearing encountering the kind of difficulties that Mik and Small experience while using their prostheses on rough terrain, Wodenblock initially avoids "crooked lanes and allies" on his first walk using the artificial leg. His anxieties are soon allayed as

With smiling looks, and air confiding,
Down broad strait streets triumphant gliding.
The leg displayed no turn for kicking,
A little whirl—a gentle ticking;
Was all the fault he could descry,
And that he thought would soon pass by.

However, this confidence in the limb is short lived. When he attempts to turn around to greet a friend, his leg is shown to possess a different idea:

He wheeled around without reflection,
Quite in the opposite direction
To that which he had just pursued;
When—as with magic power endued
A sudden jerk, a whirling thrill—
The leg no more obeys his will;
In haste, he had omitted learning
Which spring to touch in case of turning;
And prest on one of wondrous force,
To impel him on his forward course.
The act was scarce performed, when lo!
Swift as the arrow from the bow,
He felt himself compelled to fly;

Here, then, not only is the burgomaster's leg self-acting, but it is also entirely rebellious. Unwilling to heed the commands of its wearer, the leg takes a direction of its own at a frightful pace. The leg next drags its user through the woods and "O'er dykes, morasses, rivers, floods", leaving the wearer "Exhausted, trembling, gasping, fainting". The unrelenting march of the artificial leg eventually results in Wodenblock's death. Even after the user's death, the leg compels Wodenblock's skeleton to march on, rendering the ghost of the amputee a "slave to all eternity"—a clear reimagining of the Wandering Jew narrative. That the prosthesis outlives its user's body once again reveals the contrast between fragile body and tough device. The life of the mechanical part is shown to outlast the human "whole", primarily because it is much more resilient. The invulnerability of the false part was ruminated on again at the turn of the century in Wells's *The Food of the Gods* (1904). In this story, the farmer Mr Skinner is eaten by a giant rat. When a search party is sent out for him, the only part of him found is his glass eye. The motif was also present in Rudyard Kipling's short story "Mrs Bathurst" (1904). Here a charred corpse is identified as the body of the false-teeth-wearer Vickery because four white teeth are seen "glitterin' against the black" of the carcass (n. pag.). That these devices outlive the human exposes a fear that human control could be usurped by a more resilient force: technology. As I show below, Morley's poem responded to various 1830s contexts, including debates concerning vitalism and the possibility of perpetual motion; the growth of the artificial limbs trade; the rise of industrial manufacture; and the development of automated machines, such as Babbage's "Difference Engine".

While Morley's poem is clearly comical in its tone, it nonetheless reveals an anxiety about the splicing of person with thing. The technologically

sophisticated object is shown to be too advanced for its user, desiring more exercise than the human body can endure. Describing Turningvort's despair at hearing the pathologising nature of his creation, the speaker explains,

His curious springs, wheels, cork, and leather,
 By rarest art combined together,
 Had done their work: and tho' by him
 Perchance this superhuman limb
 Might condescend to be directed,
 It still might spurn to be subjected
 To one, upon whose depth of science
 It felt but moderate reliance,

That the device has agency but lacks logic shows it to be non-human. Like an unruly piece of factory machinery, the leg has “a mind of its own” but is not sophisticated enough to deviate too far from its primary function. It is also shown to be far more resilient than the body of the user, exacerbating the contrast between flesh and machine. The prosthetic leg is thus depicted as an uncontrollable mechanical other. In some ways the poem can be read to expose a cultural anxiety surrounding scientific authority—the fear here is that, in an error of judgement, a scientist could produce a self-acting mechanical device that objects to being subservient to humankind. Here the false part, employed to enable the user to pass as normal, in fact quashes the user's agency, making him act decidedly oddly.

The poem engages with contemporary debates relating to life, energy, and the possibility of perpetual motion. Building on the division of the body and soul posited by Plato, Paracelsus, Jan Baptist van Helmont, Descartes, Georg Stahl, and the Montpellier school of medicine, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century vitalist thinkers, such as Xavier Bichat, suggested that animal life and organic life could be distinguished by a contrast between the forces of life and

the forces of death—Bichat made the famous assertion that “la vie est l’ensemble des fonctions qui résistent à la mort” (“life is the sum of the forces which resist death”; 1).²⁴ Vitalism, “the theory that life is generated and sustained through some form of non-mechanical force or power specific to and located in living bodies” (Packham 1), remained an influential yet contested biological philosophy throughout the nineteenth century. In his 1840s work on “the conservation of force”, German surgeon and scientific philosopher Hermann von Helmholtz sought to disprove vitalism theories by demonstrating that perpetual motion—the possibility for which he suggested was implied by vitalist thinking—was not possible.²⁵ As Helmholtz argued, “no perpetual motion is possible . . . force cannot be produced from nothing, something must be consumed” (298). Engaging with vitalism philosophy and problematising John Locke’s enduring emphasis on “Life’ as the distinguishing character between men and machine” (Packham 16), Morley’s poem reveals a Frankensteinian fear that a scientist could, by mistake, imbue a mechanical object with vitality, creating a conspicuously “incomplete” life form capable of threatening the integrity of those who use it. Morley’s poem interrogates the vitalistic binary between animal life and the mechanical world, exploring the pathologising potential of science gone wrong. Furthermore, by displaying a prosthetic device that not only self-acts but moves without the need of a “*moving force*” (Helmholtz 282), Morley brings to the fore an anxiety about mechanical devices that could move perpetually.

Linked to the above, we can also read Wodenblock’s automatic prosthesis in relation to the real-life development of automatic technological

²⁴ See Weber 6–7.

²⁵ See Weber 278–79.

devices. Contexts such as the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1825, Charles Babbage's continuing work in the 1820s and 1830s on the Difference Engine, and James Pott's invention of the Anglesey Leg in 1816 and its subsequent celebrity championing by the Marquess of Anglesey—a shifting into public view of artificial limbs that Vanessa Warne suggests “hints at the disquieting prominence of prosthetic legs in Victorian culture” (“Artificial Legs” 29)—are all important factors.

The opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway was significant for bringing the human-technology relationship into public consciousness for several reasons. First of all, such an event marked a new age of British transport and a celebration of the nation's technological achievements. Linking together two of Britain's most important industrial centres with a state of the art technology designed to reduce journey times, the railway line promised to alter concepts of distance in the British imagination. A thousand passengers and almost a million onlookers attended the event. However, as if the crowds were not already startled by the sheer speed of the new machines, which travelled at over thirty-miles-per-hour (as fast as the quickest horses), the event was marred by a fatal accident: Tory politician William Huskisson was struck by a train causing a deadly leg break. At a routine stop to take on water for the steam engines, Huskisson got out and was hit by an oncoming train. Such a public display of mechanical brutality highlighted to the hoards in attendance, and the millions who would read or hear about the incident afterwards, what was already all too apparent to the contemporary factory worker: these new steam-powered machines were tremendously powerful, unrelenting, and, often, downright dangerous. As much as such technologies could annihilate time and

space, they could annihilate the human body.²⁶ Morley's image of a device that is also designed to enable locomotion, which affects the leg of powerful local political figure and displays the ability of mechanical devices to run straight through human intervention, can be seen as an imaginative response to Huskisson's contemporaneous accident. The mechanical prosthesis, a device designed to effect an appearance of completeness, is presented as an ironic physical threat to organic wholeness.

Alongside the emerging spectacle of the railway and the variety of opinions it evoked, the question of the ability of the machine to think, a similarly threatening concept, was raised by Babbage's work on the Difference Engine. Babbage came up with the idea for the Difference Engine in 1820 as a means with which to mechanise the production of mathematical tables. Despite encountering many difficulties along the way, by 1832, with the help of his engineer Joseph Clement, Babbage had completed a small section of the Difference Engine, a machine that would sadly never be completed during the inventor's lifetime. Though not the first automatic machine—clocks, trains, and textile machinery all preceded it—the Difference Engine, as a concept more than a complete artefact, was significant as it brought to the fore the notion of machine intelligence. As Doron Swade writes, "it is a landmark in respect of the human activity it replaced. In the case of textile machines of trains, the human activity they replaced was physical. The 1832 engine represents an integration of machinery into psychology" (47). Babbage himself stressed that his engine could not think per se, but its base organisation "reflected the nervous system's structure as revealed by anatomists of the 1830s" (Otis 33). Despite this reserved approach, others later saw the Difference and Babbage's later

²⁶ See Solnit.

Analytical Engine as devices that could replace the brain. Babbage's friend and barrister Harry Wilmot Buxton, who wrote the mathematician's biography between 1872 and 1880 declared, "the marvellous pulp and fiber of a brain had been substituted by brass and iron . . . [Babbage] had taught wheel work *to think*, or at least to do the office of thought" (48–9; emphasis original; qtd. in Otis 33). In the 1820s and 1830s, however, few saw Babbage's inventions in such a way. In fact, the mathematician was more often ridiculed for producing, or, rather, failing to produce, an engine whose ends some thought were useless.²⁷ In spite of such, Babbage's treatises on science and technology such as *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England* (1830) and *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* (1832), which were both lasting contributions in their respective fields, also linked human processes with mechanical ones. In *Reflections on the Decline*, Babbage tried to instruct scientists how to observe, in doing so reducing hands and nerves to instruments whose limitations, he argued, the scientist must appreciate.²⁸ In *On the Economy of Machinery*, Babbage's most successful work, a best-seller in its time, the author once again linked the mechanical and the organic, seeing the factory as a means through which we can understand how the human mind and nervous system function: he argued that the principles governing the arrangement of factories "are founded on principles of deeper root than may have been supposed, and are capable of being usefully employed in preparing the road to some of the sublimest investigations of the human mind" (135; qtd. in Otis 32). Here, then, as in the development of his Difference and later

²⁷ For instance, an article for *The Satirist* in 1832 listed a number of absurd calculations that the Difference Engine could make, including "That the Conservative cause is hopeless, desperate, dull, and d—d" and "The church is in danger, and the Bishops in a fright", concluding with dig at Babbage's inability to complete the calculating machine: "we shall be happy to publish another list when he shall have found the leisure to complete it" ("An Extraordinary" 373).

²⁸ See Otis 31.

Analytical Engine, Babbage brought the mechanical into the realm of organic consciousness. In the same way that Babbage brought concepts such as the machine and volition into conversation with one another, Morley's poem, and the stories of self-acting prostheses that proceeded it, drew from what were controversial materialist views, depicting mechanical devices whose proximity to the human was all too close and whose volition was all too strong.

Simultaneously mechanical subjects and supplementary objects, these devices threatened to collapse the distinction between human and thing.

Another important context for Morley's representation is the real-life development of artificial legs. As David M. Turner and Alun Withey discuss in their article eighteenth-century technologies of the body, as early as the sixteenth century there emerged "a growing division between devices that were strictly functional, such as the peg legs doled out to poor amputee, and more sophisticated prosthetics that not only restored movement but actually resembled the missing body part" (784). Pioneers of such early sophisticated artificial limbs included Ambroise Paré. By the late eighteenth century, prosthetists such as Monsieur Laurent of Bouchain, Thomas Ranby Reid, and Thomas Mann were receiving high praise in newspapers for the high build quality and lifelike nature of their devices. However, it was not until after the Napoleonic Wars were over that artificial limb developments became mainstream knowledge. The device that caught public attention was that worn by the First Marquess of Anglesey, a limb that became affectionately known as the Anglesey leg.

After Henry William Paget, at the time styled as the Earl of Uxbridge, lost his leg to grapeshot in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, he turned to Chelsea Hospital prosthetist James Potts for a device that could compensate for his lost

limb. Potts, who was the first man to patent a wooden leg articulated at the knee, ankle, and toe joints in 1805, produced what came to be known as the Anglesey leg, an artificial leg crafted to an elegant and lifelike form thereby contrasting the rudimentary shape of peg legs, which in spite of the early development of artificial legs remained the preferred type of lower-limb prosthetic up until this point. As Paul Youngquist writes, “Potts’s work was top-notch, and he created a noble leg for a noble patriot” (184). The Anglesey leg served as a model for the development of numerous patented artificial limbs as the trade ascended in Europe and America over the course of the nineteenth century. In a time when England was reportedly replete with amputees, *The Flying Burgomaster* responds to the issue of rehabilitation by imagining a hyperbolised version of a prosthesis like the Anglesey leg as a technology so astonishingly sophisticated that it could override the will of its user. The poem suggests that, in spite of being created in order to enable amputees to pass as normal, new sophisticated artificial limbs posed ironic threats to notions of physical wholeness.

Drawing from similar contexts to *The Flying Burgomaster*, Jonathan Blewitt’s song “The Cork Leg”, which was most likely first performed in the 1820s or 1830s and later became a popular street ballad—a version of it being published in A. A. Marks’s prosthesis manuals from the 1880s onwards and in John Ashton’s 1888 collection *Modern Street Ballads*—is also written in a comical style, and tells more or less the same story as Morley’s poem. A visual representation of the narrative was also provided by Joseph Lisle for advertisements for Blewitt’s original song (see Figure 2.3). Like Morley’s poem, the various incarnations of “The Cork Leg” draw from contemporary anxieties about machine volition. In the version published in Ashton’s collection, like



Figure 2.8 Six scenes narrating “The Cork Leg!”, a song by Jonathan Blewitt. Etching by Joe Lisle c. 1830. Image courtesy of the Wellcome Library.

Wodenblock, Mynheer von Clam, the amputated protagonist of “The Cork Leg”, puts faith in the mimetic capacities of technology, declaring “on two crutches I’ll never stalk, / For I’ll have a beautiful leg of cork”. In this poem we get an even greater sense of the sophistication of the prosthesis:

Each joint was as strong as an iron beam,
The springs a compound of clockwork and steam.
The fine shape gave Mynheer delight,
And he fixed it on and screwed it tight.

In the same manner that Wodenblock and John A. B. C. Smith attach their limbs, Mynheer also screws his leg on. This mechanical mode of attaching the prosthetic emphasises its non-humanness, making its ability to self-act all the more disconcerting. The act of screwing is very much associated with the joining together of fabricated objects for the purposes of construction. Yet, as Green points out, screws were rarely used in the nineteenth century except in large industrial contexts such as factories (65, 118–19). That the screw only tended to be used in large pieces of industrial machinery brings to the fore a link between this representation and anxieties relating to the factory system.

Humans tend not to be threaded thus this act suggests a process of mechanisation on the part of the prosthesis user. Such depictions thus echo Karl Marx’s fear, expressed most famously in *Capital* (1867) that the factory system renders humans a mere appendage of the machine at which they work.²⁹ “The Cork Leg” drew from contemporary anxieties concerning the human-machine relationship while bringing into view a comically pitched but nonetheless topically profound challenge to human agency, a phenomenon

²⁹ See Ketabgian 19–29.

associated with able-bodiedness. The unruly prosthetic body part threatens the agency and health of those who attempt to imitate bodily norms. The powerful prosthetic, artificial and partial, challenges the dominance of organic wholeness by asserting an unwillingness to allow its user simply to pass as normal. Instead it affects an agenda of its own.

By the early twentieth century, following over half a century of developments in prosthetic limbs, we see the self-acting prosthesis reimagined in equally comical yet vogueishly sinister terms. In *The Cinema of Isolation* (1994), Martin Norden shows how early twentieth-century film frequently drew from nineteenth-century literature, using issues relating to disability as exploitable material. As I show, it also reworked narratives that engaged with extant anxieties about human-machine relationships, using the visual medium of film to provoke new responses regarding self-acting limbs.³⁰ Also engaging with the by now established hegemony of organic physical wholeness, such depictions suggested the idea that such dominance could be challenged by increasingly intelligent and sophisticated technologies.

In *The Thieving Hand*, a 1908 film directed and produced by J. Stuart Blackton of Vitagraph Studios, another self-acting prosthesis is portrayed. Once again in the comic mode, here a false arm is depicted that displays an insatiable propensity to steal. The arm is bought as a reward for an honest street beggar who returns a dropped watch to a philanthropic passer-by. hilariously, the arm is purchased in a high-street artificial limb shop thus hyperbolising the increased commercialisation and availability of prostheses (particularly in America) in the early twentieth century. Both the homeless man and the wealthy buyer of the limb are enthralled by the sophisticated arm that they are shown, which not only

³⁰ See Norden 14–48.

looks like a real arm but also moves like one after it has been wound-up using a removable crank handle—a practice that reflects the way that petrol-powered automobile engines were started in this period.³¹ Most miraculously, the arm is shown to move independently from a user's body. However, as soon as the limb is purchased, for what appears a great sum, the arm begins to squirm uncontrollably and soon starts to rob anyone and anything within sight. The arm initially steals the handkerchief of the generous purchaser of the limb, but when it attempts to remove the gentleman's tie, the user stops it. On the street, the limb robs a number of passers-by, who in return show scorn towards the unwitting beggar. Tired of being branded a thief, the tramp sells his arm to a pawnbroker. In the pawnbroker's shop, the arm not only attacks the owner but also steals all it can from the shop's display before crawling back and attaching itself to its original user. Furious at finding the false limb and his most valuable items missing, the pawnbroker tells a police officer and together the pair track down and arrest the innocent beggar. The homeless man is then placed in a communal jail cell, where his false arm attaches itself to a one-armed criminal.

There are a number of obvious similarities between Blackton's film and a nineteenth-century street ballad that was printed in John Ashton's collection in 1888—the same collection in which “The Cork Leg” appears. In a ballad entitled “The Thief's Arm”, an amputee war veteran is fitted with the arm of a dead thief. Like the false arm in *The Thieving Hand*, this limb turns out to have agency of its own, and, while attached to the body of the veteran, it indefatigably steals wherever the subject goes. After the war veteran is arrested and executed for his arm's crimes, the arm rises and joins “a body-snatching knave, / Who stole his master out of his grave.” Though the arm depicted in this poem is not

³¹ See Corn 94–5.

mechanical, it nonetheless acts in a very similar way to the limb depicted in *The Thieving Hand*, thus suggesting that it may have provided inspiration for the short film. While “The Thief’s Arm” reveals anxiety towards a morally corrupt medical profession—one which recklessly transplants arms and digs up dead bodies—Blackton’s film presents a more nuanced satire of the prosthetics industry, which by the early twentieth century was well established and truly international. Challenging the hegemony of wholeness, which sought to erase physical difference from public view through the implementation of lifelike prostheses, here the prosthesis, itself a dismembered part, complicates the logic of passing by exhibiting a restless agency of its own.

The visual effects used by Blackton in *The Thieving Hand* complicate the distinct binary between human body and false part that is made manifest in the earlier representations of self-acting prostheses. For its time, Blackton’s film is visually impressive, providing some very convincing stop-motion animation in places. In other instances, a real arm poses as the prosthetic, in practical terms reversing the primary function of a false limb. Here a real limb stands in for a false one, rather than *vice versa*. This visual blurring of organic and artificial limb not only serves a practical purpose—the use of a real arm enables a convincing deception—but it also makes the mechanical prosthesis look more intelligent and potentially more threatening than the previous self-acting devices. While the earlier portrayals of self-acting artificial legs untiringly repeat the same stock motion over and over again, here the “thieving hand” shows initiative and adaptability as it performs more than just one task—it fights the pawnbroker, strokes the same gentleman’s head, escapes from a shop, drags itself along the floor, attaches and reattaches itself to two different users, and employs a variety of tactics to steal from various people. We can thus consider

this device intelligent yet unruly. Here the prosthesis disrupts not only the life of its user but also the lives of a great number of other people, including those whom it steals from. Since it truly does possess a mind of its own, this prosthesis provides a threat to the order of human society. It challenges not only the physically “incomplete” user, but also normative subjects too thus challenging physical hierarchies: the false part challenges the organic “whole”. This film, in a light-hearted fashion, brings to the fore a filmic trope of conflict between man and machine, a theme that still proves popular in Hollywood today—see, for instance, Alex Proyas’s *I, Robot* (2004) or any of the films from the *Terminator* franchise. Even now we are haunted by the spectre of machine agency.

Covering a wide array of texts from across the period that this thesis investigates, this chapter exposes the plethora of ways in which prosthesis narratives conceptualised the way that autonomy was affected by human-machine splices. While the texts from this period responded to many distinct historical factors, including international conflicts, technological developments, and shifting understandings of personhood, what binds the representations discussed here is the fact that they each interrogated the hegemony of physical wholeness in various creative ways. Though presented more often than not in superficially ableist ways, the representations discussed here either expose the process of prostheticising as problematic or present powerful non-normative challenges to contemporary bodily ideals. The autonomy of the prosthetic part and the human-machine hybrid is presented as a threat to the normative body even though the very existence of such results from ableist pressures. The concept of prosthesis as a disciplinary tool used to enforce and maintain bodily standards collapses as it brings about new threatening and conspicuously non-

normative agencies. To borrow a phrase from literary historian Patricia Murphy, the supremacy of the physically “complete” body was being attenuated even as it was being valorised.³²

³² In her essay “The Fissure King”, uses the phrase “attenuated even as they are being valorized” to describe the way that the instabilities of imperial rhetoric were exploited in an 1887 parody of the famous imperial adventure story *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885).

3 Peg Legs and Prosthetic Promises: Limb Prosthesis and Social Mobility in Victorian Literature and Culture

In the realm of social class, the norm is typically not the mean but the ideological fantasy of the mean. The fantasy is an ideological necessity if bourgeois capitalism is to project a positive vision of its operative world as free, prosperous, and coherent.

—Lennard J. Davis, *Bending Over Backwards* (2002).

So the boy's artificial arm was taken away from him, and another of more approved and utilitarian pattern was given to him. This arm has a hand threaded at the wrist, so that it may be quickly unscrewed and taken off. In its place then appears every morning after the whistle blows a neat little hook, admirably adopted for engaging the handle of a water bucket.

So now the one-armed boy is equipped for carrying two buckets of water instead of one, and the Carnegie Steel company has neatly adjusted what might have been a loss so that it begins already so that it figures of the credit side of the ledger.

—"The Mill Boy and the Hook", *Spokane Press* (1910).

Lennard J. Davis is a leading name in cultural and literary disability studies whose work has been influenced by his experience growing up with deaf parents, something that makes him well aware of the implications of disability in terms of social class. As he writes in a personal essay called "A Voyage Out (or Is It Back?)", published in his 2002 collection *Bending Over Backwards*, "To me, my parents' deafness will always be inseparable from our social class" (159). We learn from Davis's quotation above, which serves as an epigraph to this chapter, (and his work more widely) that the constructed notion of the "normal" body is ideologically tied to the modern economic model. The link between high social status and the "normal" body is evidenced to Davis, in part, by personal experience: he explains that in the 1950s, when he was growing up, the deaf were usually factory workers, his father being one of many in such a role (159). The link between disability, the factory—a technology conceptualised by some in the nineteenth-century as a kind of the prosthesis—

¹and modest social position is exemplified by the early twentieth-century sketch “The Mill Boy and the Hook”, also quoted above, which exposes both the social restrictions imposed by capitalist society on the disabled body and the extent to which the concept of prosthesis is tied to capitalist purposes. The hook hand in this tale is a material solution to a physical problem implemented not so much for the “one-armed boy” as for the economic benefit of the factory owner; if “the hand” served—as in Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854)—as synecdoche for the factory worker, whose labour is concentrated in a useful appendage, then here is an amplification of the worker-as-tool logic. This chapter will pick up on such thematic issues, thinking back to the nineteenth-century for literary sources that illuminate the trifold relationship between disability, technology, and social class.

The social model of disability has shown us how stigma, exclusion, and the ableist construction of our built environment have restricted opportunities for impaired people in social terms, but limited work has been done that explores the class trajectories of disabled figures in imaginative works. What were the imagined fates of impaired people who tried to climb the social ladder? Did prosthetics enable social mobility as their makers promised or did they restrict the user socially? What do such representations tell us about the position of prosthesis users in class hierarchies?

The nineteenth century, a period that bore witness to tremendous improvements in prosthetics—especially lower limb devices—provides an abundance of sources with which to think about disability in relation to social mobility. In a time when prosthetic devices began to saturate the marketplace and occupy a greater place in the social consciousness than ever before, social

¹ See Ketabgian 19–29.

opinion regarding the respectability of artificial body parts remained largely undecided. Stephen Mihm has shown us that limbs “which shall be presentable in polite society” were required for those in the middle class and aristocracy who lost limbs and wished to maintain social distinction. Similarly, Erin O’Connor suggests that artificial limbs functioned for workers as material solutions to the rupture in the physical economy occasioned by limb loss (*Raw Material* and “Fractions of Men”). But cultural and literary representation, overlooked aspects of the discursive history of prostheses, reveals that criticism was also levied towards artificial body parts—technologies that some saw as “emblem[s] of deceit” (Blanchard Jerrold 64). Certain primitive devices, such as peg legs, became associated with beggary fairly ubiquitously. Meanwhile, fictional texts, such as Charles Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65) explored the extent to which man’s fusion with technology, as manifest by the wooden leg user Silas Wegg, can enable one to climb the social ladder.

Using Dickens’s novel as a case study alongside several related lesser-known contemporary texts, several of them published in journals conducted by Dickens, this chapter shows how nineteenth-century fiction complicated the emerging hegemony of physical wholeness by revealing the paradoxes central to such a position and by imagining fictional alternatives. As I argue, the privileging of physical completeness that produced a demand for lifelike prosthetics and linked the “whole” body to social success was problematised by fictional texts that imagined conspicuously “crippled” wooden-leg-using characters as ironic exemplars of social mobility. Though many of the texts discussed come to a conservative conclusion that reifies a predominantly ableist message, I argue that the ideological necessity for such a rebuttal

paradoxically reveals the conceptual fragility of physical completeness as the hallmark of the healthy body.

Mendicity vs. Mendacity: Poor Relief and the Question of Who is “Deserving”

One critical context for the relationship between prosthesis use and class mobility is the nineteenth-century physical economy of work. As 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. Dismemberment disrupted this physical economy. (*Raw Material* 104)

In a world in which not only normative bodily function but also an impression of physical wholeness was so heavily valued, those who were missing limbs often found work hard to come by. Cindy LaCom has shown how, among other factors, “public perceptions of and responses to people with disabilities and to the very concept of disability were shaped by . . . developing capitalist economic theories and an ideology of self-help”, and “the growth of industrialism” (“The time is sick” 547).² As she explains, “Those unable to meet industrial workplace standards because of a disability or deformity were increasingly exiled from the capitalist norm, which demanded ‘useful’ bodies, able to perform predictable and repeated movements” (548). To use a quotation that she borrows, in 1846 a factory inspector noted that “sound limbs are a main part of the working man’s capital, and they should be exposed as little as possible to the risk of

² Also see Oliver 25–42.

irrevocable diminution” (qtd. in Reeve 186). In a world in which an individual’s productivity was seen as an index of his character, convincing those around you that you could work hard was important. As Marta Russell explains, “disabled people who were perceived to be of no use to the competitive profit cycle would be excluded from work” (59). For industrial workers, such as railway or factory workers, it was important to work in spite of physical loss: as Jamie L. Bronstein notes, “For workers, injury lasted as long as it kept one from returning to the same or a similar job at the same pay rate” (96). But many positions, in particular the higher paid ones, were rendered untenable for those who had lost arms or legs. For instance, railway owners tended to relegate disabled workers to lower paying positions outside of public view in order to avoid offending public sensibilities (Bronstein 88). One disabled railway worker wrote, “A man whose frame is shattered to such an extent as to render him a cripple for the remainder of his existence, is practically dead so far as active work is concerned” (*Miners’ Journal and Pottsville General Advertiser* [1846]; qtd. in Bronstein 88). Likewise, as Mihm observes, “In an age of appearances, members of the middle-class necessarily hid their deformities and weaknesses, for fear that first impressions might deny them opportunities in marriage, employment, and social advancement” (288). We learn from French mid-century ocularist Auguste Boissonneau that such prejudices were not restricted to those who had lost limbs. According to Boissonneau, the use of one of his devices “permits its wearer to look after his business and keep up his relations with society in general, without the fear of being looked upon as an object of repulsion or of pity” (*General Observations* 7).

The social situation for those who lost body parts but could continue to work was restrictive, but for those who were completely excluded from the

working environment by bodily loss the possibility of social improvement was often erased entirely. As Martha Stoddard Holmes explains in her seminal work on Victorian disability, *Fictions of Affliction* (2004), both state and charity relief for those deemed unemployable due to disability were jeopardised by anxieties surrounding the issue of who it was that *deserved* financial assistance. Indeed, the discourse surrounding disability and financial provision was often infiltrated by fears of fraudulence. In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act introduced a centralised system to manage administering relief to the poor. The new system was brought about, at least in part, in response to fears from social reformers that the decentralised parish-based system of poor relief implemented by the Elizabethan poor laws was inconsistent and, at times, misused. The new system sent able-bodied men seeking relief to the workhouse while providing limited out-relief to those deemed deserving—i.e. those unable to work, including the young, the old, and the disabled. Despite this tightening of the law, as Stoddard Holmes reveals, fears of abuse remained and much discourse surrounding the *deservingness* of the unwaged disabled perpetuated as a result. Even charitable discourse was pervaded by such questions. For instance, the Charity Organisation Society was set up in 1869, inspired by the belief that “the mass-misery of great cities arose mainly, if not entirely, from spasmodic, indiscriminate, and unconditional doles, whether in the form of alms or in that of Poor Law relief” (Owen 217). This situation meant that many unwaged disabled people were not awarded relief for fears of malingering thereby prohibiting their chances of bettering their social position. As Stoddard Holmes writes, “even if a physical impairment looks valid, the argument goes, it may be supplemented by an invisible advantage: one more instance of the difficulty of distinguishing medicity from mendacity” (119).

Anxieties about homeless people feigning disability to secure alms or cheat the poor relief system were buttressed by a culture that perpetuated images of fraudulent beggars. Such representations were visible throughout the century in England and elsewhere in the Western world. Susan M. Schweik notes, for instance how the duplicitous mendicant was a common image in mind-to-late nineteenth-century American culture: “The distinction between false and true mattered enough to produce a tension between languages of care and languages of criminality, and conflict about authenticity, that played themselves out over and over in the telling of stories of the vagrant and the beggar” (111). In England, Henry Mayhew’s expansive and popular exercise in social observation *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851)—a text that taxonomised London’s labourers, street workers, and non-workers—identified a class of mendicants, many of whom were disabled or presented as such, as “Those that Will Not Work”. In categorising and describing the kind of beggars that inhabit the streets of London, Mayhew identified “Blown-up Miners” as a group rife with impostors. He described how some “rank impostors” exposed “some part of their bodies—the leg or the arm—and show you what looks like a huge scald or burn”. He labelled the device of producing artificial sores “scaldrum dodge” (vol. 4, 420). Beggars feigning disability also appear in Victor Hugo’s grotesque masterpiece *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831). Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes story “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (1891) tells a scandalous story about one Neville St. Clair, a well-to-do gentleman who with the aid of tape, which he uses to make his mouth look disfigured, turns secretly to begging, a pursuit that he finds easier and more profitable than other careers available to him. While the image of the begging impostor was by no means

new in the nineteenth century,³ the popular motif of the fraudulent beggar in Victorian literature and culture paid testament to the prevalence of cultural anxieties surrounding categorising aberrant bodies in this period.⁴

In addition to cultivating fears about the authenticity of those on the streets with disabilities, Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor* also provided an insight into the lived realities of some disabled individuals. One particular section of Mayhew's first volume tells the story of a "crippled" seller of nutmeg graters, a man with withered limbs who is unable to walk and perform basic motor skills. We learn through this example of the social limitations and difficulties imposed upon an individual whose aberrant body is unaccommodated for by society. In a lengthy personal testimony, the seller of nutmeg graters reveals how he ended up working as a street trader. We learn that various circumstances, many unpleasantly linked to constructions of disability, led to his downfall: his "feeble-minded" mother was unable to look after him, entrusting a fellow servant to be his guardian; his extended family were and remain repulsed by him and are unwilling to provide him with financial assistance; his former lodgers exploited him by refusing to pay rent, leading to his financial downfall and stay in a workhouse; in the workhouse he was unable to perform manual labour, meaning that he was his food allowance was restricted, worsening his physical condition and prohibiting him from saving enough capital to buy sufficient stock for his nutmeg-grater-selling enterprise upon departure. The seller of nutmeg graters also explains how physically taxing his work is:

³ As Irina Metzler writes, as early as 806 a Carolingian capitulary issued at Nimwegen forbid almsgiving to beggars capable of working with their hands and around 820 Louis the Pious ordered supervisors to monitor beggars so that simulators could not hide among them (169).

⁴ For more on this topic, see Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 22–49.

It's very hard work indeed is street-selling for such as me. I can't walk no distance. I suffer a great deal of pains in my back and knees. Sometimes I go in a barrow, when I'm travelling any great way. When I go only a short way I crawl along on my knees and toes. The most I've ever crawled is two miles. When I get home afterwards, I'm in great pain. My knees swell dreadfully, and they're all covered with blisters, and my toes ache awful. I've corns all on top of them. (vol. 1, 330)

Due to the unprofitable nature of his work ("Some weeks [he] hardly clear[s] [his] expenses" [vol. 1, 330]), lack of support network, unwillingness to beg for alms, and inability to secure other employment, it seems inevitable that this individual will spend the remainder of his days in a low social position. This account therefore provides an insight into the potential social plight facing those who experienced impairment in the nineteenth century.

Despite the heart-rending nature of this story and Mayhew's apparent admiration for the resilience and industriousness of the seller of nutmeg graters, as in many representations of disabled street dwellers from this era, fears of malingering remain on the surface. Indeed, Mayhew notes that he made "all due inquiries" to satisfy himself of the seller of nutmeg grater's "worthiness" (vol. 1, 330). Mayhew also provides a number of testimonies after the street seller's personal account to convince himself and the reader of the man's honesty. This latter measure exposes the lack of trust that Mayhew places on those who displayed physical difference in Victorian London, revealing how questions of authenticity often pervaded discussions of the adult male disabled body in Victorian literature and culture.⁵

Intriguingly, the very notion that one can better one's social position by imitating disability, a state characterised by the normate as "incomplete",

⁵ See Stoddard Holmes 94–132.

provides us with our first insight into how nineteenth-century discourses of disability and prosthesis bring into doubt the dominance of the able, physically “complete” body. Here, the able-bodied are concerned about and resistant to a method of self-representation that privileges physical loss over completeness for monetary ends. Thus while physical wholeness was so often privileged in Victorian discourse, it was by no means a stable conceptual category (in part because so many deviated from it in reality) hence its need for repeated cultural reinforcement.

Both questions of authenticity and the social trajectories of people with disabilities are topics central to nineteenth-century discourses of prosthetics. Relating to the latter point, prosthetic limbs were often marketed as devices that could enable users to avoid the social plight described by the seller of nutmeg graters in Mayhew’s sociological text. But not all such devices were affordable for those who needed them the most. The next section of this chapter will explore the distinction between peg legs and artificial legs, prosthetics available, for the most part, to consumers of distinct socio-economic groups.

The Peg vs. the “Artificial Leg”

The promise of social security was used as part of a commercial advertising rhetoric employed by contemporary prosthetists. As O’ Connor argues, “The discourse of prosthesis is . . . infused with class consciousness, suggesting that man cannot occupy a meaningful social position unless he is physically complete” (*Raw Material* 130). Prosthesis makers often cited the social disadvantages of amputation or physical disfigurement in contrast to the mimetic capacities of their devices, which they claimed could mask the appearance of impairment (thus alleviating stigma and social degradation) while

allowing a wearer to maintain the same job and standard of living that s/he enjoyed prior to their injury. Ocular prosthesis maker Auguste Boissonneau states in his 1862 treatise on artificial eyes that his device, “whilst concealing a deformity of, to say the least, a disagreeable aspect, permits its wearer to look after his business and keep up his relations with society in general, without the fear of being looked upon as an object of repulsion or of pity” (*General Observations* 7). Elsewhere, Boissonneau goes even further, suggesting that the use of one of his prosthetic eyes can enable its wearer to make a more favourable impression upon those whom s/he encounters:

The use of an artificial eye is highly appreciated by those who know how much the facial defects are in the way of one’s progress in the world, and how painful is the contention between the unpleasant impression caused by an unbecoming face, and the wish of pleasing which every one [sic] experiences. Men of the most serious turn cannot help this feeling regarding those who surround them, or with whom they associate. A man in a subordinate situation is anxious to be liked by his employer, the husband wishes to produce a good impression on his wife, and *vice versa* [sic]; and young people are very desirous of exciting feelings of affection. We may easily form attachment, but it is not equally easy to have one’s love returned. It is certainly very advantageous to gain our fellow creatures’ approbation, both *physically* and morally; and expressive and regular features are not to be despised. Outward appearance has a great deal to do with success in the world, and when we neglect to rectify a physiognomical defect we may mar our prospects for ever. (*Method* 3; emphasis original)

Along similar lines, in *Automatic Mechanism* (1863), limb prosthetist Frederick Gray refers to the fitting of an artificial limb as “the facility of progression” (46 and 55), once again implying that those missing body parts need prostheses in order to move forward in life—with regard to legs, in terms of both physical locomotion and social mobility. In his treatise Gray also includes a great number of testimonial letters, which in many cases emphasise how his artificial limbs

have enabled users to maintain their social position. Captain W. W. A. from the Bengal Army, for instance, states, “To one in my situation, the benefit I have derived from your skill is incalculable, as it enables me to return to an efficient performance of my military duties” (qtd. in Gray 182).

Making life for the amputee even more problematic, the type of prosthesis employed by an individual was seen as a measure of social standing. Contemporary American poet and physician Oliver Wendell Holmes made the discrepancy between standard and sophisticated artificial legs infamous in his essay “The Human Wheel, Its Spokes and Felloes”. Holmes states that while “A plain working-man, who has outlived his courting-days and need not sacrifice much, to personal appearance, may find an honest, old fashioned wooden leg, cheap, lasting, requiring no repairs, the best thing for his purpose”, in “higher social positions at . . . an age when appearances are realities . . . it becomes important to provide the cripple with a limb which shall be presentable in polite society, where misfortunes of a certain obtrusiveness may be pitied, but are never tolerated under the chandeliers” (306–7). As Holmes identifies, while the old-fashioned peg served as an acceptable device for lower-class users to wear, its crude construction meant that it was utterly unsuitable for the respectable amputee for whom it was a social requirement to display good health—a condition that relied upon an impression of physical wholeness. What Holmes fails to acknowledge in this essay is that peg legs were also inadequate replacements for lower-class users. In fact, their general unaccommodating design often further impaired the already maimed amputee and, more concerningly, prevented the wearer from maintaining a position of employment.

Peg legs were the cheapest and most basic devices available to amputees. Having been in circulation for several centuries, these devices consisted, in the commonest instances, of a hollow wooden bucket or cup, into which the stump would go, which was fixed to a wooden peg that would reach the ground in the place of a foot. As an article published in *All the Year Round* in 1875 describes, "In order to make it look a little more shapely than a mere stick of firewood, the peg is contoured somewhat in rolling-pin fashion, with a knob at the lower end" ("Legs: Wooden and Otherwise" 463). For slightly more money, other adaptations could also be made to better fit the amputee's stump: a leather sheath could be attached for improved comfort or a knee joint could be incorporated so that the peg could be bent whilst sitting-down. Despite these possible modifications, however, the peg-leg was considered a low-end product: "what are wooden-pegs compared with artificial legs? No more than penny dolls compared with Mr Cremer's walking and talking young ladies" ("Legs" 464). Since these devices were most commonly used by working-class or mendicant amputees, they became synonymous with low status and small income. As if to suggest that the wooden-legged beggar was a ubiquitous figure, one *All the Year Round* contributor wrote, "You, London reader, have seen wonderful things in your time; the sham sailor in the New-road, with a painting of a storm in the Bay of Biscay rolled out between his wooden legs, which rest as sentinels on either side of it" ("Street Sights" 279).

Unfortunately, while the adaptations listed above were occasionally made to improve the utility and comfort of wearing such devices, these limbs were noticeably inferior to the so called "artificial legs" that were being produced in this period. An undisputable fact, which has thus far been overlooked by scholars of the literary history of Victorian prosthesis, is that while great

advances were made in the technologies of human prosthesis over the course of the nineteenth century, in the case of lower-limb prosthesis, the vast majority of cultural and fictional representations of prosthetic legs describe peg legs rather than the costly, new-fangled devices made by emerging prosthetists.⁶⁷ In this sense, then, the cultural and literary representations of leg prosthesis can be read to accurately convey the real-life paradox in nineteenth-century prosthesis circulation. Amidst a society that demanded working men to look productive (“whole”), the consumer group that required the use of effective prostheses the most was the labouring class, who were so often maimed by industrial machinery or lost limbs to disease or infection.⁸ As already noted, it

⁶ Examples of nineteenth-century literary representations of wooden leg users: Old Tom from Frederick Marryat’s 1834 novel *Jacob Faithful*; Mik-hoo-tah the one-legged bear hunter from Henry Clay Lewis’s sketch, “The Indefatigable Bear Hunter” (1850); the eponymous Martin Guerre from the anonymous retelling of the well-known tale of imposture, “Martin Guerre” (1867); the wooden-legged postman in Anthony Trollope’s 1869 novel *He Knew He Was Right*; Bob from the anonymous short story “Peg-Legged Bob” (1874), who despite being given what appears to be a more up-market artificial leg, refers to it as a “peg leg” and is rendered unemployable; Jonathan Small from Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* (1890). While we see more expensive prostheses displayed in Thomas Hood’s “Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg” (1840–41) and Hermann Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851), neither are equivocal to the light, articulated prostheses, which were being made by contemporary specialists: the eponymous heroine of Hood’s popular poem buys a prosthetic leg made of gold, while Captain Ahab, from Melville’s novel, wears a device made of ivory. In instances where we do see representations of the new-fangled artificial leg, the results are not always good: a popular song called “Cork Leg” circulated throughout the century about a rich Dutch merchant who is run to death by his prosthesis; “The Flying Burgomaster” (1832), which was authored and illustrated by Countess Morley told the same basic story.

⁷ According to Jessica Riskin’s analysis of late-eighteenth-century “wetware” (a term she borrows from computer science and engineering that she uses to refer to technologies that replicate features and functions traditionally deemed exclusive to humanity or the animal world, including, for instance, nerves and the ability to speak or defecate), this decision could be down to what she describes as a “disenchant[ment] with the close simulation of life” (264), which, according to her, occurred during the nineteenth century after an earlier Enlightenment concern with mimesis. While this observation seems convincing with regard to the automata that she discusses, and even the literary portrayals of primitive prosthesis use in the nineteenth century, her analysis is undoubtedly undermined by the endeavours of Victorian prosthetists, who (as I discuss) attempted to, as closely as possible, mimic human form—to the extent that some makers even designed limbs that would trick the body of the wearer into thinking that the device was a part of him/her, thus alleviating phantom limb pain. See O’Connor, *Raw Material* 111–16.

⁸ Highlighting the danger of industrial work to the labourer’s body, Jamie L. Bronstein reveals that “Construction work on a single stretch of railway line over a six-year period resulted in 32 deaths, 23 compound fractures, 74 simple fractures, and 140 ‘severe cases’, including blast burns, severe bruises, cuts, and dislocations. Many of those injured suffered from multiple injuries”. Such, according to Bronstein, “was in addition to 400 cases of minor [8] accidents: trapped and broken fingers, seven of which had to be amputated; injuries to the feet, lacerations of the scalp, bruises and broken shins” (8–9).

was a financial imperative for disabled individuals from this social group to return to manual work as soon as possible. Despite their apparent need to appear able-bodied, these amputees simply could not afford the kinds of devices that would provide them with the best chance of returning to work.

As the mid-nineteenth-century prosthetist Gray states (much to his disappointment both financially and philanthropically), devices such as his were not available to all. Coming at a high price, working-class amputees had virtually no chance of attaining one of Gray's (or any other well-regarded prosthetist's) sought-after legs, unless they were sponsored by a particularly generous employer: "from the expense entailed by their elaborate construction, they are not within the reach of the poorer class of sufferers" (Gray 107). It is with regret that Gray makes this declaration since, as he states, "in the case of the affluent the loss of a limb does not reduce the sufferer to a state in which his relative position in life is rendered worse, whereas, when a poor man becomes crippled, he is reduced to a state of almost perfect destitution and misery" (107). For Gray, then, amputation was more debilitating for a labourer than for a member of the aristocracy or bourgeois, primarily because persons belonging to the two latter classes did not need to rely on their physical capacities to earn an income. Despite Gray's encouragement for employers to fit their injured workers with more suitable prostheses, in the majority of cases working-class amputees were forced to make-do with peg legs.⁹ Later in the century (1888), George

Furthermore, providing an indication of the high percentage of amputations performed on those from working-class professions, E. J. Chaloner, H. S. Flora, and R. J. Ham show us that of the 84 amputations performed at the London Hospital between 1852 and 1857 as a consequence of trauma, "72 were necessitated by injuries sustained at work—for instance, 'being run over by a railway car', being 'crushed between two ships' or being 'injured by machinery'". As Chaloner, Flora, and Ham note, "The distribution of injury is reflected in the occupations of the male patients, most of whom were labourers, railwaymen, sailors or factory workers" (409). Also see Williams-Searle; O'Connor, "Fractions of Men" 744–46; Cooter and Luckin.

⁹ As Gray notes, there were a few exceptions to this trend: some employers, including Great Western Railway had a special prosthesis fund for its employees. The North Western railway

Marks, brother and business partner of renown nineteenth-century American prosthetist A. A. Marks, spoke on behalf of his prosthesis firm when he critiqued the use of peg legs: “We do not advise the use of the peg leg, as it so poorly replaces the lost member, and besides, its use has a tendency to impair the movements of the stump” (47). It should be noted, however, that in the same paragraph Marks also stated that despite his recommendation, his firm could make pegs upon request, highlighting the commercialism underpinning contemporary prosthesis discourse, the prevalence of the lower-class amputee, and the persisting social hierarchies associated with prosthesis that continued through to the end of the nineteenth century.

The fully articulated legs of makers such as Gray, James Potts, Douglass Bly, Benjamin Palmer, Dubois Parmlee, and A. A. Marks thus sat at the opposite end of the commercial spectrum to peg legs.¹⁰ As Vanessa Warne

company had similar provisions in place—see Pendleton 477. Gray suggests that the investment of such employers was worthwhile as it enabled injured workers to return to work: “This charitable conduct has been found to be, in fact, the most economical. Those who have been the objects of it have been rendered useful to the companies in many ways, and instead of remaining mere pensioners on their bounty, have become efficient agents in their service” (108). In this sense, then, prosthesis was seen by Gray as tool that employers could use to repair the physical economy that was ruptured by injury to workers. For a fictional example of an employer that does take responsibility for his injured employees, see the anonymously published short story “Pegged-Legged Bob” (1874).

¹⁰ Potts was the innovator of the “Anglesey Leg”, a prosthetic leg made for and used by the Marquess of Anglesey that included a steel knee joint and utilised artificial tendons made of catgut, which were designed to enable the leg a natural range of movement. Gray, an apprentice of Potts, succeeded his master as the Marquess’s artificial leg supplier and was accredited by the nobleman as the producer of “the best substitute he had ever tried” (Gray 20). Gray encouraged a closer relationship between surgeon and prosthesis maker, highlighting the best “elections” for amputation. He also employed a more anatomical, empirical and individualist approach to prosthesis making, which was not seen before. Bly took the anatomically-accurate aspect of Gray’s design even further by designing a device, which, in its very construction, mimicked the form of the organic leg: Bly patented the use of a ball and socket ankle joint, which offered a further range of movement than other devices on the market. Palmer, on the other hand, was commissioned by the American government to produce artificial limbs for the thirty thousand amputee veterans that survived the American Civil War; according to Holmes, Palmer had won fifty honorary awards by time his essay was published in 1863 (309). Another American prosthetist, Parmelee was the first to successfully make an artificial leg that included a socket for the stump of its user that attached itself using atmospheric pressure. The century’s final great prosthetist, Marks, invented the rubber foot, which gave its users a more natural gait than other devices. Like Palmer earlier in the century, Marks was commissioned by the American government to supply artificial limbs to the nation’s war veterans.

notes, the distinction between peg legs and these more expensive prostheses was clear:

The term “artificial leg” was reserved for prostheses that imitated both the appearance and movement of a natural leg; it did not apply to simple wooden pegs or to rudimentary leg-shaped prostheses. Marketed as more attractive, comfortable, and safe than crutches or pegs, artificial legs had patented features such as rubberized feet and articulated joints. They were usually made to order and were consequently costly. (“To invest a cripple” 84)

In his 1855 treatise on amputation and limb prosthesis, Gray identified his mentor Potts (creator of the much respected “Anglesey leg”) as the inventor of “the artificial limb” as distinct from other, more primitive substitutes. For Gray, and others, the distinction between artificial limb and “peg” or “pin” lay in the sophistication of these new devices and in particular, the attention they paid to human anatomy. As Gray states,

the science of artificial limb-making is neither a very simple nor easy acquirement; it cannot be attained without great attention, great experience, and a habit of induction applied to facts. A very trifling discrepancy in the shape or outline . . . will, in the formation of an artificial leg, give a very grotesque and absurd appearance to the wearer. A very small deviation from correctness in the shape and bearing of an artificial leg, will produce a very great amount of inconvenience to the patient, and tend greatly to mar what may in other respects be a very creditable performance on the part of the artist. (94)¹¹

¹¹ In “The Physiology of Walking” (1878), Holmes suggests that anatomical precision is key to replicating the human walk. He claims that it is exactly because he and his contemporaries did not know enough about the human leg that a life-like walking automaton could not be made: “no man has been able to make a figure that can *walk*. Of all the automata imitating men or animals moving, there is not one in which the legs are the true sources of motion. . . . our knowledge is not yet so far advanced that we can hope to succeed in making real walking machines” (122; emphasis original).

Though Gray does not explicitly say it, to him a peg was not to be confused with an “artificial leg”. While the former provided a cheap and simple solution for immobility resulting from amputation, the later was anatomically designed to not only enable free and easy movement for the amputee but also mimic the organic motion of the patient’s real leg and provide optimum comfort at all times.¹²

Unlike the artificial leg, which was designed so that its non-human composition could be easily concealed, the peg leg was obviously wooden.¹³ It is therefore worth taking a moment to consider what the contemporary connotations of this material were, since woodenness was often so lucidly displayed by peg leg users and brought into the representational armoury of the writers that depicted such figures. While we may be inclined to assume that the industrial revolution rendered wood archaic, as Harvey Green identifies, even by the mid-nineteenth century, timber remained prominent:

we should remember that the Industrial Revolution in the West began with wood as its major material. Before 1850 most machines—spinning wheels, looms, plows, rakes, shovels, hoes, churns—were made almost entirely of wood. Even at the outset of the age of steel, machines for home and factory production were made mostly of wood, with iron or steel fittings attached at areas of greatest friction or where cutting took place. But iron and steel require fuel (wood, charcoal, coal, coke) to smelt the ores and melt the metals. Wood requires no further transformation of its substance in the wild. Metals and plastics may be the materials of industrialism today, but wood made the revolution possible. (xxv)

¹² As Neil Handley has shown us, the ocular prosthesis market was also one divided by class barriers (101–2). See “Artificial Eyes” (1869) for a nineteenth-century description of the hierarchical nature of the Parisian glass eye market (Paris being the global centre for ocular prosthesis manufacture at the mid-century).

¹³ While, upon close observation, even the most high-tech artificial legs were quite blatantly made of wood, they were designed to be worn under clothes, thus disguising their non-human form. Their ability to emulate the natural gait of a real leg meant that, while concealed, they often went unperceived. Because of their design, peg legs either protruded beyond the natural contours of the stump or were not thick enough to fill trouser legs, meaning that they could not be easily worn under garments. They were, therefore, often exposed for all to see.

Indeed an article published in the *London Journal* on 30 Aug 1862 (“Different Uses of Wood”) pays testament to the enduring uses of wood, not the least as a means of fuel and also as a durable building material. Thus while today wood “endures because it is now thought of as a traditional, even (ironically) preindustrial material” (Green xxv), in mid-Victorian times the material was contiguous with industrial practice. Chiming with David Edgerton’s innovative research on technology-in-use,¹⁴ wood is far more entwined with industrial modernity than often accredited. To many Victorians, the wooden leg user therefore appeared not only as someone who was not fully human in composition, but also a person whose body part was the product of industrial manufacture—made by an increasingly autonomous mechanical method. As we will see in the following sections, such links with industry complicated representations of wooden leg users, who were often imagined as transgressive social climbers.

Literary Representations/Complications

Despite the apparent class divide between peg-leg and artificial-leg users, some writers engaged imaginatively with the possibility that prosthesis use could enable an amputee to climb the social ladder. This very idea was explored in Charles Manby Smith’s satirical story “An Essay on Wooden Legs, with Some Account of Herr von Holtzbein”, which was first printed in the April

¹⁴ In *Shock of the Old* (2008), Edgerton shows how “old” technologies have, in many cases, had a greater impact on the world than the new innovations that are often believed to characterise particular historical moments. For instance, Edgerton suggests that “The horse made a greater contribution to Nazi conquest than the V₂” (xii). Edgerton makes the radical argument that “The history of invention is not the history of a necessary future to which we must adapt or die, but rather of failed futures, and of future firmly fixed in the past” (210).

1854 edition of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*.¹⁵ Resonating with the prostheses described in the previous chapter that were represented as adding to the abilities of their users, in this essay the author, in a provocative and humorous manner, goes beyond identifying prostheses as devices that can enable amputees to live normal lives, suggesting instead that such technologies are capable of enhancing the user and raising his—his because the piece is conspicuously geared towards a male user—social status. The author uses a sixteenth-century philosophical treatise as starting point and framework for his argument. The treatise, translated from Latin by Manby Smith, theorises that

there is no state or condition of existence prevailing among any of the nations of the world, which can be truly said to derive its character from its own inherent elements; that, on the contrary, the force of habit and the prejudice such force engenders, rather than the dictates of nature, determine the ill or well being of the human race; and that it is the business of a refined civilization, by the development of this second nature, to surmount and subdue the first—in furtherance of which development it is both lawful and right to subject every condition and circumstance of being, however honoured by antiquity or general usage, to the test of investigation and practical experiment. (230)

This philosophy undergirds Manby Smith's purpose: "to reconsider a question which I fear has been too summarily settled, without duly weighing the arguments which have been, or might be, adduced on both sides—the question being, whether TWO legs are better than ONE" (230; emphasis original).

According to the narrator, the use of an artificial leg not only lessens the chances of the user contracting illnesses or defects, such as gout, corns, and

¹⁵ Manby Smith was in fact very much interested in, and concerned with, the marginalised status of "cripples". In *Curiosities of London Life* (1853) he expresses particular anxiety for those who were maimed by "commerce" (referring to labourers injured by industrial machinery), who, according to him, were given little support and "left to fight the battle of life at fearful odds" (17).

bunions, but also prevents damp feet and the risk of sustaining injuries as a result of doing things too quickly. It also, according to the narrator, provides some physical advantages, such as providing a better footing on soft ground. To exemplify his argument, the narrator tells the story of Herr von Holtzbein—“Holtzbein” in German literally means “wooden leg”—a Berlin-based¹⁶ war veteran, who after losing his leg to a bullet-wound in the Napoleonic war, “cured the ills that fighting flesh is heir to by applications of wood and steel, and leather and whalebone and cork, all so elaborately made and so perfectly simulating nature’s handy-work, that his reputation, amateur though he was, surpassed that of the first professors of the day” (233). After Holtzbein’s daughter gets engaged to a fellow veteran’s son, the prosthesis maker breaks off the engagement because of an off-hand comment made by the young suitor regarding the inferiority of prosthetic limbs to their organic equivalents. Only after the suitor has an accident himself—resulting in amputation and the charitable offering of an artificial leg by Holtzbein—is the relationship between father and son-in-law-to-be restored. Herr Doppelschank, the suitor, is ironically only “enabled” to marry the successful prosthetist’s daughter, thus raising his status and presumably his finances, once he is himself adorned with a prosthetic limb.

While the tone of Manby Smith’s essay is obviously ironic, what is significant is that the hegemony of physical completeness is brought into

¹⁶ During the mid-nineteenth century Germany was thought to be the leading nation for wood sculpture and, in particular, for the production of wooden toys. As an article in *Bow Bells* on 17 November 1869 states, “In Germany, more than any other country, sculptors in wood seem to have been encouraged—for, not only are the churches there richly decorated with exquisite carvings, but palatial edifices, the chateaux of the nobility, and even the residences of the wealthier citizens, boast of similar sculptural works” (“Sculpture in Wood” 401). Furthermore, an article published in *All the Year Round* in 1865 notes that “All the English toy-makers agree, with one accord, that we cannot for an instant compete with the Germans and Tyrolese in the fabrication of [wooden toys]” (“Noah’s Arks” 260). The supposed proficiency of German wood craft could, perhaps, account for Smith’s decision to set his anecdote in Berlin. However, in reality there is little indication that German leg prostheses were popular in Britain.

question in the anecdote that he provides. Here an amputee, a subject whose freedom would normally be restricted within the marriage market (discussed at length in ch. 4), is provided greater opportunity by his use of artificial legs. It is true that Manby Smith's essay could be read as a jab at contemporary prosthesis makers, who made bold claims about their devices, promising social respectability for those who used them. The blatant humorous and sensationalist tone of the piece as a whole also portrays limb loss and prosthesis use as comical spectacles. However, despite the playful tone of the essay, Manby Smith does appear to be committed to the project of problematising the "inconsiderate habit" of discriminating against those missing legs (231). Indeed, in Manby Smith's most famous work, *Curiosities of London Life* (1853), a book not dissimilar to Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor* but written from a working-class perspective, the author encouraged his reader to avoid underestimating the physical capacities and working spirits of London's "deformed, maimed, and crippled sweepers":

there is a considerable number constantly at work, and, to do them justice, they appear by no means the least energetic of the brotherhood. Nature frequently compensates bodily defects by the bestowal of a vigorous temperament. The sweeper of one leg or one arm, or the poor crippled who, but for the support of his broom, would be crawling on all-fours, is as active, industrious, and efficient as the best man on the road[.] (54)

Revealing his empathy for London's disabled population, in particular those impaired by industry, Manby Smith also writes:

Commerce maims and mutilates her victims as effectually as war, though not in equal number; and men and lads without arms, or without legs, or without either, and men doubled up and distorted, and blasted blind and hideous with gunpowder, who have yet had

the misfortune to escape death, are left without limbs or eyesight, often with shattered intellects, to fight the battle of life at fearful odds. Had they been reduced to a like miserable condition while engaged in killing their fellow-creatures on the field of battle or on the deck of carnage, a grateful country would have housed them in a palace, and abundantly supplied their every want; but they were merely employed in procuring the necessaries of life for the fellows in the mine or the factory, and as nobody owes them any gratitude for that, they must do what they can. (17)

We learn, then, from *Curiosities of London Life* that Manby Smith was in fact very concerned about the position of disabled people in Victorian society, enabling us to read “An Essay on Wooden Legs” in new light. Though it is clear that Manby Smith does not actually think that wooden legs are preferable to organic ones, his against-the-grain reading is nonetheless resistant to the assumptions, prejudices, and lack of empathy displayed by the normate. Like Mayhew and many of his other contemporaries, however, Manby Smith was also acutely aware that an impression of disablement or disfigurement could hold coercive advantages for those roaming London’s streets: in *Curiosities of London Life*, Manby Smith notes that certain disabled crossing sweepers believe that they have “an extra claim upon the public on account of the afflictions [they] had undergone”, meaning that “now and then one of these supposed maimed or halt performers turns out to be an impostor” (54). As the next section of this chapter shows, themes of fraudulence and social mobility are reworked in relation to wooden leg users, first, in the articles and stories that appeared in Dickens’s journals and, second, in the author’s last complete novel, *Our Mutual Friend*.

Prosthesis Users in Dickens's Journals

It can be confidently asserted that Dickens was well accustomed to editing and imaginatively creating prosthesis-using characters well before the first instalment of *Our Mutual Friend* was published in May 1864. As Adrienne E. Gavin asserts, “while his novels are not filled ‘entirely by wooden legs,’ the number of wooden legs within them reveal his fascination with these limbs” (n. pag.). Discussing Dickens’s deployment of effigy and his interest in the boundary between human and thing, John Carey asserts that “Dickens’ most popular lifeless bit is the wooden leg, about which he has a positive obsession” (91). In *Dombey and Son* (1846–48), for instance, the author presents to the reader the hook-handed Captain Cuttle, a character who, according to Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph, “literalizes Dickens’s sense of the emerging prosthetic man” (619).¹⁷ Wooden legs are also referred to, or appear in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1837–38), *The Pickwick Papers* (1838), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41), *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44), and *David Copperfield* (1849–50).¹⁸ Dickens goes a step further in his interrogation of

¹⁷ Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph argue that “the oscillation in Dickens’s work between representing characters as self-acting ‘things’ and as ‘people,’ (i.e., as nineteenth-century liberal subjects moved by ethical will), registers a Victorian discursive practice wherein the boundary between the machine and the human tends to dissolve” (617). By placing *Dombey and Son* in context with the author’s friendship with Charles Babbage, inventor of the Difference Engine and Analytic Machine, the Victorian forerunners to computer technology, Sussman and Joseph suggest that Dickens possessed and presented in his works an engaged but ambivalent attitude to the human-machine relationship.

¹⁸ In *Nicholas Nickleby*, Miss Knag tells Madame Mantalini about her uncle, who “had such small feet, that they were no bigger than those which are usually joined to wooden legs” (157). In *The Pickwick Papers*, a one-legged reformed alcoholic is reported to have found “a wooden leg expensive going over the stones”, so for a while wears second-hand legs and drinks “a hot glass of gin and water every night—sometimes two”. After finding that “second-hand wooden legs split and rot very quickly” he is “firmly persuaded that their constitution was undermined by the gin and water”. He quits drinking and buys new wooden legs, which he finds “last twice as long” (348–49). In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, freak show proprietor Mr Vuffin asserts, “Look at wooden legs. If there was only one man with a wooden leg what a property he’d be! . . . Instead of which . . . if you was to advertise Shakespeare played entirely by wooden legs, it’s my belief you wouldn’t draw a sixpence” (194). Simon Tappertit, from *Barnaby Rudge*, is crushed in a riot thus leaving him with two wooden legs. Mrs. Gamp, from *Martin Chuzzlewit*, describes how her husband would send his son “a errand [sic] to sell his wooden leg for any money it would fetch as matches in the rough, and bring it home in liquor” (590). *David Copperfield* also features a wooden leg user: Mr Tungay, the “obstinate barbarian” henchman of violent schoolmaster Mr

human-machine boundaries in a section entitled “Display of Models and Mechanical Science” of *The Mudfog Papers*, which was published in *Bentley’s Miscellany* from 1837 to 1838. Here, in a satirical dig at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Mr Coppernose, a member of the “Mudfog Association for the Advancement of Everything”, proposes creating a automaton police force for the relief of carousing young noblemen who were inclined “to pummelling each other” (135). Jay Clayton gestures towards the author’s bizarre obsession with man-made bodies and body parts with his assertion that “Dickens seems to find something grotesque in the very idea of automata” (189). Dickens’s interest in prosthetics is corroborated by his correspondence. Indeed, in a letter to John Leech dated 23 October 1848, Dickens wrote of his enthusiasm to see “a gentleman with a wooden leg . . . dance the Highland Fling” as advertised in a Britannia Saloon Bill (n. pag.).

A number of prosthesis using characters also appear in *Household Words*, a weekly magazine established and edited by the author, which ran from 27 March 1850 to 28 May 1859. These include the wooden-legged dust scavenger Peg Dotting from “Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed” (1850), the wooden-legged man described in an article published on New Year’s Day in 1859 (“New Year’s Day”), and the respectable amputee milliner’s daughter Mary Wigley from Sarah Smith’s short story “The Lucky Leg” (1859) to mention but a few. William Blanchard Jerrold’s famous article on the Victorian penchant for prostheses “Eyes Made to Order”, discussed at length throughout this thesis, also appeared in *Household Words* in 1851. What these examples demonstrate is not only that Dickens was familiar with cultural and fictional representations of

Creakle (97). The tale also includes the miser Mr Barkis, who is found to own “a silver tobacco-stopper, in the form of a leg” (271), perhaps drawing from Hood’s popular poem “Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg”. Also see V. R. “The Wooden Legs in Dickens” (1936).

lower-limb amputees but that he was in fact preoccupied with issues relating to prosthesis use.¹⁹ These representations explore the increasingly intimate relationship imagined between people and things in this period, which Dickens was keen to scrutinise, while at times complicating the cultural dominance of the “whole” body by portraying socially mobile prosthesis users.

Before we turn to the fictional prosthesis users depicted in *Household Words*, it is worth taking some time to consider broader discussions of the human-technology relationship in this publication, in particular with regard to social class. Both Tamara Ketabgian and Catherine Waters have written in detail about how the human-machine relationship was negotiated in Dickens’s magazine. Ketabgian draws our attention to Harriet Martineau’s 1852 series of essays on the factory system published in *Household Words*, which reveal Martineau’s sanguine outlook on human-machine integration. Ketabgian comments, “While Martineau views female-mechanical hybrids as promising and productive, she continues to privilege notions of bodily integrity, seamlessly integrating the mechanical prosthesis within the body” (36–7); “While the Victorians found the union of humans and machines an urgent issue, Martineau disavows the tensions of this union, portraying fantastic, metallic humans in their place” (39). Waters, on the other hand, complicates the picture, suggesting that the journal as a whole communicated complex and conflicting attitudes regarding the splicing of human and machine, in particular as manifest in the factory system. Waters reveals an intriguing paradox in the very ethos of Dickens’s journal:

¹⁹ For scholarship that attempts to justify Dickens’s interest in prostheses, see Gavin. Also see Cotsell 50–51; Allen 16, 77.

Ironically, while *Household Words* sought to differentiate itself from such a “cast iron and utilitarian” competitor as *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*—sought, that is, as Dickens's epithets imply, to distinguish its journalism from any resemblance to the machine-made commodity that might otherwise be seen in its identity as a cheap periodical, designed for a mass readership and produced by a team of authors who were part of a large division of labour in print production and (except for salaried staffers) paid by the column—the imaginary narrative techniques used to achieve this distinction also serve at times to conceal the nature of industrial labour. (85)

Such an ambivalent stance on human-machine interaction, as the following will show, was manifest in both the articles that appeared in Dickens's journals and the representations of prosthesis users that appeared in his works of fiction.²⁰

A *Household Words* article that Waters discusses, which contributes much to the debate concerning how human-machine integration affects social status on an individual level is Henry Morley's 1857 article “Men Made by Machinery”.²¹ In this article, Morley champions the industrial machine, and the factory system more generally, as a technology that has, contrary to the beliefs of some, both increased the demand for and raised the wages of competent labourers, thereby “do[ing] infinitely more than any other mere invention . . . for the elevation of [the workers'] class” (357). As Morley explains,

with the machinery comes a demand for better labour and the offering of better pay; with it comes, also, increase of production and a necessary widening of the whole field of labour and of the resources of the working-class; with it comes also a cheapening of the product, therefore a more extended, a more certain and less fitful demand, a lessening of that fluctuation in the labour market which makes the well-being of the workman insecure. (100)

²⁰ Such a stance thus aligns my work with Sussman and Joseph's argument that Dickens's fiction displays an engaged but ambivalent attitude to the human-machine relationship.

²¹ See Waters 83–4.

Promoting the benefits of the implementation of industrial technology, an application that Morley articulates as a prosthetic relationship between human and machine, he ultimately states that “the tendency of machinery is not to convert poor men into machines, but that the steam-engine is in fact their steady helper, tending to no end so much as the making of them men indeed” (100). Here Morley’s attitude echoes that of the technophiles Charles Babbage and Andrew Ure, whose views are discussed in the previous chapter.

Despite the optimism of Morley’s account of the human-technology relationship, as Water’s shows us, the overall picture that *Household Words* paints of machine-aided manufacture is an ambivalent one. In fact, Morley’s own attitude regarding the factory system was divided: in his article “Ground in the Mill”, published three years prior to “Men Made by Machinery”, Morley displayed outrage towards the greedy commercialism that led to factory accidents, incidents that, as I have suggested, could have catastrophic social impacts on the maimed workers that survived them. The rest of this section will show that *Household Words*’s ambivalence to human-technology integration also showed in its fictional stories containing actual prosthesis users, stories that complicated the hegemony of physical wholeness by imagining socially mobile amputees.

The short story “Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed” is a tale that is interesting not the least because it is thematically and narratively similar to *Our Mutual Friend*. Like Dickens’s later work, the tale associates a wooden-legged amputee with dust—the waste through which the author explores man’s bizarre yet increasingly intimate relationship with the material world. In this tale three disabled characters, two of whom are prosthesis users, describe their intimate personal ties to the dust mound, which they see not only as a source of income,

but also as an enchanted entity—one that has the ability to revive those who have almost drowned to death. Each of the three afflicted characters describes to his/her peers his/her ephemeral experiences of encountering riches: the ninety-seven-year-old one-eyed man Gaffer Doubleyear (who wears an oyster shell over his lost eye and whose name is in part recycled in the form of Gaffer Hexam in *Our Mutual Friend*) describes a piece of gold he once spotted as “dropped” from the sun (381), while Peg Dotting, the eighty-three-year-old wooden leg user, expatiates her experience of encountering “a beautiful shining star” embedded in the mound, which she claims “Providence had sent for some better purpose than to be taken home by some old woman like [herself], whom it has pleased heaven to afflict with the loss of one leg, and the pain, ixpinse, and inconvenience of a wooden one” (sic; 382). A little later, Jem, a “poor deformed lad whose back had been broken as a child” (379), reveals that he was told by an Angel that rose out of the dust to quit his job as a chimney sweep and instead seek arcane riches in the dust-heap (382). Later in the story, these three characters work together to revive a gentleman (fallen both figuratively and literally) who had almost drowned in an adjacent canal, though (as is described) the dust itself also has a big part to play in the man’s recovery: “It is a fact well known to those who work in the vicinity of these great dust-heaps, that when the ashes have been warmed by the sun, cats and kittens that have been taken out of the canal and buried a few inches beneath the surface, have usually revived; and the same has often occurred in the case of men” (383). Luckily for the gentleman, he is revived thanks to a combination of human intervention and the remedying powers of the dust. In a stroke of even better good fortune, he notices that a piece of parchment wrapped around a treasure recovered by Jem is in fact a missing part of a title-deed, which in the

long-term allows him to once more climb the social ladder and recover his former position—in actual fact, it indirectly enables him to eventually secure a wife, thus elevating him above his former bachelor status.

Significantly, the close relationship of the scavengers with the dust-heap is made manifest by Peg and Gaffer's uses of prosthetic devices. These two characters are (like the dust-heap) haggard, aged, decaying, and made-up by material objects: Peg by her wooden leg and Gaffer by his oyster shell eye-patch. Like Wegg, these prosthesis-using characters experience an elevation in status over the course of the story thanks to their close relationships with the material world (for which they are marked physically by their use of prostheses). As a token of gratitude for saving the drowning gentleman, the pair are rewarded with a cottage nearby. They are thus elevated to the status of home owners. As the following analysis shows, complicating the hegemony of natural physical wholeness, the idea that class mobility can be enabled as result of a close human-material relationship (as made manifest by wooden leg use) is thematically explored and interrogated by Dickens's rewriting of the dust-heap story in *Our Mutual Friend*. However, unlike the prosthesis-using duo of "Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed"—who receive a very slight elevation in status as a result of their dust-heap knowledge and tender human generosity (though they become home owners, they continue to be scavengers of the dust heap)—Dickens's later novel reveals the inverse of this story: as he shows, those who become too much like the material world ultimately fall because of their lack of human qualities. *Our Mutual Friend* brings into question the primacy of organic wholeness by imaginatively exploring class mobility enabled by prosthesis use while manifesting a distrust towards too close an intimacy with technology. Evoking the human "organs" of Karl Marx's conceptualisation of the factory

system, Wegg's humanity is compromised by the hardening influence of a technological device.

Sarah Smith's short story "The Lucky Leg", which was also commissioned by *Household Words*, is another tale that depicts a prosthesis-using character who achieves success thanks to the use of a prosthetic device. This story describes a bizarre turn of events in which Mary Wigley, a respectable working-class amputee, manages to secure a husband of high social standing thanks to her use of a wooden leg. After becoming distressed that she would never be able to have a family of her own because of her disability, Mary is approached by a man in the street who hands her a note asking to make her acquaintance. Following a short courtship, the man proposes to Mary and she accepts. Despite her apparent good fortune, the protagonist's suspicions are raised towards her future husband when, on a trip to his Manchester estate, a gardener reveals to her that his master's real name is Mr Gordon, not Mr Williams as he first introduced himself. Gordon allows Mary access to the whole of his mansion so that she can suggest any alterations before moving-in, but she uses the opportunity to search his premises in hope of revealing her fiancé's mystery. All that she discovers (with the help of her mother and her friend, the minister's wife) is two wooden legs. Before she can come to any conclusions, Gordon reveals that he is in fact a double-widower and that both of his previous wives were amputees. As he discloses, his first wife died prematurely, leaving a will that entitled Gordon to her full estate on the condition that he married another one-legged woman; his second wife also died, leaving the widower an inheritance. Explaining his attraction to Mary, Gordon suggests that "these circumstances tended to invest a cripple with peculiar interest in my eyes" (380). Satisfied with the explanation

that Gordon only concealed his name because of the infamy of his previous marriages, Mary forgives him and the two are happily married.

While Sarah Smith's story seems to suggest that class mobility can be enabled by a female amputee's use of a wooden leg, it must be noted that the very appeal of the tale is its unusual course of events. The story is, after all, entitled "The Lucky Leg", emphasising the good fortune of the protagonist, who in the eyes of the narrative's other characters (and audience) was thought to have little or no chance of securing a husband. As the minister's wife recalls, "Even my husband said a wooden leg would be a serious obstacle to any one falling in love" (375). The story is narrated by Mary's friend, the minister's wife, and its oration is stimulated by a conversation about "What unaccountable things people do in the way of marrying!" (374), suggesting before we are even presented with Mary that her husband made an unusual choice in selecting her as his wife. At a time when disabled women were supposed to be entirely off limits to able-bodied suitors, there is an almost sensational element to the tale, which flips the predominant privileging of physical wholeness on its head.²² In this sense, then, it is the very rareness of such an opportunity that makes Mary Wigley's story intriguing to a contemporary reader. The story is therefore arguably less subversive, for instance, than Wilkie Collins's 1872 novel *Poor Miss Finch*, which presents a blind woman who is not only sexually forward, but who also secures marriage (and unthinkably) reproduces at the end of the novel. Sarah Smith's story emphasises its very unusualness, in part reaffirming the status quo that prohibited the social mobility of "cripples".

²² For detailed analysis of disabled women in Victorian marriage plots, including the subversive effect of constructing such subjects "as figures of eros rather than pathos" (76), see Martha Stoddard Holmes's chapters "Marital Melodramas" (34–73) and "My old delightful sensation" (74–93) in *Fictions of Affliction* (2004). Also see ch. 4 of this thesis.

Commenting on the thematic intersections between Sarah Smith's story and Thomas Hood's *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41)—discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Four—Vanessa Warne brings our attention to the pragmatic ends of a marriage such as Gordon and Mary's: “the marriage of an able-bodied man to a disabled woman involves either the acquisition of new wealth or the preservation of already inherited wealth” (“To invest a cripple” 97). However, the happiness that the reader is intended to feel at Gordon and Mary's marriage, a union between an able-bodied man and disabled woman, brings into question the reason why physical wholeness is so often privileged over physical aberrance. Mary and Gordon's marriage is not only happy but mutually beneficial thus challenging the cultural barrier that prohibits physically “incomplete” women from the institution of marriage and social mobility more widely. Furthermore, the very caveat that the story is unusual, a nod to the status quo—perhaps to avoid an ableist backlash—brings our attention once more to the ironic conceptual frailty of hegemonic physical wholeness: due to its quixotic rather than realistic underpinnings, it is a concept that requires persistent affirmation. The effect of wooden-leggedness upon class mobility is taken up again by Dickens in *Our Mutual Friend*.

Our Mutual Friend

Our Mutual Friend, first published in serial form from 1864 to 1865, is a novel that literalises George Henry Lewes's observation that Charles Dickens's characters are wooden puppets that are brought to life by incident (98): the author uses Silas Wegg, a man who is both a peg-leg user and depicted as wooden in appearance, character, and action, to explore the greed-provoking

influence of material culture.²³ More widely, as Dorothy Van Ghent suggests when she wrote that “People were being de-animated, robbed of their souls, and things were usurping the prerogatives of animate creatures” (158–59), the author’s work displays an explicit engagement with topics relating to human/object relationships. Significantly, as I go on to demonstrate, the novel engages with representations of prosthesis, its materiality, and how the latter impacted upon social mobility in the nineteenth century.

To some extent, through his portrayal of Wegg, Dickens complicates the assertions of contemporary influential figures such as Samuel Smiles, John Ruskin and Charles Kingsley, who believed that displaying good physical health was a signifier of mental vigour, by depicting a blatantly one-legged man who is, for a time, enabled class mobility thanks to his use of a wooden leg. In *Self Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (1859) Smiles asserted that the male body, alongside masculine morality and intellect, must be cherished and refined: “Each must be developed, and yet each must yield something to satisfy the claims of the others It is only by wisely training all three together that the complete man can be formed” (240). As suggested in this passage, for Smiles physical cultivation was a vital yet overlooked aspect of ideal masculinity. Indeed, Smiles later asserts that “It is in the physical man that the moral as well as the intellectual man lies hid; and it is through the bodily organs that the soul itself works” (246). Smiles further claims that the success of professional men “depends in no slight degree on their original stamina and cultivated physical strength” (245). Smiles’s vision was reaffirmed by Ruskin, who in 1860 asserted that a gentleman’s status derives from his physical vigour:

²³ As Caroline Evans notes, this trope of Dickens’s fiction is also made manifest, yet also complicated, by the portrayal of Jenny Wren, her doll-making business and the confused way in which she refers to people as dolls and dolls as people (167).

“A gentleman’s first characteristic is that fineness of structure in the body, which renders it capable of the most delicate sensation” (268). Around the same time that Smiles and Ruskin promulgated their masculine ideals, Kingsley re-envisioned masculinity infamously with his concept of “muscular Christianity”. “Perhaps more than any other middle-class writer”, James Eli Adams suggests, “Kingsley placed the male body into widespread circulation as an object of celebration and desire” (150). Donald E. Hall claims that the defining characteristics of “muscular Christianity” included “an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself” (7). Highlighting the importance of physical cultivation in his essay “The Science of Health” (1872), Kingsley proclaimed that “We must . . . have the CORPUS SANEM if we want the MENTEM SANEM; and healthy bodies are the only trustworthy organs for healthy minds” (34; emphasis original). Wegg is not physically fit and thus vigorous and resolute as Smiles, Ruskin, and Kingsley might expect. Rather, in Dickens’s novel, Wegg’s hardiness and desire to climb the class ladder are affected by stubbornness and inhumanity, qualities that the author imagines stem from the character’s use of a wooden leg. As I suggest, Wegg’s initial rise is to some extent enabled by his prosthesis and the apparent influence that the materiality of the device has upon him.

Engaging with contemporary debates surrounding the relationship between man and machine in this period, Dickens presents Wegg as someone who, in almost every respect, resembles the wood from which his artificial body part is formed. It is, in part, the very fact that Wegg wears a wooden leg that convinces Mr Boffin to employ him, thus enabling the amputee to climb the social ladder. However, though the author allows the “wooden” Wegg a great

deal of social mobility prior to the novel's denouement, Dickens eventually privileges the organic over the artificial: Wegg's plan to usurp Mr Boffin from his elevated position eventually fails—in part due to the inability of the amputee's peg leg to successfully negotiate the terrain of his master's dust mounds.

Echoing the contemporary instructions that encouraged amputees to utilise sophisticated prosthetic devices in order to avoid the stigma surrounding bodily loss, Wegg's leg ultimately stands, metonymically, for stasis, accurately depicting the social limitations of wooden leg users.²⁴ Since Wegg's wooden prosthesis is seen to have such a profound impact on its wearer, Dickens's portrayal suggests both an uneasiness regarding the meshing of the human with the non-human and also a lack of sympathy towards amputees such as Wegg, who were so often depicted as figures of fraudulence and imposture in contemporary culture. In a time when lower-limb amputees were routinely branded masters of deceit, Dickens's text speaks to David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's assertion that "defining corporeal unruliness consistently produces characters who are indentured to their biological programming in the most essentializing manner" (*Narrative Prosthesis* 50).

While a number of critics have commented upon the synecdochal significance of Wegg as a character who embodies the dispersal and

²⁴ Here I use the idea of metonymy as deployed by Elaine Freedgood in her 2006 monograph *The Ideas in Things*. In this work Freedgood suggests that "The reader who wishes to recover (or rather, imagine) the material qualities of fictional things must avoid the temptations of allegory and follow instead the protocols of the collector" (2), suggesting that to better understand the significance of objects in Victorian fiction, one must first appreciate their contingent associations before applying symbolic meaning. She describes her own methodology in the following way: "the historically and theoretically overdetermined material characteristics of objects are sought out beyond the immediate context in which they appear. These objects are then returned to their novelistic homes, so that we can inhabit them with a radiance or resonance of meaning they have not possessed or have not legitimately possessed in previous literary-critical reading" (6). In other words, Freedgood encourages reading "things" in context with their actual material and manufacturing histories; for her these must be appreciated in order to fully appreciate the significance of a given object. In terms of my approach to analysing Wegg, I therefore investigate his prosthesis in relation to the contemporary associations of such devices to social mobility before returning my analysis to the context of the novel and in particular how Dickens imaginatively complicates these bonds.

fragmentation that are considered major themes of *Our Mutual Friend* as a whole, Gavin is the only scholar who has placed Dickens's novel in historical context with medical matters relating to amputation and lower-limb prosthesis. As Albert D. Hutter identifies in his 1983 essay, a "problem" for several of the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* is "disarticulation": "characters are cut off from their work and from each other or like Wegg (at another extreme) from parts of themselves" (154). Elsewhere, Lawrence Frank suggests that "Silas Wegg's comic embodiment of the danger of dispersal, of fragmentation, is matched by his equally comic inclination to paralysis, to petrification. . . . Inevitably, in the art of analogy Dickens so skilfully employs, Wegg's comic predicament comments upon the serious plights of other characters" (27). Building upon Frank's analysis, Alex Woloch argues that "Wegg's emblematic wooden leg doesn't only stand for both petrification and fragmentation but also stands as a product of the clash between embodiment and disembodiment that is produced by a character's standing for such abstractions in the first place" (354n2). Goldie Morgentaler, meanwhile, uses Wegg and his woodenness as an example through which to explore "the idea of mistaken and disembodied identity that is one of the central themes of the novel in which he appears". "*Our Mutual Friend*", Morgentaler writes, "is vitally concerned with issues of identity and with the difficulties of separating the genuine essence of an individual from its outer manifestation" (n. pag.). Unlike these critics, then, who are primarily concerned with the symbolic value of Wegg's wooden leg, Gavin's article "examines Wegg against the historical background of Dickens's interest in wooden legs, Victorian surgery and prosthetics, and nineteenth-century commodification of body parts" (n. pag.). Extending the medical history work of Gavin while bearing in mind the symbolic power of Wegg's wooden leg, here I address the issue of class, an

issue linked to both the materiality of the user's prosthesis and his status as a physically "reassembled" Victorian male.

Readers first encounter Wegg as a character who is very much defined by his prosthesis. Indeed, before we are acquainted with Wegg's name, Dickens describes him as "a man with a wooden leg" (46), suggesting that his most distinguishing feature is the prosthesis that he uses. At this point in the narrative, Wegg operates at the lower end of the Victorian class system: he owns a stall that sells a number of miscellaneous items, including sweets, fruits, ballads, and gingerbread. In addition to his stall, Wegg claims to run errands for a nearby house, though, as the narrator notes, "he received such commissions not half-a-dozen times in a year, and then only as some servant's deputy" (47). That he is unable to attain a position as a servant highlights the privileging of physical wholeness that abounded in nineteenth-century society. Aligning with the discourse of work and disability described at the start of this chapter, because Wegg is one-legged it is assumed that he is unable to perform household duties as well as an able-bodied employee. In this sense, Wegg's false leg, with which he is identified by the narrator, stands for his inability to secure employment. At this point in the narrative, he is rendered a "useless cripple" by his amputation and use of a wooden leg. Furthermore, Wegg's prosthesis is symbolic of his lowly position within society: metonymically the leg stands for low income while metaphorically the limb fits a stereotyped view of paupers who were often represented as being impaired or disfigured in one way or another. David Copperfield's sweetheart, Dora, for instance, associates beggary with "a yellow face and a nightcap, or a pair of crutches, or a wooden leg, or a dog with a decanter-stand in his mouth, or something of that kind" (545–46).

Despite the symbolic status of his prosthesis, Wegg's wooden leg appears to provide its user with some advantages. In his line of work, which involves (for the most part) sitting and waiting for customers to arrive, Wegg's artificial leg in fact appears less of a hindrance than his healthy one: to keep his organic leg warm, he places it in a basket—an unusual choice of leg-warmer that in form closely resembles the “bucket” of a peg leg into which the user's stump would be inserted. Later in the novel, when he is asked if he likes his wooden leg, Wegg humorously responds, “Well! I haven't got to keep it warm” (50), as though he's ready to be rid of the “good” leg too. In this instance, Dickens light-heartedly echoes the words of Manby Smith who jokingly gestured towards the possibility that prosthesis wearers possess advantages over bipeds: “look at the double risks of the double-footed, even in calamities that come unsought. The gout, that horrible visitant, has but half a victim in a one-legged man; of corns too he has but half a crop; his bunions never mar his quiet pilgrimage; and, come what may, he cannot by any possibility suffer from damp feet” (“An Essay” 231). Considering the way that Wegg is described throughout the novel (as we will see, he is as wooden in character as his artificial leg is in form) it is perhaps unsurprising that he chooses another wooden object to keep his real leg warm. Wegg's use of the basket in this way suggests that he is comfortable using wooden objects as supplements to his physical form—the basket is, in fact, not much different to the “bucket” part of his prosthesis that his stump goes into—as also suggested by the manner in which he uses his prosthesis in ways that go beyond physical replacement and mobility aid; elsewhere in the novel Wegg prods Venus with his wooden leg to discretely

gain his attention (513–15); in another instance he is said to “take his wooden leg naturally” (48).²⁵

Ironically, Wegg’s wooden leg actually helps him to secure a position as a literary man for Mr Boffin, the recent inheritor of a considerable fortune. Boffin goes so far as to boast that his literary fellow is a prosthesis user: when John Rokesmith first approaches Boffin looking for employment, the Golden Dustman warns the young man that he has already made a recent appointment: “I have in my employment a literary man—*with* a wooden leg—as I have no thoughts of parting from” (103; emphasis original). It seems unusual from any perspective to boast of employing someone with a physical impairment, yet in this instance emphasis is placed on the prosthetic device rather than the missing limb. In this sense, Boffin’s respect for Wegg appears to be expounded by the amputee’s use of an artificial limb. The fact that Wegg sells ballads and is physically impaired somehow implies to Boffin that the amputee is well-read. Boffin employs Wegg in order to fulfil new social expectations that come as a corollary to wealth; Boffin feels it necessary to be learned in order to successfully perform his heightened social role. Since it was considered more respectable for amputees to wear artificial limbs than to not, Boffin judges Wegg in a favourable manner because of his use of such a device. To Boffin, Wegg’s use of a prosthetic limb seems to signify that he is genteel. A culturally aware Victorian reader would pick up on Boffin’s assumptions, which are not just absurd but comical: for a start, the wooden leg that Wegg wears aligns him closer with maimed industrial workers, beggars, and naval veterans than with high society.

Despite his best intentions, Boffin is depicted as somewhat of a fool by the narrator at this point in the story. Not only is Boffin unlearned and

²⁵ For more on devices that are imagined to enhance their users, see ch. 2.

completely taken in by Wegg's clumsy use of verse and false literary prowess—epitomised by Wegg's "wooden conceit and craft", which "kept exact pace with the delighted expectation of his victim" (60)—but he also shows an ignorance towards popular contemporary connotations of peg legs, which were more commonly associated with beggary than respectability. As Mihm suggests, in the nineteenth century, a time where the "tendency to equate external, bodily appearance with internal character" became popular and legitimised by scientific and medical doctrines, prosthesis type became an index for social value: "Prostheses from [the nineteenth century], far from being mere markers of technological progress, remain emblems, largely forgotten, of the demands posed by an 'age of appearances' in whose shadows we continue to live today" (294). An 1885 American etiquette manual suggested that "A man's walk" is "an index of his character and of the grade of his culture" (qtd. in Mihm 288). "The sight of a man, however respectably dressed," Mihm suggests, "hobbling down the street on an 'odious peg' would inevitably lead strangers to judge him in a negative light, as a 'cripple'" (289). Thus Dickens establishes Boffin as being ignorant of this social code since the Golden Dustman values Wegg more for having a wooden leg. Boffin's lack of awareness towards the social connotations of an unnatural-looking prosthetic device could be symptomatic of his own rise up the social ladder: within working-class social spaces, such as the factory, farm, or gin palace, there was much less impetus on the appearance and life-like movement of a prosthetic limb. Instead, the merit of an artificial body part was judged on performance: if a wooden leg allowed an amputee to return to work it was deemed successful. Justified by his rapid rise from the lower end of the class spectrum, Dickens depicts Boffin as unaware of polite society's demands for more life-like prostheses.

Providing a contrast to the hegemonic norm of organic wholeness, the materiality of Wegg's prosthesis is reflected in the mannerisms, movements, and character of the wooden leg user. As described by the narrator:

Wegg was a knotty man, and a close-grained, with a face carved out of a very hard material, that had just as much play of expression as a watchman's rattle. When he laughed, certain jerks occurred in it, and the rattle sprung. Sooth to say, he was so wooden a man that he seemed to have taken his wooden leg naturally, and rather suggested to the fanciful observer, that he might be expected – if his development received no untimely check—to be completely set up with a pair of wooden legs in about six months. (48)

Later in the novel Wegg is said to have a “hard-grained face”, “stiff knotty figure”, and is compared in looks to “a German wooden toy” (524). In another instance he is said to have a “wooden countenance” (624), and elsewhere a “wooden head” (698). Of course, Wegg's very name is an elision of “wooden” and “legg”—a splicing of language that signifies the splicing of man and thing. As Carey suggests, Wegg is one of the most lucid representatives of Dickens's interest in “the border country between people and things” (101):

In a sense the wooden-legged men are at an intermediate stage of turning into wood, and with Silas Wegg the process has gone further. He is described as “knotty” and “close-grained”, altogether so wooden that he seems to have grown his wooden leg naturally, and may be expected to develop a second one, Dickens conjectures, in about six months (103).

In typical Dickensian fashion, the characterisation of Wegg is determined by his physical features. In this case, Wegg's prosthesis is (in material if nothing else) the most visible signifier of the character's behaviour and inner qualities. To an almost comical degree, the narrator attributes the one-legged man with

attributes akin to timber. That Wegg is “knotty” sets out that he is fixed and awkward, much like his wooden leg; that he is “close-grained” suggests that he is hard, obstinate and narrow minded. Stern faced, with a mechanical laugh, Silas Wegg is in nearly all capacities presented as wooden by the narrator. Even the character’s movements are described in terms of woodenness since he is described to “stump” rather than walk. In a similar way to how prosthesis-wearing characters depicted elsewhere were said to reflect, in character, the material properties of their devices—for instance in the case of Miss Ruff in Anthony Trollope’s *The Bertrams* (1859), who is as cold, hard and fixed in her mannerisms as her glass eye is in material—here Wegg’s prosthesis reflects him as much as he does it. Unlike “the Oaken Lady” of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story “Drowne’s Wooden Image” (1844)—a wooden figure head for a boat that is so mesmerisingly mimetic an effigy that “she” is thought to have come to life when “her” original comes to town—the aesthetic effect of Wegg’s wooden artificial part is not only blatant, but all-consuming. In appearance he is more wooden than the oak figure skilfully carved by the craftsman Drowne in Hawthorne’s tale.²⁶ As we learn, Wegg’s prostheticised woodenness serves him well, for a time at least, providing an imaginative alternative to organic physical wholeness.

²⁶ Another notable wooden character that appears in nineteenth-century fiction is the eponymous protagonist of Lucy Lane Clifford’s short story “Wooden Tony” (1890). In this narrative Tony, a wayward youngster who is nicknamed “Wooden-head” due to his general slowness and inability to apply himself, is transformed into a wooden figurine. Like Wegg, Tony begins life fully organic, but acquires a wooden part (figuratively to begin with). As with Wegg, Tony’s woodenness spreads and, as we learn, turns from the figurative to the literal: he actually becomes wooden. The idea that woodenness could spread from head to foot is also jokingly referred to in a short story entitled “Peg-Legged Bob”, which was published in *All the Year Round* in 1874. In this story the wooden-legged protagonist recalls his experience of accident, amputation and prosthesis use. Whilst recovering in hospital, Bob’s philanthropic employer visits his employee, revealing that he has purchased a wooden leg for the amputee: “you allus [sic] had a wooden head, and now you’ll be head and foot all alike” (565).

The splicing of man and thing that is represented by Wegg recalls the also static, mechanised “hands” of the Victorian factory system. The human-machine relationship as manifest in the factory system was analysed in depth by Karl Marx in his contemporaneous critique of political economy, *Capital* (1867). As Ketabgian explains, Marx’s text articulates how humans and machines jockey for dominance and subject status in the factory system: “the humans and machines of *Capital* shift restlessless between the role of host and prosthesis” (19). According to Marx, the factory arranges its workers as “parts of a living mechanism” (548; qtd. in Ketabgian 21). The division of labour, Marx suggests, “mutilates the worker”, transforming him into the “life-long organ of [a] partial function” (482, 458; qtd. in Ketabgian 21). Reversing the prosthetic function that technology is usually held to serve, Marx suggests that the worker, fragmented by monotonous routine, becomes a “living appendage of the machine” (614; qtd. in Ketabgian 21). Dickens’s portrayal of a character in Silas Wegg, who is mechanised by his use of a prosthetic device, has parallels with the “human organs” of Marx’s factory. In Marx’s text, the dominance of the mechanical is brought into play. In terms of social mobility, the human subject takes on the supposed passivity of the object/thing. Dickens, on the other hand, gives thought to a more beneficial human-object relationship.

In Dickens’s novel, the hard woodenness that is characteristic of Wegg throughout is simultaneously a help and hindrance to the amputee’s social rise. Early on, when the one-legged man runs a stall, the hardness (which is transposed to the fruit that he sells) is somewhat off-putting for potential customers:

Assuredly, this stall of Silas Wegg’s was the hardest little stall of all the sterile little stalls in London. It gave you the face-ache to

look at his oranges, the tooth-ache to look at his nuts. Of the latter commodity he had always a grim little heap, on which lay a little wooden measure which had no discernible inside, and was considered to represent the penn'orth appointed by Magna Charta. (48)

Here, not only is hardness reflected in Wegg's character, but also by the produce that the one-legged man attempts to sell. Wegg's fruit is hard and thus unpalatable. Also directly reflecting the properties of wood, his measures are fixed and rigid. Elsewhere, the very language with which the narrator describes Wegg's bargain-driven character draws from a lexical set of wood: "Boffin will get all the eagerer for waiting a bit,' says Silas, *screwing* up, as he *stumps* along, first his right eye, and then his left. Which is something superfluous in him, for Nature has already *screwed* both pretty tight" (80; emphasis added). Here both his facial expression and figurative composition—being "screwed" tight together—play once more with the notion that the material properties of his prosthesis are reflected in his character while also suggesting that Wegg is someone who very much has his wits about him. The noisy and inarticulate way in which he is described to move, which again draws on his bodily state and use of prosthesis, also reflects his slow, methodical, and calculating nature. It is these characteristics that allow Wegg to infiltrate the Boffin family home and scheme the plan that almost collapses the world of the Golden Dustman. Wegg's wooden mannerisms are represented as directly responsible for his rise up the social ladder when, after "stumping leisurely to the Roman Empire" (196), Boffin offers his wooden-legged literary man a permanent position at the Bower, meaning that he can give up his street stall for a better living. Revealing the advantages of a human-machine splice, Dickens brings into question the preference for organic physical completeness by presenting a temporarily

successful, prostheticised, and conspicuously wooden alternative. By presenting Wegg as so blatantly wooden and prostheticised, Dickens also collapses the social mandate for prostheses that allow users to pass. It is after all the recognition that he *is* a wooden leg user that gains him employment in the first place.

However, displaying an ever ambivalent attitude to concepts of health and the human-technology relationship, early on Dickens's text seems to gesture towards the notion that a wooden prosthesis could prove an advantage for a man wishing to scale the social ladder, but later his novel reveals some unpleasant corollaries of being a socially marginalised and physically impaired individual. An incident that reveals the vulnerability of the amputee to unwanted attention occurs when Mr Boffin callously asks Wegg how he got his wooden leg. Here it is interesting that the Golden Dustman asks not how Wegg sustained his injury but how he obtained his prosthesis. Boffin's question can be read as both an attempt at subtlety and revelatory of his preoccupation with Wegg's false leg, which for him is both an object of fascination and a physical manifestation of literary knowledge and worldliness. The fact that Boffin makes this rather personal enquiry during his first meeting with Wegg once again highlights the former's ignorance towards the social protocol of bourgeois life. The inappropriateness of such a question was mocked a few years earlier in Dickens's journal *Household Words*. In a serialised chapter of "The Great Hotel Question" (1856), the anonymous author mocks Americans for their supposed reprehensible inquisitiveness:

There is but one instance on record, I believe, of a Yankee being worsted, in the query line of conversation; and this was the questioning Yankee who persisted in asking the dyspeptic man with a wooden leg how he had lost his missing leg, and after much

pressing was told, on a solemn promise that he would ask no more questions, and under a penalty of dollars uncountable, that it had been bit off; whereupon, in an agony of uncertainty as to who or what had bitten it off, and how—whether it had fallen a victim to the jaws of deadly alligator, or catawampous panther, or fiercely-riled rattlesnake; and, fearing to break his word, or lose his dollars, he was crestfallen and confounded, and, ignominiously sloping, was seen no more in that territory. (148)

This particular passage reveals that even to the Victorians, who as we know often displayed unsympathetic or suspicious attitudes towards disabled adults, such enquiries were deemed inappropriate. What is particularly fascinating about the quotation above is that the American assumes that “bitten off” means that an animal inflicted the amputee’s injury, entirely ruling out the very real possibility that the man may have lost his leg to the metallic jaws of the cotton-mill, paper-press, or other dangerous piece of machinery.²⁷

Indelicate and invasive, Boffin’s enquiry is symptomatic of his fast rise up the social scale. In essence, he asks a question that reflects an ignorance to the feelings of others, which a Victorian reader might associate with an unrefined, working-class mind-set despite now occupying a position within the social elite. Wegg’s response to this enquiry indicates that he is understandably offended: “Mr Wegg replied (tartly to this personal inquiry), ‘In an accident’” (50). This sharp retort implies emotional distress: Wegg neither enjoys being subjected to such enquiries nor is willing to go into detail about how exactly he sustained his injury. As O’Connor has identified, lower-limb amputation was feared to have a de-masculinising effect on male patients: “It unmanned amputees, producing neurological disorders that gave the fragmented male body—or parts of it, anyway—a distinctly feminine side. Thrashing, twitching, and suffering from

²⁷ Related to Dickens’s interest in America and Americans, discussions of the American Civil War in *All the Year Round* provide important context to the author’s anxieties about the dissolution of class barriers. See “Princely Travel in America”; Hingston 119.

phantom pains, stumps showed a deep-rooted propensity for theatrical malingering that rivalled that of the hysterical herself" (*Raw Material* 104). In this case, the reproof that Wegg seems to suffer in response to Boffin's question suggests that the amputee feels that his masculinity is being placed under scrutiny. The "tart" retort is an unquestionably defensive response and is discursively reinforced by the answer that he lost his leg in an accident. This reaction is intriguing since Boffin did not ask directly how the amputee sustained his injury. It is therefore possible that Wegg asserts the cause to be an "accident" to defend his masculinity: like the amputee who claims that his leg was bitten off, accident transforms the limb-loss from a feminising defect into a war wound—an emblem of masculine endeavour in the most extreme degree.

As we later learn, Wegg's leg was surgically amputated (82). It is also implied that the operation may have been carried out as a result of a congenital defect since Mr Venus, an experienced articulator of bones, reveals to Wegg that his leg is abnormal: "You have got a twist in that bone, to the best of my belief. *I never saw the likes of you*" (84–5; emphasis original). Venus later remarks that Wegg's amputated leg could be made use of as a "Monstrosity" (87), further emphasising its unusual form. Assuming, then, that Wegg's leg was surgically removed due to abnormality rather than injury, his retort to Boffin's question reveals that it was less socially acceptable to be congenitally deformed than it was to lose a body part as a result of accident. Dickens's text thus further complicates our understanding of physical wholeness and loss, suggesting that the social position of the physically disabled is contingent on how s/he lost her/his body part.²⁸

²⁸ For more on prejudices stemming from hereditary fears regarding the disabled in the nineteenth century, see Stoddard Holmes 34–73. Also see ch. 4 of this thesis.

Dickens draws our attention to the ludicrous ends that a privileging of physical integrity can bring about when Wegg decides that in order to advance himself socially he must reunite himself with his lost leg. Going to Mr Venus's shop with the intention of purchasing back the remains of his amputated leg, Wegg explains, "I shouldn't like—I tell you openly I should not like—under such circumstances, to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here, and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person" (87). Wegg takes the contemporary privileging of physical wholeness to its logical extreme. The perceived link between social mobility and physical wholeness here is key: Wegg believes that one must be fully intact to make progress in the world. But in an absurd and cruelly humorous manner Dickens shows that a wooden leg is not enough to make a man feel "whole" again after losing a leg. He also draws the reader's attention to the conflicting cultural messages regarding physical wholeness: one should strive to maintain an appearance of completeness but to artificially cultivate such an appearance is fraudulent. Through Wegg Dickens show us that such conflicting demands can bring a man to a state of confusion. Morgentaler gets close to such a reading when she writes,

[Silas's] wish to buy his leg back partakes of Dickens's general satire on parvenus and their social aspirations in *Our Mutual Friend*. If the definition of a rich man is someone who has more money than he needs and who can spend his money on luxuries that he does not need, then Silas's wish to buy back his leg falls similarly into the category of a useless luxury. After all, to what earthly use can Silas put his leg once he has it back? It cannot be reattached to his body, so it is really an acquisition of no practical value. Its only value is to restore Silas's sense of himself as a full-fledged member of the respectable world of the fully abled. And in the process of conferring this sense of self-possession on Silas, the purchase of the limb also suggests that ownership equals identity, that it is only when we are in full possession of all our bodily parts that we are truly ourselves and truly whole. Furthermore, if our bodies are an inherent part of our sense of identity, as Dickens implies in his portrayal of Silas, then Silas's

dilemma also forces us to confront the paradox that Dickens's text seems to underline. When the human body is scrambled and dispersed as Silas's is here, when limbs are amputated, where then does the essence of identity reside? Which is the real Silas Wegg—the man without the leg, or the leg itself, or both? Which part of us is us? (n. pag.)

To add to Morgentaler's astute observations here, such a representation of reconstituting the fragmented body draws satiric attention to the very privileging of physical wholeness, a favouring that Dickens shows to be responsible for perpetuating conflicting messages that bring about a conundrum regarding how to proceed for those whose bodies could be seen as "incomplete".

Elsewhere, bringing the logic of prosthetic supplementation into question, Wegg highlights the flaws in his prosthesis. In these instances Dickens can be read to actively engage with contemporary debates surrounding what constituted "a limb which shall be presentable in polite society" (Holmes, "The Human Wheel" 307). Most luridly, Wegg describes to Venus how he would like to see wooden legs adapted: "Mr Wegg next modestly remarks on the want of adaption in a wooden leg to ladders and such-like airy perches, and also hints at the inherent tendency in that timber fiction, when called into action for the purposes of a promenade on an ashy slope, to stick itself into yielding foothold, and peg its owner to one spot" (323). Here, Wegg highlights the practical flaws of his prosthesis for performing manual work outdoors. Highlighting, in particular, the wooden leg's unsuitability for climbing ladders and its tendency to get stuck in soft ground, Wegg outlines the inhuman and unwieldy nature of wooden prostheses, seemingly reinforcing the contemporary preference for organic wholeness—as we will see, such a position is not consistent throughout the text. That climbing ladders proves difficult suggests that the wooden prosthesis is unable to mimic the full-range of movement allowed by an organic

leg. It also implies that, unlike a real leg, a wooden one is difficult to manoeuvre, meaning that it is in some ways independent of, rather than incorporated within, the body. That the wooden prosthesis is prone to getting stuck underlines the fact that such devices in no way mimic the size and shape of a human foot. Since timber is heavy and inflexible, prosthesis makers tended not shape their prosthesis to the form and dimensions of a real leg. Instead, as we have seen, peg legs were thin and rolling pin shaped. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Wegg promulgates the flaws in limb prosthesis that primarily stem from the inorganic nature of such devices; while Wegg is represented as a man who is as wooden as his prosthesis, his device is depicted as flawed, just as he is as a character. On the one hand, then, the depiction of Wegg seems to support the hegemony of organic wholeness as its alternative, prosthetic “woodenness”, is debunked. But such a process brings into question the impulse to prostheticise, a desire brought about by a cultural privileging of physical integrity.

As suggested in the previous quotation, the faults that Wegg identifies in his prosthesis become most problematic to the amputee while he sneakily scours Mr Boffin’s dust mounds in order to find evidence that could lead to his master’s downfall. In fact, in several ways Wegg’s prosthesis and its material influence can be read as the primary causes of his own fall from grace. It is after all because Wegg is unable to find Mr Harmon’s most recent will before Boffin that results in his eventual fall. Likewise, it is Wegg’s wooden obstinacy and general “knotty” demeanour that drive him to become so greedy in the first place. Boffin identifies earlier on that “a literary man—*with* a wooden leg—is liable to jealousy” (192), yet little is he aware at this time that it is he and his fortune that Wegg is most jealous of.

In several senses Wegg can be read in context with the “disabled male dichotomy” that Stoddard Holmes identifies in her monograph *Fictions of Affliction* (98). She suggests that there is a “representational gap” between the portrayal of disabled men and boys in Victorian literature in which the latter evoke “emotional excess as the intensity of pure pathos”, while the former represent “the excess of bilked emotion, imposture, and inauthenticity” (95). Aligning with the contemporary stigma discussed earlier in this chapter that associated disabled street workers with imposture, Wegg is depicted as a fraud—to a rather comical extent. That Boffin assumes the amputee to be a literary man is revealed to be (unsurprisingly) well wide of the mark: though the Golden Dustman knows no better—Wegg’s “wooden conceit and craft” are said to keep “exact pace with the delighted expectation of his victim” (60)—the amputee’s knowledge is proven to be farcical very early on. A clear indicator of Wegg’s façade becomes apparent when Boffin asks his literary man what the difference is between the “Rooshan” and Roman Empire. Here, Wegg retorts, “The difference, sir? . . . The difference, sir? There you place me in a difficulty, Mr Boffin. Suffice it to observe, that the difference is best postponed to some other occasion when Mrs Boffin does not honour us with her company. In Mrs Boffin’s presence, sir, we had better drop it” (61–2). Earlier, after having been offered employment by Boffin, Wegg is described in the following way:

His gravity was unusual, portentous, and immeasurable, not because he admitted any doubt of himself, but because he perceived it necessary to forestall any doubt of himself in others. And herein he ranged with that very numerous class of impostors, who are quite as determined to keep up appearances to themselves, as to their neighbours. (56)

Wegg is thus singled out by the narrator as a fraud and associated with the swindling beggars described in Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor* even before the amputee attempts to extort Boffin of his riches. Like beggars that use an impression of disability for profit-making purposes, the depiction of Wegg troublingly (by contemporary tastes) elides the disabled body, the physically "incomplete", with monetary gain.

Dickens's representation of the fraudulent wooden leg user can also be read in context of debates surrounding the authority of science, in particular in relation to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century displays of automata, which, as Martin Willis and others identify, problematised the already permeable boundaries between trickery, occultism, and mechanical progress.²⁹ Arguably the most famous automaton that was displayed in the nineteenth century was Wolfgang von Kempelen's chess-playing Turk, which was made as an entertainment for Maria Theresa in the late 1760s. Though Kempelen never took the device very seriously himself, confessing that it relied on a blatant trick, the Turk captivated the thoughts of many and proved so popular that it was purchased by Viennese music engineer Johann Maelzel following Kempelen's death (in 1804) and was displayed across Europe and America until its destruction by fire in 1854. From the outset Kempelen's Turk was subject to committed exposés, which continued throughout the duration of the device's tour. One critic postulated that "The machine cannot produce such a multitude of different movements, whose direction couldn't be foreseen in advance, without being subject to the continual influence of an intelligent being" (qtd. in Schaffer 68). A notable attempt to reveal the secret of the chess player was made by Robert Willis, a man who would in later life become a pre-eminent

²⁹ See Cook; Schaffer; Standage; Martin Willis 28–62.

Cambridge mathematician and distinguished professor of applied mechanics.

In 1819 Willis responded to an advertisement placed in the London papers, which offered two thousand guineas for the secret of the chess player.

Following an extensive examination of the device, Willis concluded that the chest upon which the Turk rested was big enough to conceal a fully grown human chess player, thus dismissing the earlier speculation that the automaton was operated by a dwarf, magnetism, or by means of a piece of wire or catgut so small as to not be perceived by spectators. Edgar Allan Poe also took time to scrutinise the automata's supposed artificial intelligence with his essay "Maelzel's Chess Player" (1836), which, like his later story "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839), explored themes such as technical progress, artifice, human agency, and the splicing of man and machine.³⁰ As Simon Schaffer notes with regard to the chess player, "nowhere else in Europe did the relation between intelligence, mechanism and concealment become such a matter of public interest" (66). The association between automata and fraudulence was reaffirmed by articles published in Dickens's magazines, which argued that automata "have helped to bewilder men's minds and disturb the relations between the real and the false" ("Mediums under Other Names" 135).³¹ Wegg's use of artificiality and deceit differs drastically from the theatrical displays of mechanical trickery that were exhibited by automata such as Kempelen's

³⁰ In her article "The Victorian Automaton as Imaginary Prosthetic" (2009), Fiona Coll explores how in Clementina Black's short story "The Trouble of an Automaton" (1876)—a tale based on Kempelen's device, which imagines life from the perspective of the concealed operator of the chess-player, Sydney Bannerman—"the human element of this automaton-Sydney hybrid can be understood as a prosthetic involution by which Sydney's mind and body become coextensive with the hollow form of the chess player" (18). Therefore, like Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith of Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up", who is the severely atrophied, but nonetheless essential, human agent that operates the impressive set of prostheses that give the "used up" man his apparent good looks, here human agency is required to operate another seemingly advanced piece of machinery.

³¹ Also see "Wonderful Toys" (1852), "Witchcraft and Old Boguey" (1857), "Inventors and Inventions" (1860), "Heat and Work" (1865).

chess-playing Turk: with Wegg it is a human's use of an artificial device in place of an organic one that is fraudulent, whereas with the chess-playing Turk it is the use of a human in the place of what is supposed to be an artificial device that is deceitful. But the wooden-leg user's charlatanism (with regard to his dubious literary talents) once again associates the artificial, or (more specifically) the user of the artificial part, with fraudulence. Both Wegg and Kempelen's automaton are spurious but in different directions.

Continuing with the theme of fraudulence, Dickens brings the fakeness of Wegg's wooden leg to the fore late in the novel, showing that for him, as with Blanchard Jerrold, prosthetics are a kind of sham in and of themselves. The discrepancy between flesh and artificial body part is depicted most luridly by Dickens towards the end of *Our Mutual Friend* when Wegg is described as worn and haggard by his endeavours to get rich at Boffin's expense. As the narrator notes, "So gaunt and haggard had he grown at last, that his wooden leg showed disproportionate, and presented a thriving appearance in contrast with the rest of the plagued body, which might almost have been termed chubby" (830). In this instance, the fact that Wegg's prosthesis remains unaltered by the stress occasioned by the wearer's pursuit of wealth provides a contrast with the body of the amputee, which is described as vulnerable to the physical symptoms of stress. Despite the earlier descriptions of Wegg's complete woodenness, then, ultimately the divide between hard, unchanging substance and soft, vulnerable human tissue becomes apparent. Like the "hands" of the Victorian factory, whose physical discrepancy to the unrelenting force of industrial machinery routinely resulted in the kinds of accidents reported and lamented by commentators such as Morley, Wegg's organic body pales in comparison to his artificial wooden leg. Unfortunately for Wegg, the apparent strength and social

mobility occasioned by his woodenness proves a façade: not only does his health suffer as a result of his designs, but the designs themselves fail as it turns out after all that he did not succeed in obtaining the final will written by Harmon senior. Though Wegg remains wooden-looking, obstinate, and greedy until the end of the novel—naming what seems like an unrepresentative amount of goods when Boffin kindly offers to pay for another street stall in order not to leave the amputee in a worse state than when they met—his woodenness no longer appears an advantage. In fact, as it is revealed, Wegg's use of prosthesis was one of the very flaws that led to his plan failing: the able-bodied Boffin negotiated the dust heap better than the impeded amputee. Fluctuating between a position that either mocks the hegemony of organic physical wholeness or reaffirms it, Wegg's fall from grace sides with the latter.

In addition to Wegg, Dickens also presents the reader with a second prosthesis-wearing amputee, whose social mobility, like the wooden villain, is linked to his use of prosthesis: the sea veteran Gruff and Glum, who appears in Book Four Chapter Four. Unlike Wegg, Gruff and Glum is a double amputee. The representation of this character more straightforwardly equates physical mobility to social mobility. Here, the double-amputee veteran is represented as a character whose lower-limb prostheses restrict him to the social space of retirement: Greenwich hospital, Britain's home from the seventeenth century for its disabled naval officers. The very name Gruff and Glum indicates the character of the man (a hardened navy veteran) and hints towards the psychological impact of limb loss. Prior to Bella's arrival in town (for her wedding with John Rokesmith), Gruff and Glum is said to have "no other object in life but tobacco" and is described as "Stranded . . . in a harbour of everlasting mud" (707). The latter description is both metaphorical and literal: harbours,

such as Greenwich's are often muddy, meaning that his physical mobility is restricted by the limitations placed upon him by his prostheses, which are not well-suited for walking on soft ground, yet he is also trapped by his retired status and the symbolic meaning attached to his wooden legs. Oddly, the veteran's body is described as being reawakened by his contact with Bella: "For years, the wings of his mind had gone to look after the legs of his body; but Bella had brought them back for him per steamer, and they were spread again" (708). Here, the presence of Bella liberates Gruff and Glum's thoughts from being occupied by his injuries, highlighting the importance of human contact within the rehabilitation process of an amputee. As it would appear, the amputee's experience of being spliced with the non-human makes him appreciate human contact that bit more. In this regard, we can read Gruff and Glum's portrayal as a comment on the social segregation experienced by inmates of institutions like Greenwich Hospital.³² Like Wegg, the woodenness of Gruff and Glum's prostheses is also reflected in his character. His artificial legs stand as visual signifiers for his former profession which, as we can see, remain a strong influence upon him. In response to a compliment from Bella, "Gruff and Glum . . . wished her ji and the fairest of fair wind and weather; further, in a general way requesting to know what cheer? And scrambling up on his two wooden legs to salute, hat in hand, ship-shape, with the gallantry of a man-of-wars-man and a heart of oak" (sic; 710). As the narrator's description suggests, he has become a half wooden masthead, like the wooden midshipman in *Dombey and Son*. Here, Gruff and Glum's choice of language directly draws from his former days at sea, while the description that he has "a heart of oak"

³² Such a critique stands at odds to Dickens's usual championing of public hospitals. See Boehm, *Charles Dickens and the Sciences of Childhood* 79–111; Penner.

suggests that he is akin both in character and substance to a naval vessel. Like a retired ship, he is worn, wooden and moored to a dock, where it is destined to remain until his eventual demise. Like Wegg, Gruff and Glum is *pegged* to a low social standing by prosthesis.³³

Wegg's Legacy

Some years after Dickens's premature death in 1870, an article appeared in *All the Year Round* (at this time commissioned by Charles Dickens Jr.) that reaffirms some of the associations with inauthenticity, dishonesty, and imposture that Wegg embodies in *Our Mutual Friend*. In an article entitled "Mr. Wegg and His Class", the author discusses the imprudence of a class of street beggars that are "engaged in the crossing-sweeping line of business", who, s/he claims, are the real-life equivalents of Dickens's fictional amputee (250).³⁴ Of the deplorable figures that the author describes, one in particular is said to be uncannily similar to Wegg: "Like his great prototype, he had a wooden leg; like him he was literary; and, finally, like him, under cover of affecting to follow his profession, he assiduously cultivated another, namely that of Humbug" (251). Here, then, not only is this real-life figure also an amputee peg leg wearer, but he is also considered a literary man and (most significantly) is depicted a miser. Like Wegg and the disabled street workers described by Mayhew, the beggar uses a number of duplicitous strategies for financial gain: he uses his wooden leg to inspire the idea that he is a war veteran; he draws upon the sympathy of others, claiming to be in constant pain; after his wooden leg breaks, he uses

³³ Dickens's other prosthesis-using navy veteran, Captain Cuttle from *Dombey and Son*, is also shown to be relatively socially static, though his status is raised slightly at the end of the novel when he becomes a recognised business partner to Solomon Gill, owner of The Midshipman shop.

³⁴ Manby Smith emphasised the prolificacy of maimed crossing-sweepers in *Curiosities of London Life* (54).

this as an excuse to demand extra money from passers-by; and finally, he claims to have found Salvation and so uses Christian verses to encourage charitable donations. As this article suggests, then, long after *Our Mutual Friend* was published peg legs remained closely associated with the apparently deceitful tactics employed by street beggars to gain a living.³⁵

What the article fails to consider is that for a lower-class amputee, losing a limb, in the majority of cases, often resulted in the use of a peg leg simply because it was the only type of prosthesis that could be afforded by such a person. The employment of such a device more often than not failed to enable amputees to perform the same physical feats, occasionally making their physical situation worse, meaning that in many cases street work or begging were the only viable options. It was thus a vicious circle for lower-class amputees. While those who could afford “artificial legs” might be enabled social mobility once more—as such devices might enable them to pass as “normal”—those who could not were, more often than not, rendered both physically and socially immobile. Such inevitabilities, brought about by a culture that privileged wholeness at the expense of those missing body parts, were, as we have seen, challenged by narratives such as *Our Mutual Friend*, which experimented with the idea that amputees could be social climbers. It is telling, though, that Dickens’s successors see Wegg as the archetypal peg-legged beggar rather than social climber. What *Our Mutual Friend* and “Mr Wegg and His Class” share is a vision that those whose subject positions are repressed by a society unwilling to employ or respect them cultivate a ruthless streak, which can manifest itself in behaviour akin to Wegg’s. While such an attitude has clear

³⁵ Such is also evident when one considers the popularity of fraudulent beggars in early films such as Cecil Hepworth’s *The Beggar’s Deceit* (1900), Sigmund Lubin’s *The Fake Blind Man* (1901), and Arthur Copper’s *Blind Man’s Bluff* (1903). See Norden 14–48.

ableist underpinnings—since it deflects blame away from society by criminalising the marginalised subject—both texts, like the other fictional works discussed in the chapter, bring into question the premium placed on physical completeness as it draws attention to the disruptive results of such preferences.

This chapter has shown how certain Victorian writers, including most famously Dickens, experimented with the social trajectories of their fictional prosthesis users in ways that challenged but did not ultimately refute the contemporary privileging of physical wholeness. By reading such texts through a disability studies lens, self-contradictions in the philosophy of prosthetically supplementing the human body become apparent. If the body is sacrosanct, its imitation, a process forced upon those whose bodies are perceived to be “incomplete”, becomes stigmatised as counterfeit. Thus the very desire to replicate the body brings about its own critique since if a prosthetic part made is a poor replica its purpose is defunct, but if perfect it becomes an item of deceit—something that people can use to make them appear as though they are not. But also, critical to the social element of such a paradox, the more superior devices made to hide physical losses, those that are not easily perceived by the normate, come at prices too high for those needing them the most—those whose jobs require physical exertion—meaning that social mobility becomes impossible for amputees at the lower end of the class spectrum. Ironically, due to the very hegemony of physical wholeness, impersonating a condition of physical loss becomes profitable for those at the bottom end of the social scale as such a condition evokes pity, and thereby increases potential for charitable gain. By transgressively imagining prosthesis users that thanks to their splicing with technology are able to climb the social ladder, the representations discussed here flip cultural preferences on their head. Even

though many of these texts end conservatively or are caveated as unusual, reifying the premium placed on wholeness, such an act itself shows the fragility of a concept that invites interrogation and requires so much cultural buttressing.

4 “A fine example of philosophy and pious resignation”: Gendered Means for Managing Physical Loss in Victorian and Edwardian Britain and America¹

False rumps, false teeth, false hair,
false faces,
Alas! poor man! how hard thy case is;
Instead of WOMAN—heavenly woman’s charms,
To clasp cork, gum, wool, whalebone in
his arms.
—“Made-up Beauty” (1839).

The poem above, which was first printed in the *New York Atlas* and then in the *Botanico-Medical Recorder* and the *Graham Journal of Health* (all in 1839), brings to the fore the gendered implications of prosthesis use in nineteenth-century Britain and America. In this instance, men are portrayed as victims within a world increasingly filled with “false” females—women made up with various forms of cosmetic prostheses. This quotation, on the one hand, draws from wider concerns about prosthetics as devices that fraudulently mask physical aberrances—features that the physiognomically minded thought, if read correctly, could reveal character and behavioural traits—and, on the other, reveals specific concerns about the popularity of certain kinds of artificial body parts among women. These forms of artifice, which include dentures, wigs, and “False rumps” (39)—a padded cushion-type accessory that was worn by women under their dresses, particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century—and also make up, are portrayed as robbing men of “woman’s charms” (39), by which the speaker clearly means organic idiosyncrasies. The comment “how hard thy case is” has a double meaning, referring to both the supposedly unfortunate situation faced by men and the lamentable physical hardness or otherwise unhuman nature of some of the materials that were used to make

¹ This chapter comprises revised versions of Sweet, “Get the best article” and “Pirates and Prosthetics”.

prostheses—“cork”, which many thought was used to make false limbs (though it rarely, if ever, was in actuality); “gum”, which was used to make false teeth; wool, which was used to make false rumps; and “whalebone”, which was used to make corsets and some high-end artificial legs.² The gendered focus of this poem, which is about women from a male perspective, thus shows how certain types of prosthesis were associated with particular genders (cosmetic devices with female users) and how negatively such items were received when they were detected.

Drawing from these debates, this chapter explores how gender affected representations of prostheses in Victorian and Edwardian literature and culture. Using two conspicuously gendered and popular tropes of fiction that used physical difference as a major motif, the pirate story and the marriage plot, this chapter will explore the way that fictional tales reveal the different issues that were at stake for male and female prosthesis users in this period. The pirate story and marriage plots are singled out for analysis here as both distill particular gender ideologies. Scholars such as John Tosh have observed how adventure fiction, the larger generic framework in which we can place pirate stories, facilitated the construction of a robust kind of masculinity that emphasised the necessity of “honest brutality” (201). The marriage plot, meanwhile, was a genre considered acceptable for both female writers and readers as it reflected the pervasive ideology that “the ideal womanly virtues—sacrifice, self-effacement, moral purity, service—were best expressed in the vocations of wife and mother” (Foster 5). Both genres, then, were complicit in the construction and upholding of gender ideologies. This chapter shows how such ideologically informed

² American limb maker John S. Drake used whale ivory in the construction of his devices. See Drake. Also see ch. 2, especially the discussion of Ahab’s ivory leg in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1850).

genres shaped messages to physically “incomplete” men and women regarding how they should respond to physical loss. As I argue, cultural and fictional representations of male and female prosthesis users, in pirate stories and marriage plots respectively, highlight different priorities for men and women when selecting artificial body parts. Men who had lost body parts tended to be encouraged to persevere with a primitive prosthetic, such a peg leg, go without a prosthesis altogether (especially when it comes to cosmetic adornments, such as wigs), or choose a device that is functional—all decisions that emphasise practicality. Women missing body parts, on the other hand, were encouraged to select prostheses, corrective or cosmetic, by virtue of discreetness alone. Invisibility was preferable for both male and female users, but for female users in particular concealing all signs of physical loss was especially important. Highlighting the educational messages behind certain representations of prosthetics, I first focus on the ways that pirate stories draw the reader’s attention to amputee male figures, who, thanks to their courageousness, resourcefulness, and never-say-die attitude, “overcome” their physical losses. I argue that these characters are kinds of disabled role models that display how some Victorians thought disabled men should respond to physical impairment. The chapter then moves on to think about female prosthesis users, the devices that they used, and how literature and commerce intersected to influence female prosthesis selection. I argue that marriage plots discouraged women from using certain kind of prostheses—those prone to malfunction or inviting of unwanted attention. I also show how particular texts and representational strategies were borrowed from marriage plots by contemporary prosthetists to promote the abilities and originality of their devices and critique the products of opposing makers.

Both the pirate and marriage-plot analyses of this chapter contribute to this thesis's argument, that prosthesis narratives both drew from and challenged the hegemony of physical wholeness. The pirate stories problematised the dominance of the physically "whole" in compelling ways: they represented dangerously compelling and physically active amputees (non-normative subjects); the pirates depicted resist the ableist mandate to use prosthetics that stand in visually for the lost body part. As I show, such stories display successful pirates who either resist using a prosthesis altogether or use devices that are functional rather than humanlike in appearance. These tales resist the demand for devices that can enable one to pass. The analysis of female prosthesis users in marriage plots, however, shows that prosthesis narratives concerning female users expose the instability of physical wholeness as a hegemonic concept. Such narratives are buttressed by prejudice against non-normative female subjects but also lambast women who use artifice to supplement their appearances. As these stories show, the hegemony of wholeness demanded that women conceal their physical losses while chastising those who did exactly that. They thus reveal an awareness that privileging wholeness is a flawed, unstable, and self-contradictory system.

In terms of both the literary and commercial history of prostheses, gender is a major factor. Regarding the representation of disabled characters in nineteenth-century literature, the prevalence of disabled females has received a growing amount of recent attention. Cindy LaCom comments on the pervasiveness of disabled women in Victorian literature, arguing that such a trend "signaled very real cultural fears about women, female sexuality, and the maternal" ("Is it more" 190). Along similar lines, Martha Stoddard Holmes's work builds on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's thesis that the female and the

disabled have long been entangled in patriarchal thought.³ Highlighting the transgressive allure of disabled women, Stoddard Holmes argues that “As potential signs of both disease and sexuality, disabled women characters functioned not only in parallel ways to ‘fallen’ women in Victorian literature and culture—as containers for the most dangerous qualities associated with all women—but even as stand-ins for fallen women” (69). This chapter adds to the work done by feminist disability studies authors such as LaCom, Garland-Thomson, and Stoddard Holmes, showing that prosthesis-using women, in addition to disabled ones, were a common motif in marriage plots.

Disabled women have received considerable attention in the field of Victorian disability studies, but the same cannot be said for female prosthesis users. Perhaps unsurprisingly when one considers the historical figures that we so often associate with artificial body parts—pirates, veterans, and maimed industrial workers—much recent critical attention on nineteenth-century prostheses has tended to focus on male users. Of this work, several studies demonstrate the importance of such devices in terms of masculinity. For instance, focusing on the American context, in particular the period following the Civil War—a conflict that is widely believed to have accelerated advancements in prosthetics—Erin O’Connor has identified the intersections in nineteenth-century prosthesis discourse between masculinity and mobility. O’Connor reveals that prostheses were perceived as restorative devices that could reinstate an amputee’s supposedly lost sense of masculinity by making him “whole” and allowing him to work once more (*Raw Material* 117–43). Directing her attention almost exclusively to male amputees, she argues, “Treating amputation as a problem of unemployment, prosthetics rehabilitate recalcitrant

³ See Stoddard Holmes 60–2; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 27.

physiologies by professionalizing them; as such, they stand for the transformative power of work itself" (*Raw Material* 125). Similarly, other historians and literature scholars that have written on nineteenth-century prostheses, including Stephen Mihm, Jennifer Davis McDaid, Katherine Ott, Lisa Herschbach, Neil Handley, David D. Yuan, and Adrienne E. Gavin, have concentrated primarily on male prosthesis users and the artificial devices used by or made available to them. Mihm discusses the marketing of nineteenth-century American artificial limbs and the various ways that such devices were advertised to a predominantly male market, but he does not directly address the issue of gender. This chapter adds to male-centred historical studies of prosthesis as it historicises one of the Western world's most iconic prosthesis users, the pirate, showing how representations of such characters promoted particular ways to deal with physical loss rather than mimetic forms of prosthesis. This chapter, however, is also interested in the female history of this form of technology.

Notable exceptions to the male-dominated trend in terms of the Victorian context are Vanessa Warne, who investigates the ways in which prostheses are tied to financial networks in two Victorian marriage plots in her 2009 essay "To invest a cripple with peculiar interest", and Marquard Smith, who explores what he calls "technofetishism" in the commercial photography of the nineteenth-century Chard-based prosthetist James Gillingham. The quality of invisibility is an aspect of prosthesis that is critical to Smith's study. Using Gillingham's photographs—in which female prosthesis users expose their artificial legs in fetishised ways—as a case study, Smith discusses how the exposure of prosthesis for a woman in this period equated to an "assault to modesty", which brought to the fore "the pivot between invisibility and visibility, hiding and

revealing, concealment and revelation” (54). Kirsten E. Gardner is another historian who draws attention to “the creation of appendages that enhance the realistic nature of the part” in her unavoidably gendered discussion of breast prosthesis before 1950 (116). Galia Ofek, on the other hand, describes how, despite its popularity at the mid-century, women’s use artificial hair was often treated with distrust in literary and cultural sources (9–16, 118–30, and 202–7). In spite of these recent studies, Warne draws our attention to the relative lack of studies on women and prostheses, provocatively claiming that “If [prostheses] are understood only in terms of their use by working-class men, as rehabilitative industrial appendages or cures for the emasculating effects of limb-loss, a significant part of their history will be lost” (“To invest a cripple” 98). Responding to Warne’s rallying call for attention to be paid to the female history of prosthesis, further exploring the conceptual ties that Smith and Gardner draw between invisibility and the female body, and extending analysis of the suspicion that Ofek observes regarding artificial hair to other types of prosthesis, the second part of this chapter demonstrates how a particular branch of Victorian marriage plots commented upon the kinds of prostheses that were deemed suitable (and regrettable) for women in this period.

In addition to the recent work on prostheses for women, this chapter as a whole is informed by current disability studies research into the social practice of “passing”—a term that for the most part “refers to the way people conceal social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability and pass as ‘normal’” (Brune and Wilson 1). Jeffrey A. Brune and Daniel J. Wilson explain how passing is a contested practice in disability studies since it “can take a psychological toll [on those who attempt to ‘pass’] and can also reinforce—or, at least, fail to challenge—the stigma of disability” (4). They also, however, note

that “Even when passing seems to reinforce the stigma of disability, it is more productive, and more just, to challenge the ableism that compels people to pass rather than blame the individuals who choose to do so” (5). Following in the footsteps of David Linton, whose chapter “The Menstrual Masquerade” appears in Brune and Wilson’s edited collection *Disability and Passing* and explores the curious history of how women have had to “deny their membership” as menstruators in order to avoid “shame, embarrassment, and ostracism” (58), the second part of this chapter shows how in the nineteenth century physically “incomplete” women were, more so than men, pressured into and provided advice how to pass by commercially resonant literary texts. The first part of this chapter, however, draws our attention to quite the opposite: conspicuously impaired male characters who are successful, in part, precisely because they do not attempt to pass.

By and large, this chapter utilises a feminist disability studies approach that considers how representations of prosthesis users are inflected by gender. Building on Rosemarie Garland Thomson’s work, which encourages us to think of disability as an “identity vector that disrupts the unity of the classification woman and challenges the primacy of gender as a monolithic category” (“Integrating Disability” 21), using cultural and literary material as primary sources, this chapter shows how anxieties surrounding the concept of physical wholeness affected both men and women who had lost body parts in distinct but nonetheless related ways. This chapter thus identifies the male and female prosthesis user as distinct social groups that were forced to conform to standards set by and for the able-bodied in order to get by in life. In essence, within a particular historical context, I provide some answers to the question

raised by Kim Q. Hall, “What role does gender play in the experience of disability?” (7).

Gendering Loss

Before exploring gendered representations of prosthesis users, it is first worth considering the different aspects that were at stake for men and women who lost body parts in the Victorian period. As I argue in this section, though an appearance of physical wholeness was key for both men and women in this period, bodily loss was perceived to come at a different cost for men and women. An impression of physical wholeness was vital for a man as it signalled moral integrity and social status, provided an index for youth and vitality (particularly in the case of teeth and hair), and distinguished him as someone capable of working and thus accruing capital.⁴ Women, in particular single ones, on the other hand, were under pressure to look as physically whole as possible, for the most part, in order to either look eligible for marriage or so as to not place the reputations of their husbands and families into disrepute by displaying physical incompleteness.

In her important chapter on “Marital Melodramas”, for her seminal book on nineteenth-century disability *Fictions of Affliction* (2004), Stoddard Holmes observes that disability often provided an obstacle for women to find marriage partners in this period because of believed contagious and hereditary risks. Drawing from contentious medical debates surrounding contagion, suggestiveness, and transmission, Stoddard Holmes goes so far as to claim that, according to the logic of the time, “any physical impairment had the potential to be perceived as transmissible by contact; by miasmatic air; by a

⁴ See Mihm; Ott, “Hard Wear” 152–53; O’Connor, *Raw Material* 104–6; Haley 3–22.

combination of contact, environment, and individual constitution; or perhaps simply by the social class into which one was born” (63).⁵ More significantly for women, with theories about maternal impressions on unborn children rife in the 1850s, hereditary fears about the implications of having physically aberrant mothers often ruled women who had lost body parts out of marrying. A number of cultural and medical sources from the 1830s onwards perpetuated degenerative fears about all manner of disabilities being hereditary conditions. The perceived risks of allowing the disabled to copulate were made explicit by medical men such as Henry Maudsley. As Maudsley put it,

Certain unfavourable conditions of life tend unquestionably to produce degeneracy of the individual; the morbid predisposition so generated is thus transmitted to the next generation, and, if the unfavourable conditions continue, is aggravated in it; and thus is formed a morbid variety of the human kind, which is incapable of being a link in the line of progress of humanity. (“Gulstonian Lecture” 609–10; qtd. in Stoddard Holmes 66–8)

Such harsh scientific verdicts buttressed the troubling view that those exhibiting physical difference were not suitable marriage partners.

The fact that women, rather than men, were the primary focus of discussions of the supposed degenerative potential of disabled procreation brings to the fore a sexual double standard about men and women with disabilities that this chapter explores. In his study *Intermarriage* (1838), Alexander Walker highlights the sexual agency of men and focuses attention on the need for women’s bodies to be perfect: “the organization of the woman destined to reproduce, should be of the best kind; and that maturity, exercise

⁵ Drawing from such fears, a joke appeared in *Reynold’s Miscellany* in 1868 that played upon the absurd notion that wooden legs might be heredity: “A CREDULOUS man said to a wag who had a wooden leg, ‘How came you to have a wooden leg?’—‘Why,’ answered the wag, ‘my father had one, and so had my grandfather. It runs in the blood’” (“Wit and Humour” 335).

and perfection in every function, are equally essential; for, as are these and their adaption to the male, so will be the perfection of the progeny” (324). While Walker identifies the “necessity” for both the male and female partner to be physically sound in order to create perfect progeny, two factors highlight a gendered discrepancy: first, the medicalised (male) focus of this piece is on the female body—the male body is very much a second thought here; second, both the authorship and intended audience of this piece—both male—point towards the agency that men had when it came to choosing their partners compared to the lack of choice that women had. Indeed, women’s freedom of choice was restricted by social codes, economic factors, and even legal restrictions.⁶

Furthermore, as critics such as Helena Michie, Alison Bashford, and Mary Poovey have noted, women’s bodies were a constant source of cultural and medical attention.⁷ Underlining the importance of physical beauty for women in this period, by the turn of the century medical men, including Havelock Ellis and Carl Heinrich Stratz, were writing in detail about what constituted the perfect female body.⁸ Thus while physical appearance was also important for men, depending, of course, largely on their social standing, for women it was paramount across the classes since without it their pathway to marriage—the most viable course for social and financial security in adult life—was obscured.

A 1909 *New York Times* letter to the editor entitled “Damages for an Eye” reveals in regrettable tones the effect that the loss of just a single eye could have to an aspiring young woman even in the early twentieth century. Written by the aunt, and guardian, of a girl who lost an eye in a “street car collision”, the

⁶ See Foster, Shanley, and Griffin.

⁷ Also see, Vrettos, Gilbert, and Mangham and Depledge.

⁸ See Ellis, *Man and Woman* and “Vision. I.”; Stratz.

piece argues that \$4,000,⁹ which is the amount of compensation that the aunt's lawyers encourage her to aim for, is nowhere near enough to make up for the financial, social, educational, and potential medical implications of the niece's loss:

I think the accident has cut off her chances of ever marrying. No man would have her. Moreover, she has lost her judgment of distances, which will make her always clumsy in whatever occupation she may take up to support herself. On her blind side she is exposed to future accident, which she cannot be alert to guard against. . . . Her education is limited; the accident has handicapped her in acquiring more education. Her disfigurement has crushed her spirit—she feels ashamed, unfit to compete with people in the world. (10)

From this passage we can begin to see the price of physical loss for a young woman in this period. That the niece's supposedly compromised marriageability is the aunt's first consideration is revealing of the different things at stake for men and women who lost body parts. Such a distinction is compounded further by the shame that the victim feels, an emotional state stemming, in support of the social-constructivist model of disability, not from the disfigurement itself, but from the unaccepting nature of contemporary society—she no longer fits the beautiful, physically “complete”, female ideal and is thus marginalised accordingly.

We can contrast such marital fears with the financially linked but somewhat different anxieties felt by men that lost functional parts. In the 1867 *Household Words* short story “The Lame Landlord's Story”, a former engine driver recalls his initial fears after losing a leg and badly injuring an arm in what

⁹ According to measuringworth.com, \$4,000 in 1909 is equivalent to the “historic standard of living value” of \$107,000 in 2014 (Williamson).

was thought an accident (but, as we learn, was actually an attempted murder): “It stood to reason that I couldn't hope to drive, nor even stoke, engines any more, and it really seemed than as if I'd nothing but the workhouse or a street-crossing before me” (127). Here, then, the amputee's fear is not that he will be unable to marry—though this is later a short-lived anxiety that is quashed when his beloved “sent word that she'd love [him] better, without legs or arms, than any one else” (127). Instead, his immediate anxiety is that he will not only lose his job but will be rendered unemployable by his loss. The issue of employability for men that had lost body parts is a problem that late nineteenth-century prosthetists promised to fix. In order to show how prostheses were marketed differently to men and women, the following section will use famous American prosthetist A. A. Marks's 1888 catalogue as a case study.

Indefatigability and Invisibility: A. A. Marks's Legs for Men and Women

Providing evidence for O'Connor's thesis about the link between masculinity and mobility in prosthesis discourse, Figure 4.1, from American prosthesis franchise A. A. Marks's 1888 *A Treatise on Marks' Patent Artificial Limbs with Rubber Hands and Feet* (authored by George E. Marks), is one of many examples that could be used to reveal the way in which artificial limbs were advertised to men as devices that could, first and foremost, enable them to return to work. The illustration shows a male artificial leg user digging using a shovel. In the testimonial that accompanies the images, the man depicted lauds the functional and enabling capacities of his prosthesis. For instance, he boasts “I have used your make of legs at nearly all kinds of work, such as plowing, spading, hauling logs, and other work. I have walked twenty-five miles in a single day” (qtd. in George E. Marks 346). Also significant in this image is the

fact that the artificiality of the user's false limb is conspicuous: it is uncovered, it is foregrounded, and it is the limb closest to us as viewers. Curiously, the testimonial fails to mention the aesthetics of the prosthesis. Several similar illustrations of and endorsements from working men appear the A. A. Marks catalogue marking the practical capabilities of the limbs as a major selling point to male amputees.

As foregrounded in the title of their catalogue, the firm A. A. Marks were keen to draw attention to the fact that their devices were patented, and there are clear links in the text between the foregrounding of patenting and the gendered advertising rhetoric of the piece as a whole. Aligning with James F. Stark's observations about the commercial uses of patents in the medical marketplace (517–18), Marks's use of patents served to legitimise the promises made about the restorative capacities of the firm's prostheses for male users—the patented parts of Mark's products being the rubber hands and feet, aspects introduced primarily to enhance function rather than aesthetic.

In contrast to Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2 is one of only two illustrations of women who appear in the A. A. Marks treatise. Like the other illustration of an adult female user, the focus of this illustration is less on function and durability and more on appearance and concealment. Indeed in this latter image the Marks-type leg is imperceptible, virtually invisible. In fact, if it was not for the “before” image on the left-hand side of Figure 4.2—showing the female user holding her artificial leg in her hand—and the explanatory written material surrounding the illustration, one would hardly know that the illustration depicted a prosthesis user. The invisibility of prosthesis in this image—aided in part by the way that it can be easily hid under clothing—is of course precisely the point.

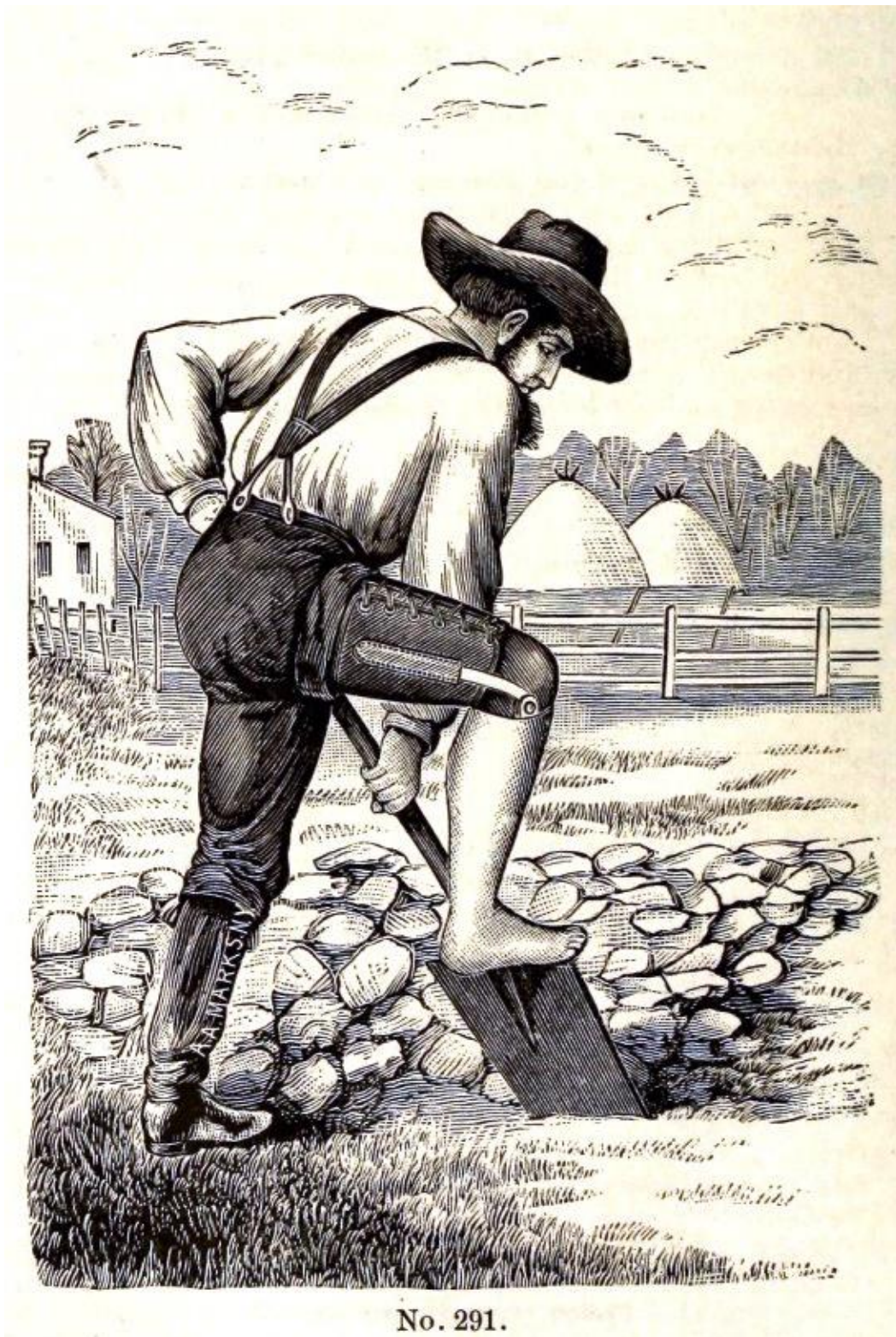


Figure 4.1 An illustration of a male Marks-type artificial leg user digging with a shovel. From George E. Marks, *A Treatise on Marks' Patent Artificial Limbs with Rubber Hands and Feet* (New York, 1888), p. 346. Courtesy of Library of Congress RD756 .M34 1888.

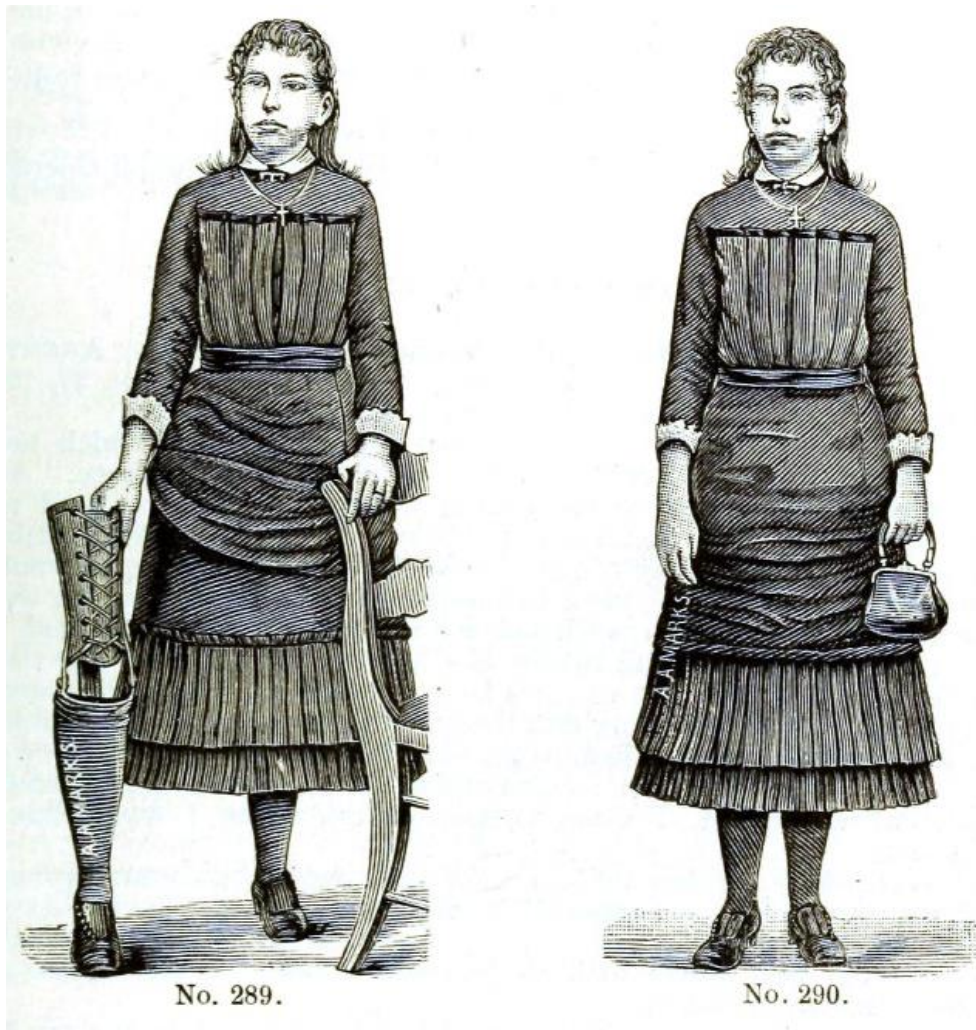


Figure 4.2 An illustration of a female Marks-type artificial leg user demonstrating the mimetic capacities of her prosthesis. From George E. Marks, *A Treatise on Marks' Patent Artificial Limbs with Rubber Hands and Feet* (New York, 1888), p. 335. Courtesy of Library of Congress RD756 .M34 1888.

As George E. Marks explains, “It is very well understood that young ladies wearing artificial limbs are not over-desirous of having it publicly known” (111). Whereas the men depicted in the image discussed above is named—Lewis C. Cox—the female subject of the only other image of an adult female prosthesis user that appeared in Marks’s catalogue wished to remain anonymous. This wish for anonymity—in addition the images, which highlight how A. A. Marks’s devices could supposedly mask physical loss—shows that it was less favourable for a woman to be perceived as physically “incomplete”.

Emphasising the inconspicuousness of his firm’s devices—perhaps even exaggerating or fabricating such material—George E. Marks thus markets his firm’s devices as ones that can enable women, such as the amputee from Figure 4.2, to look physically “complete” and thereby able to pass.

The fact that only two images of women appear in Marks’s treatise is also telling of the gendered consumer culture surrounding these products. Such leg that he bought for his wife. To Studwell’s delight, his wife’s prosthesis did an excellent job at disguising her physical loss: “strangers, even experienced doctors, seeing her walking, or at work, can never detect that she is wearing a false limb” (qtd. in George E. Marks 312). Studwell’s quote shows that the promise of invisibility was as much an assurance to the husband of a female amputee as it was to the amputee herself.

While we must of course consider axes of representation, such as social class, as significant factors in the marketing materials just discussed, such images show how the aspects of artificial limb design that were considered most important depended, in part, on the gender of the amputee subject—the mimetic capacity of artificial body parts was also important for middle- and

upper-class gentlemen because of the stigma attached to bodily loss.¹⁰ Since marriage and motherhood were both ideologically and economically considered the best routes for women in life, and because such virulent prejudices stood in the way of both spinsterhood and physically “incomplete” females marrying, women were forced, by necessity, to mask their physical imperfections in order to give themselves the best chance possible to find an eligible partner and get married. Highlighting the impressive verisimilitude of contemporary prostheses while gesturing towards prejudices against limbless women, an 1882 article for the *New York Sun*, for instance, reflected that “the young woman will dance all night with that substitute leg without her partner suspecting its existence” (qtd. in George E. Marks 155). Similarly, affirming the importance of a good quality prosthesis that will not give itself away to a potential partner, and providing the title for this chapter, William Chambers’s 1877 *Chambers’s Journal* article “The Wooden Leg” advises its female readers to not compromise when it comes to selecting a prosthesis: “A keen regard for economy in a matter of this kind is poor policy. I should say if you want an artificial leg that will look and act as nearly as possible like a real one, do not grudge the money. *Get the best article in the market*” (82; emphasis added).

For women already married, however, the functionality of prosthetic body parts was also important. While concealing their physical loss as much as possible from their husbands and, more importantly, from friends, acquaintances, and the general public (to protect the reputations of their spouses) was important for such women, it was also essential for them to be able to continue their domestic duties. Revealing both the value of artificial legs that can enable one to perform household chores and the close link between

¹⁰ See Mihm; Ott, “Hard Wear”.

literary texts and commercial works in this period, the Marks artificial leg user Mrs S. E. Silley wrote a poem to A. A. Marks, included in the firm's 1888 treatise, which contained the following lines:

I now could walk around the room,
Then o'er the house about my home;
Could cook and wash and iron too,
And do all the work that others do. (qtd. in George E. Marks 287)

As this poem shows us, while the invisibility of prostheses was important to women of all class backgrounds, for those who had domestic duties to perform, functionality also proved important.

The concept that prostheses could enable physically “incomplete” women—including not just those who had had limbs amputated, but also those who lacked hair, were missing teeth, or who had lost eyes—to appear “whole” to eligible men proved a point of contention for some. Indeed, William Blanchard Jerrold famously debated the virtues and vices of prosthetics—including artificial limbs, eye, teeth, and hair—identifying that some saw artificial body parts as “emblem[s] of deceit”, “device[s] of ingenious vanity”, or items that “cover[ed] the wearer with gross and unpardonable deceit” (64). Drawing from such claims, an 1861 *Chambers's Journal* fictional text purporting to be an article suggested that women, in particular single ones looking for partners, had less of a right than men to use prosthetics:

I admit, if the lady I pay my addresses to has the misfortune to have one of her legs made of cork, I should prefer to be apprised of the fact before I put up the bans, rather than after the marriage-ceremony. Perhaps she, too, has some claim to be made acquainted with the circumstance, that my prepossessingly natural appearance is not altogether free from a certain alloy of unreality. But we will let that pass. (“The False Hair” 65)

This quotation draws our attention to the seemingly impossible position faced by a single woman who had lost a body part. While “for her own sake”, and her family’s, an “incomplete” woman would most likely face significant pressure to use a prosthesis and try as hard as possible to mask her loss in order to attract a future husband, the implication in the passage above is that she should not try to deceive potential suitors. Yet this assertion is troubling when one considers the stigma that accompanied physical loss in this period. Men were encouraged to avoid copulating with physically aberrant women. Thus “incomplete” women faced a conundrum: did they use a prosthesis and risk discovery? Or did they give up on the possibility of marriage altogether and face an also stigmatised life of spinsterhood? As such a situation reveals, life-shaping decisions like this were informed less by impairment itself than by the social conditions that prohibited intermarriage with physically aberrant women.

Manly Markers for Managing Limb Loss in Victorian and Edwardian Pirate Stories

In a time when dangers to physical integrity came in many forms and the importance of bodily wholeness could not be underestimated, a contingency plan was needed for men aspiring to go places in life but whose bodies did not meet the establishing standards for the bodily “norm”.¹¹ For many, prosthetics provided a solution to this problem. As we have already seen from looking at Marks’s catalogues, a burgeoning profession of prosthesis makers promulgated the mimetic capacities of their devices, which they claimed could “substitute for

¹¹ See Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*. Also see ch. 1.

the handiwork of nature” (Bigg 2). Such claims were supported by some journalists, who were awestruck by the “ingenuity shown by . . . wooden-leg makers” (“Legs” 463) and other prosthetists, such as glass-eye makers—a profession pioneered by Auguste Boissonneau, who coined the term “ocularist” to describe those working in the trade. Others, however, were less sure about prosthetics and lambasted what they saw as a means of deception—devices that could disguise bodily difference thereby obscuring popular physiognomic prejudices. Blanchard Jerrold, for instance, famously debated the virtues and vices of prosthetics, identifying that some saw artificial body parts as “emblem[s] of deceit”, “device[s] of ingenious vanity”, or items that “cover[ed] the wearer with gross and unpardonable deceit” (64). Most concerningly for men who had lost limbs, certain prosthetics came to be associated with beggary. David Copperfield’s sweetheart, Dora, for instance, associates beggary with “a yellow face and a nightcap, or a pair of crutches, or a wooden leg, or a dog with a decanter-stand in his mouth, or something of that kind” (Dickens, *David Copperfield* 545–46). Thus while prosthetics provided a practical material solution for those who could afford top-end products, like those created by British prosthetists Henry Heather Bigg or Frederick Gray, such devices were not available to everyone and the efficacy of them was debatable.¹² If prostheses did not provide a complete solution to the perceived problems caused for men by bodily loss—loss of function, respect, and job prospects—what was needed was an attitude to deal with physical loss. As I suggest, a piratical approach to dealing with physical loss—that encompassed adaptability, defiance, determination, courage, and resilience—was

¹² In his 1855 treatise on artificial limbs, Gray lamented that “from the expense entailed by their elaborate construction, they are not within the reach of the poorer class of sufferers” (107).

promulgated to “boys of all ages” by late Victorian and Edwardian adventure narratives.

The developmental role of late Victorian adventure fiction has received increased critical attention in recent years.¹³ Significantly, David Head has suggested that the pirate story, a popular subgenre of adventure fiction, was thought by late-nineteenth-century educators, librarians, and psychologists to be good for boys’ physical masculine development. He argues that “Pirate stories could . . . encourage boys to be vigorous, fighting the perceived tendency of modern middle-class life to create soft boys and softer men” (112). Discussing a very different Victorian genre, Karen Bourrier has outlined the capacity of disabled male figures in fiction to “train the reader emotionally” (“The spirit of a man” 117). As she argues, in mid-century sentimental fiction, disability opens up a more capacious emotional range for male characters, while the physical limitations of such characters mirror the emotional restraint expected of both able-bodied male characters and readers (“The spirit of a man” 118). Bourrier elsewhere argues that “far from being marginalized in a culture that prized health and industry, weakness and disability came to serve an integral role in shaping narrative form, and ideals of what it meant to be a man in the Victorian era and beyond” (*The Measure* 3). Clare Walker Gore meanwhile explores how the Victorian authors Dinah Mulock Craik, Sarah Steele, and Lucas Malet attempted to reconcile constructions of masculinity and disability, constructions that Walker Gore shows were “perceived incompatible” at the time (363). Drawing in particular from Bourrier and Head’s ideas—about the conditioning potential of disabled male figures and adventure stories respectively—this section of the chapter, an analysis of male amputees and

¹³ See Showalter 80; Tosh 199–203; Deane, “Imperial Barbarians” and *Masculinity*.

prosthesis users, shows how pirate stories promoted physical toughness, strength, resilience, and resolve through their portrayals of disabled characters. Tom Shakespeare suggested in 1999 that “non-disabled men have things to learn from disabled men” (“Sexual Politics” 63). As I show, the disabled antiheroes depicted in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1881–82) and J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904) served as disabled male role models, whose ability to battle through life’s obstacles—in their cases limb loss—provided a masculine model of resilience to both able-bodied and disabled readers. It is, however, noteworthy that the messages promulgated by disabled pirates were buttressed by an ableist philosophy that encouraged men with disabilities simply to “get on with it” rather than hope for social changes to lessen their disablement—disability being a condition now considered, for the most part at least, socially constructed.¹⁴ Though ableist, such depictions in clear ways challenged the dominance of physical wholeness as they suggested that disabled men did not need to pass as “normal” in order to be successful.

While studies on disability and masculinity have tended to dwell on the incompatibilities between the realities of male disablement and traditionally held ideals of masculinity, which usually hold physical strength in high regard,¹⁵ pirate stories tend to exhibit quite the contrary: disabled male figures who seemingly overcome their impairments, and the disability that usually accompanies them, by exhibiting a kind of hyper-masculinity—that which stubbornly perseveres with manual work despite the difficulties imposed by disability. The most blatant examples of pirate characters who display the kind of resilience and adaptability encompassed by this form of hyper-masculinity

¹⁴ See Shakespeare’s “The Social Model of Disability” for a thorough yet concise survey of literature, discussion, and interrogation of the social construction of disability.

¹⁵ See Shakespeare, “Sexual Politics”; Serlin, “Crippling Masculinity”; Russell P. Shuttleworth; Wilson; Bionaz.

are two of the most famous fictional pirates of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, Long John Silver and Captain Hook. This section will turn to these two figures in due course, but first it is worth turning our attention to the disabled pirates of R. M. Ballantyne, a popular producer of adventure stories to boys, whose influence on Stevenson and Barrie is well recorded. Stevenson revealed Ballantyne's influence on his work in the prefatory poem to *Treasure Island*, "To the Hesitating Purchaser":

If studious youth no longer crave,
His ancient appetites forgot,
Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:
So be it, also! And may I
And all my pirates share the grave
Where these and their creations lie! (ix)

Like Stevenson, Barrie also acknowledged his indebtedness to Ballantyne in a preface he wrote for a 1913 edition of the latter's most famous novel, *The Coral Island* (1857): "Ballantyne was for long my man" (vi).

Though not a pirate per se, but a character unwillingly and unwittingly formerly employed on a pirate vessel—who adopts the blood-thirsty traits of his former comrades after losing his leg while being forced to perform piratical activities—Jack from R. M. Ballantyne's *Why I Did Not Become a Sailor* (1864) is another character who exhibits extreme adaptability and surprising physical capacities in spite of his limb loss. Jack not only manages to engulf his eventual captors—who entrap him and the narrator, Bob, after they help to liberate a slave—with flames while performing somersaults in a bizarre denouement scene, but earlier bludgeons an alligator, kills a dog, and injures a slave keeper

all by using his wooden leg as a club.¹⁶ With some significant adaptation to his prosthesis, Bob and Jack fashion an artificial foot out of a “square piece of bark off a tree” (327), Jack is also able to traverse a swamp. Jack’s bravery is probably the most impressive aspect of his characterisation. Bob notes, “Poor Jack was very gentle and uncomplaining. He even made light of his misfortune, and laughed a good deal at himself; but I could see, nevertheless, that his spirits were at times deeply affected, in spite of his brave efforts to bear up and appear gay and cheerful” (329). *Why I Did Not Become a Sailor* thus presents a complex portrayal of disability that, on the one hand, shows some alluring, hyper-masculine ways of dealing with limb loss while, on the other hand, supporting prejudices that associated disability with villainy and violence.

Ballantyne’s other prothetically adorned pirate, Rosco from *The Madman and the Pirate* (1883), also shows a relatively stoic attitude to disability while revealing the functional inadequacies of primitive lower-limb prosthetics.¹⁷ Notwithstanding the humorous trials of his double-prosthesis use—he is first unable to walk with his prosthetics, then breaks one of his false legs, realises that his prostheses are poorly suited to the terrain of the island, wears defective limbs with lifted toes, and finally falls over repeatedly, requiring the assistance of others to return him to his feet—Rosco perseveres and eventually achieves a degree of physical mobility and, more importantly, happiness: he reacquires the art of walking “to such perfection” that he is seen “almost at all times and in all

¹⁶ The use of false legs as weapons is a surprisingly familiar motif in Victorian and Edwardian narratives. This trope is also taken up in Thomas Hood’s narrative poem *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41), Henry Clay Lewis’s short story “The Indefatigable Bear Hunter” (1850), Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes story *The Sign of Four* (1890), and Arthur Melbourne Cooper’s short film *Blind Man’s Bluff* (1903). See ch. 2.

¹⁷ Even after Jack and Bob add the false foot to the wooden leg, Jack has to rely on his friend’s assistance: describing the efficacy of their adaptation, Bob explains that “it acted too well, for being a broad base it did not permit the wooden leg to sink at all, while the natural leg did sink more or less, and, as the wooden limb had no knee, it was stiff from hip to heel, and could not bend, so that I had to walk behind my poor comrade, and when I observed him get somewhat into the position of the Leaning Tower of Pisa I sprang forward and supported him” (327).

weathers, stumping about the village” (240). His contentedness is revealed by the image presented at the close of the novel where he is described to be sitting “slightly bent, with eyes gazing sometimes at the children, and sometimes at his wooden toes” (246). Acceptance is, above all, the quality encouraged here.

If acceptance is the favoured response to disability espoused by Ballantyne, then defiance is the preferred attitude propagated by *Treasure Island*. Silver’s physical capacities are no doubt aided by his otherwise impressive physique (“He was very tall and strong, with a face as big as a ham” [62–3]) and yet his mobility and physical prowess in the text are, at times, remarkable—if not, to an able-bodied Victorian reader, somewhat disconcerting. As Alan Sandison has commented, “perhaps the two most striking things about Silver are his remarkable physical agility, given his missing limb, and a parallel and equally notable mental agility” (238). Silver is at one point described as moving “with the speed and security of a trained gymnast” (117) and in the same scene, the one where he murders the seaman Tom, he is also said to be as “agile as a monkey, even without leg or crutch” (117). Possibly a nod to the also “monkey-like” double-amputee Miserrimus Dexter from Wilkie Collins’s *The Law and the Lady* (1875), who is said to move “as lightly as a monkey, on his hands” (212), Silver’s portrayal is similarly sensational and transgressive in this scene. The reader is simultaneously shocked, impressed, and terrified by the acrobatics of Stevenson’s disabled antihero.

Though Silver’s physicality is impressive, it is, more than anything else, his ability to work and at times climb the social ladder that is truly admirable. Protagonist Jim Hawkins, his virtuous ally Dr Livesey, and Stevenson himself all resist punishing Silver after his piratical designs fail, revealing a degree of forgiveness and admiration for the endearing anti-hero. If the reader too is to

forgive Silver for his misdeeds—which by virtue of the actions of Hawkins and Livesey he is certainly encouraged to do—one can do little more than marvel at the pirate’s unwavering commitment to self-betterment throughout *Treasure Island*. Silver goes from respected sea-cook to pirate captain, and is only reduced to a venerated and valued crew member and then an unpursued exile after his mutiny attempt is compromised and he forms an alliance with his former enemies. Silver begins *Treasure Island* a landlord with a bank account and ends it with a sack of coins “worth, perhaps, three or four hundred guineas” (288)—an amount roughly equal to the annual income of a middle-class household at this time. Though by no means a rich man at the end of the novel, Silver ends it with more than he began with. He also earns decidedly more than he would have had he remained an honest sea-cook. Although his means of securing an income are dubious, he certainly works for it, thereby elevating him above the status of the stereotypical wooden leg user from this period—the street beggar.

A considerable amount of stigma surrounded disabled men who were reduced to begging in the nineteenth century. As we see in Chapter Three, not only were wooden legs commonly associated with mendicants, but they were routinely seen as fraudulent props used to dupe alms givers into giving more. Numerous reasons why wooden legs were seen as beneficial to street vendors, a class barely above beggars in the Victorian class hierarchy, were propagated in an 1877 *All the Year Round* article titled “Mr. Wegg and His Class”. In this piece, the anonymous author describes the various duplicitous strategies of a one-legged crossing sweeper for increasing his income: he uses his wooden leg to inspire the idea that he is a war veteran; he draws upon the sympathy of others, claiming to be in constant pain; after his wooden leg breaks, he uses

this as an excuse to demand extra money from passers-by; and finally, he claims to have found Salvation and so uses Christian verses to encourage charitable donations. Other fraudulent wooden-legged street dwellers are depicted in Mark Twain's *Roughing It* (1872) and Arthur Melbourne Cooper's 1903 short film *Blind Man's Bluff*. Though Silver is certainly deceptive, his cunning, unlike other calculating amputee characters, such as Silas Wegg from Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), is less deplorable because of his activeness and robustness. Unlike Wegg's scheme for success, Silver's designs rely on his actions rather than the mistakes of others. Silver's activeness, work ethic, and ability to accrue capital elevate him above the status of street "cripples"—as suggested by his decision to not use a peg leg, which was seen as a signifier for paupers. Certainly a slippery character, Silver nonetheless commands respect and is an antihero not only in the novel's context but for disabled men in general. Young male readers are not intended to aspire to Silver's piratical ways but are encouraged to admire his unrelenting attitude to physical injury and perhaps life's obstacles by and large. Stevenson was, after all, impressed by his one-legged friend William Ernest Henley's "maimed strength and masterfulness" ("To W. E. Henley" 137).

Hook is another impaired fictional pirate who transcends the association of prosthetics with beggars. Indeed, Hook's aristocratic attire—based on the apparel of Charles II—and stately diction elevate him from the lower echelons of society in spite of his piratical career. Like Silver, Hook is also separated from street beggars by his apparent work ethic and ability to continue his duties in spite of his loss of a hand. Unlike Silver, however, Hook is not driven by financial reward but is motivated by vengeance. Though physically compromised and once defeated by Peter Pan, Hook continues his

buccaneering career in order to avenge his bodily loss. Despite his neglect for looting, Hook remains apparently wealthy. His ability to continue working as a pirate stems primarily from his adaptability. He adjusts profoundly well to his hand loss, claiming to prefer his hook to his remaining organic hand: conversing with Hook, Smee comments, “I have oft heard you say your hook was worth a score of hands, for combing the hair and other homely uses”, to which Hook responds, “If I was a mother I would pray to have my children born with this instead of that” (29). Hook’s success as a pirate therefore relies on the efficacy of his hook prosthesis and also on the unflinching way in which he has adapted to using it. Like Silver, Hook adopts a never-say-die attitude to his loss of a body part.

It is possible that the attitudes that Silver and Hook display towards bodily loss stem from Stevenson’s own experience of living with disabling illness. (According to Neil Rennie, *Treasure Island* was a significant influence for *Peter Pan*.)¹⁸ While Stevenson is often believed to have based Long John Silver—who in turn inspired Hook—on his one-legged friend Henley, Stevenson himself was a long-term sufferer of nervous exhaustion and various lung problems, rendering him, by Victorian standards, a “cripple”. Oliver S. Buckton has observed the influence of Stevenson’s body on his literary work: “Disease was an apt metaphor by which Stevenson could represent subjection to power, being a state of oppression under which he had long suffered” (28). Reading the mobility of Silver in light of Stevenson’s often bed-ridden lack of it may encourage us to consider whether Silver represents a disabled fantasy of physical and social mobility. Alternatively, we may wish to view Silver as imbued with some of Stevenson’s own mechanisms for coping with impairment. In

¹⁸ See Rennie 197–98.

1901, former Free Church of Scotland minister William Robertson Nicoll, who himself was forced to retire from pastoral ministry after contracting pleurisy, praised Stevenson's resilience to illness and gestures towards his enduring success:

He was simply the bravest of men. Now and then, as in his letter to George Meredith, he lets us see under what disabling conditions he fought his battle. Human beings in a world like this are naturally drawn to one who suffers, and will not let himself be mastered or corrupted by suffering. They do not care for the prosperous, dominant, athletic, rich, and long-lived man. They may conjecture, indeed, that behind all the bravery there is much hidden pain, but if it is not revealed to them they cannot be sure. (qtd. in Hammerton 148).

Though Stevenson's own struggles with his body are little-known to popular audiences in the twenty-first century, the image of Long John Silver, a physically impaired character so durable and resilient that he manages *without* a prosthetic and who inspired our most famous prosthesis-using pirate, Captain Hook, endures as a Stevensonian role model for coping with life's obstacles.

The pirate adventures stories discussed above provide a range of transgressive physically "incomplete" male figures who challenge the hegemony of physical normalcy. Stevenson and Barrie's pirates, in particular, resist stereotypes of "cripples" as men unable to work as they persevere in spite of their physical losses without using prosthetics that enable them to pass. Instead of selecting devices that conceal their impairments, a process encouraged by preferences for physical wholeness, Silver and Hook use assistive technologies and prostheses that provide functionality. They thereby resist social preferences and show surprising capacities for manual work and social progression. Though unable to shake stereotypes that associated physical aberrance with moral

deficiency, such depictions provided a challenge to the dominance of the normal body. While pirate stories provided examples of resilient disabled characters to male readers, marriage plots offered advice to female readers in terms of prosthesis: readers were encouraged to either mask their physical losses using the most concealing of devices or were encouraged to accept their marginalised and unmarriageable position.

“Get the best article in the market”: Prostheses for Women in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Commerce

In a similarly instructive manner to the pirate stories described above, which provided role models for men who had lost body parts, a number of prosthesis narratives coexisted that provided guidance to women who had experienced similar bodily losses. In such tales prostheses are commonly represented as devices that either stand in the way of prospective marriages, or, in a somewhat transgressive fashion given the stigmas attached to prostheses, provide the very spark for romantic affairs. More often than not, women are the prosthesis users in these narratives. In many of these stories, comments, direct and veiled, are made about contemporary prosthesis designs thus providing an intriguing commentary on the kinds of artificial body parts that were deemed acceptable or lamentable for females to use in this period.

Certain marriage plots, including Thomas Hood's satirical poem *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* (1840–41), were so popular that they were mentioned and utilised for commercial gain in the treatises and manuals of international prosthesis makers, such as John S. Drake and A. A. Marks. Furthermore, other makers of artificial body parts, such as Thomas Elliott and Professor Brown drew upon the public penchant for prosthesis narratives by

including poems about their products in advertisements. The link between literature and prosthesis commerce was therefore a complex one as writers used fiction as a means through which to critique poorly performing prostheses while prosthesis makers sought to exploit the contemporary interest in fictional prostheses to their advantage.

The following sections of the chapter explore the reciprocal relationship between fictional texts and prosthesis commerce. I show that fictional writing was a key component of nineteenth-century prostheses discourse, a constituent that provided practical advice for its readers on the kinds of prostheses that should be avoided for both social and functional purposes. While popular literary sources provided kinds of advertisement not for but *against* certain prostheses, both entire fictional works and particular representational strategies were used by contemporary prosthetists interchangeably as means through which to subtly disparage the devices of opposing makers, reinforce the proprietary ownership of particular designs, or promote the concealing abilities of particular devices to female users.

To appreciate why women felt under such pressure to disguise physical losses in the nineteenth century, it is worth bearing in the mind the specific stigma that was attached to disabled or otherwise physically “incomplete” women—those missing an eye, teeth, or hair, for instance. First, disabled women were often viewed as unfit mothers. Since motherhood was widely perceived as the primary function of women—a sentiment that Sally Shuttleworth and Mary Poovey have shown was buttressed by medical opinion—such a devastating estimation rendered these females, for many, unmarriageable.¹⁹ As physical aberrance came to be seen in wider society as

¹⁹ See Poovey; Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë*.

increasingly unfavourable—as Lennard J. Davis has identified, in part, due to the emergence of the concept of “normalcy” (*Enforcing Normalcy*)—medical attention was drawn to heredity. As Stoddard Holmes puts it, “As a Victorian cultural sign, disability pointed not only backward, to parental transgression and defect, but even more urgently forward, to future generations” (68). Much attention on physical and mental inheritance resulted in an increased focus on mothers as sources of congenital defects.

Furthermore, as observed in Chapter One, wholeness came to be seen as the fundamental hallmark of health. Thus those who displayed missing body parts were seen as less desirable partners. A “defect” as minor as a missing tooth or bald patch would render a woman less attractive, perhaps even unmarriageable, in the public eye. Since beauty had long been held as an essential trait of womanhood and was “legitimised” as such by scientific papers written by Walker and later Ellis and Stratz, women were judged more harshly than men for having perceivable physical losses. With increasing pressures to erase visible marks of physical imperfection, prostheses held both the capacity to aid and betray their users. A convincing prosthesis might allay any suspicions of physical incompleteness or even attract a potential suitor through its beauty alone;²⁰ an unconvincing one might not only reveal the user as a “defective” but would draw attention to her supposedly fraudulent attempt at hiding a physical loss. As we will see, such a conundrum provided ample material for a number of marriage plots, which served as indexes for the kinds of prostheses that should be avoided.

Building upon the conceptual ties between female prosthesis use and invisibility that the Marks treatise discussed earlier makes manifest, this section

²⁰ Such a scenario occurs in J. P. H.’s “How I Was Mesmerised into Matrimony” (1876).

begins by exploring fictional responses to female prosthesis users in contemporary literary marriage plots. Buttressing the necessity for female prostheses to be unnoticeable, these stories provide the reader with specific guidance on devices to avoid: noisy and showy devices. Next, the chapter turns to the way that such literary stories and representational strategies were utilised to the advantage of various prosthetists, underlining the surprising intersections of fiction and commerce in Victorian prosthesis discourse. The following sections consider false wigs, teeth, and artificial eyes alongside prosthetic limbs. False teeth and wigs are not often seen as prostheses in the traditional sense, yet, as I show, these technologies were often considered alongside other forms of prosthesis as devices of concealment in the nineteenth century. I analyse false teeth and wigs alongside limbs to verify the importance of gender in the relationship between commerce and literature.

Fiction and Falsehood: Literary Guides for Selecting False Teeth and Artificial Legs

While one might assume that the reception of female artificial leg and false teeth users was radically different in the nineteenth century, both types of prosthesis user was subject to similar stigma regarding either (or both) sexual unattraction and/or duplicitousness depending on the mimetic capacity of the user's device. Many writers, including Blanchard Jerrold and Chambers, considered such devices alongside one another as concealers of physical disfigurement, ignoring issues of impairment versus aesthetic preference. Like wooden legs, false teeth were also seen as fair game for comic stories by fiction writers.

Though historian John Woodforde suggests that references to false teeth are virtually absent in Victorian novels (*False Teeth* 3), the periodical press reveals several marriage plots in which female false teeth users are brutally exposed—usually resulting in the withdrawal of a marriage proposal. Such stories include “Too Hard upon My Aunt” (1863), A. M.’s “Was She False?” (1875), and “Kitty the Careless” (1883) to mention but a handful. Thus while Woodforde is right about the lack of false teeth references in canonical novels, the relative popularity of them in periodical sources, such as the *All the Year Round*, *London Reader*, and *Judy* (in which “Too Hard upon My Aunt”, “Was She False?”, and “Kitty the Careless” appeared respectively), draws our attention to their status as popular motifs in light-hearted stories designed to elicit mild shock and comic revulsion. Though it may be true that these prostheses served a primarily comic function, such representations not only reinforced prejudices against those missing teeth but also provided a reminder to readers of devices to be avoided: namely, dentures prone to malfunction or those that appear overly striking. Since together *All the Year Round*, *London Reader*, and *Judy* covered a wide readership, it seems that readers from the literate working class upwards were exposed to similar directives concerning prostheses for women. The rest of this section will show how two of these stories, “Kitty the Careless” and “Was She False?” provided particular advice to women regarding two kinds of false teeth to avoid: partial plates and overly white dentures.

“Kitty the Careless”, which appeared as the sixth part of a series called “The Misses Lovibond’s Refusals” in the London-based comic journal *Judy*, provides a comic example of how young women should not act while also highlighting a kind of dental prostheses they should avoid—in this case, a

partial dental plate. In this sketch we are told of the careless habits of an otherwise very attractive young woman called Kitty. Having lost her three front teeth after trying to slide down a bannister (an action that the sketch chastises as “unladylike” [50]) she is fitted with three false ones, it would appear, as part of what was known as a partial set—an upper or lower plate, usually by this time made of vulcanised rubber but occasionally celluloid, gold, or ivory, with false teeth, often porcelain but occasionally human teeth, positioned only in place of the missing teeth. When a childhood lover, who since he last met Kitty has earned his fortune in the colonies, returns to renew his devotion to her, the careless girl drops her false teeth out of her mouth, frightening her devotee into making an abrupt exit.

As we learn from Woodforde’s work, such malfunctions were not uncommon in prostheses of this design (*False Teeth* 69–74, 77). Indeed, while springless plates had been around since the eighteenth century, they remained often ineffective throughout the nineteenth century—in part because few makers or users understood how atmospheric pressure works (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 69–75). Stories of false teeth being swallowed or fired out of the mouth were common in surgical and dental journals, as well as periodicals directed at untrained readers. R. H. Rozenzweig, for instance, wrote in *The British Medical Journal* in 1891 of a patient who swallowed and then excruciatingly passed a golden false teeth plate. Ever the source of cruel jokes about prosthetics, *Fun* jested, “The poor lady who was found suffocated in bed the other morning through swallowing her false teeth ought to be a warning to others, *by gum!*” (“Curt Comments” 187). Though Kitty evidently experiences difficulties keeping her false teeth in, her appearance is described as deceptively flawless: “Those who gazed with rapture at her ruby lips, which as

they parted displayed a row of pearly teeth, were far from suspecting the truth” (50). Thus while this story does not attack the aesthetics of partial dental plates, which, it suggests, could be alluring to look at, it does scrutinise the reliability of such devices.

By the time that “Kitty the Careless” was published, partial plates were a fairly outdated mode of replacing lost teeth on a low scale, explaining, in part, their critique in this instance. Following the inventions of safe dental cement (an oxyphosphate of zinc) in 1869 and the foot-operated dentist drill in 1871, fixed replacements, such as crowns and bridges, took preference over partial dentures (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 77). The implementation of such fixed replacements became known as “American dentistry” in Britain, reflecting the superiority of American dental expertise in the second half of the century. Crowns and bridges were more expensive than partial plates in the 1880s, but were generally preferred to artificial teeth since they carried less stigma and were less prone to falling out (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 77–8). In a comical fashion, “Kitty the Careless” warns women against making the “careless” mistake that Kitty does—that is, using a partial plate—as it subtly endorses “American dentistry”. Reflecting the aspirational interests of the journal’s lower-middle-class readership,²¹ the *Judy* sketch attacks what was by the 1880s an inexpensive,²² yet unfashionable and outdated, mode of fixing teeth, thereby providing implicit support for “American dentistry”, which was for dentists a more profitable and for the public a more respectable method for replacing lost teeth.

²¹ See Vann 285; Hansson 67.

²² Partial plates could be purchased for as little as 2 s. 6 d. per tooth in 1883. According to measuringworth.com, such a price for a commodity in 1883 is relative to the “real price” of £11.24 in 2014 (Officer and Williamson). The price for “American dentistry”, by contrast, was seldom advertised, reflecting, perhaps, its bespoke form but also its higher cost. See advert for Mr. Hogg, Consulting Dentist.

Overly showy prostheses also received scrutiny in Victorian marriage plots. Such devices were feared to draw too much attention and scrutiny to the appearance of the female user, thereby risking discovery. With regard to false teeth, a story that reveals the possible consequences of using a device that looks better than the real thing is the 1875 *London Reader* short story “Was She False?”. In this tale, a man called Mr Mortimer breaks his engagement after it is revealed to him that his betrothed, Miss Hopkins, wears false teeth. The reader’s suspicions are alerted about the questionable authenticity of Miss Hopkins’s teeth (if not by the title of the story!) when her looks are eulogised over in larger-than-life terms: “Eyes deep blue, like midsummer sky—hair lustrous as flaxen gold—teeth like twin rows of pearls” (75). The description of her teeth as akin to “pearls” highlights their preciousness, suggesting that they are assets that alone make their owner worthy of marriage. Their appearance also communicates in coded terms that they may not be human. Miss Hopkins’s deceptively youthful appearance also raises suspicions: she is described as “five-and-thirty, but . . . has the complexion of eighteen” (75). Our inkling about her potentially augmented physical appearance is vocalised by Mr Mortimer’s handsome nephew, Harry, who postulates his fear that the “desperate old maid that Uncle Mortimer is going to marry is painted like a Jezebel” (75). The reader’s suspicions shift to an impending sense of martial catastrophe as we learn that Mr Mortimer is, typically, strongly opposed to artificiality: “one don’t want to look as if one were varnished all over or dipped in a jar of boiling oil, like the forty thieves in the Arabian Nights” (75). This discriminatory attitude is soon put to practice: Harry discovers a box of false teeth with Miss Hopkins’s name on it at the dentist’s and mischievously arranges for the teeth to be delivered to her lover—who, of course, is unaware of her “falseness”. After seeking

confirmation from Miss Hopkins's servant that his lover does indeed use false teeth, Mr Mortimer breaks his engagement immediately. He angrily asserts, "She's treacherous! I have been deceived all through. I daresay the rest of her is as false as her—but no matter! I am disenchanted at last. I have bidden her an eternal adieu!" (76). Here, then, it is the fact that Mortimer feels "deceived", the shock of discovery, and the fear that "the rest of her is . . . false" that drives him to end the relationship. Her actual "defects", while one would imagine still important, are a secondary concern. In this case, the fraudulent capacity of the woman's prosthesis, its very success in masking physical loss, is what makes it, in the male suitor's eyes, so deplorable. Echoing Blanchard Jerrold's earlier fears, that prostheses are "device[s] of ingenious vanity" that obscure dominant physiognomic means of judging people (64), "Was She False?" comes to the problematic conclusion that those who conceal their physical "defects" are more likely to have other secrets that they wish to conceal. Above all, though, this story demonstrates that overly white and straight, "pearly", false teeth can arouse suspicions and, in the case of female users, result in tragic consequences: discovery.

The anxieties about falseness and incompleteness underpinning stories like "Kitty the Careless" and "Was She False?" once again reveal the fragility of wholeness as a hegemonic concept. These stories show the absurd results of privileging a physical form to the extent that many are forced to use artificial substitutes in order to appear "normal". The pressure to look "whole" is exposed as a self-contradicting force since it drives individuals to use artifice, the antithesis of naturalness, which is held as sacrosanct. "Kitty the Careless" draws our attention to the troubling trend of privileging impressions of physical wholeness over what is truly healthy as Kitty uses a device that, though

promising in terms of appearance, puts its user at risk of choking. “Was She False?”, on the other hand, makes us question the dogmatism of favouring organic wholeness. If Miss Hopkins’s false teeth really do cause her to look so attractive why does it matter so much that they are artificial? The fact that so much advice was needed for women using prosthetics reveals the ironic artificiality of a system that privileges the natural. As the next section shows, though marriage plots such as “Kitty the Careless” and “Was She False?” provided advice for female readers about what kinds of prostheses should be avoided, literature was also used in a similarly rhetorical but even more commercially driven way by contemporary prosthetists.

Lumbering Legs and Wonderful Wigs: Commercial Literature and Fiction

In terms of showy prostheses, artificial body parts do not come more ostentatious than the golden artificial leg that is used by the eponymous protagonist of Thomas Hood’s *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg*, a poetic parable that was popular and well-remembered throughout the nineteenth century.²³ The resounding message in Hood’s poem, like the previously mentioned *London Reader* story, is that eye-catching prosthetics, and pretentiousness in general, should be avoided by women. Hood’s poem comically portrays a pompous countess, who, after losing a leg in a riding accident, demands to be adorned with an artificial leg made of solid gold. The eponymous protagonist later marries an in-debt Italian count who demands that she sells her leg to pay off his gambling debts. After she refuses, he bludgeons her to death using the very leg that he so wishes to sell. Hood’s poem is

²³ See ch. 2, n. 19.

certainly a parable that warns against materialistic avarice—as Warne notes, “Hood’s heavy-handed moral is clear: the love of gold costs Miss Kilmansegg both life and limb” (“To invest a cripple” 89). However, the poem also provides a commentary on a kind of prostheses that women should avoid using: showy, impractical devices that attract unnecessary attention. Though the leg is visually impressive—“Twas a splendid, brilliant, beautiful Leg” (817)—it draws considerably more attention, good and bad, than any other kind of prosthesis imaginable: while money-driven suitors are transfixed by it, others are outraged by its obnoxiousness—“The jeers it had met, —the shouts! the scoff! / The cutting advice to ‘take itself off,’ / For sounding but half so heavy” (1167–69).

The criticism that Hood’s poem levied towards Miss Kilmansegg’s noisy leg was such a lasting concern that it was invoked on a couple of occasions several decades later by American artificial limb makers. Such highlights the transatlantic appeal of Hood’s poem, the longevity of its engagement with topic pertinent to prosthesis marketing, the international nature of prosthesis discourse, and the important role that literature played more widely in prosthesis commerce. Hood’s golden leg was cited in the commercial texts of American prosthetists John S. Drake and A. A. Marks as an example of bad prosthesis. In praise of Drake’s artificial legs, an article in the *Boston Evening Gazette* in 1859, quoted by Drake in his manual of the same year, noted that

Instead of the cumbrous and clattering pedals which, like Miss Kilmansegg’s wonderful leg, go

“—clump, clump, clump,

Like the ghost in Don Giovanni,”

Dr. Drake has made a delicate and ingenious machine, that bends naturally with the motion of the body, provided with springs that answer the purpose of muscles and sinews. (qtd. in Drake 45)

Similarly, George E. Marks also commented on Miss Kilmansegg's noisy gait in his 1888 treatise on artificial limbs, describing her leg as a "fascinating perambulator" (8). The mutual concern that Hood's text, the *Boston Evening Gazette* journalist, and George E. Marks all have regarding the weightiness of prosthesis brings to our attention the widely held view that prostheses, especially those used by women, should be as silent (both literally and figuratively) as possible—a logical extension one might say to the Victorian ideal of women as muted and passive. The reuse of the golden leg as a comical example of a poorly designed prosthesis reveals the enduring concerns that prosthetists had regarding the weight of their devices throughout the century. In terms of the commercial use of such a text, we see the prosthesis narrative serve as a kind of *anti-advertisement* used for particular marketing ends. In the Drake example in particular, Miss Kilmansegg's leg is a referent used in a simile that disparages the "cumbrous and clattering" artificial legs of rival limb makers. The use of a comical literary referent, in combination with the fact the words are quoted therefore distancing them slightly from the prosthesis maker, softens the tone of what is otherwise a denigrating remark about artificial limbs that are not made by Drake.

The reference to Miss Kilmansegg's leg in nineteenth-century discourse relating to real-life prosthesis highlights not only the popularity of Hood's poem but also the way that fictional texts were understood to inform or educate people's views on new or existing technologies. George E. Marks included not just an allusion to Miss Kilmansegg but a whole section on "Literary Amenities on Artificial Limbs", including a full transcript and comment on the popular song "The Cork Leg", in his 1888 treatise on prosthetics, in part to dismiss popular misconceptions regarding his devices. Like *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious*

Leg, “Cork Leg” was another British text thus attesting to the transatlantic exchange of prosthesis discourse in this period. Not only did the firm A. A. Marks include British literature in its treatises but they also sold artificial limbs to British amputees via its popular mailing system. In their 1886 catalogue, A. A. Marks included a section called “Our Foreign Trade” featuring a testimony from Frank Mills of Bath, England (27). From its 1888 catalogue onwards, A. A. Marks included instructions and prices for overseas orders—\$1.50 for orders to Liverpool and \$1.75 for orders to London (George E. Marks 397). In their 1908 *Manual of Artificial Limbs* (authored by James Law), A. A. Marks included no less than nine testimonials from English amputees.

For A. A. Marks and others on both sides of the Atlantic who saw Hood’s poem as a comment on unsuitable false limbs and artificiality, literature was seen as a powerful means of shaping people’s views concerning prostheses. A. A. Marks’s inclusion of internationally popular pieces of literature such as Hood’s poem in its prosthesis treatises reveals an intriguing marketing strategy. By evoking these popular narratives, prosthetists such as A. A. Marks and Drake hoped to conjure an association between popular pieces of literature about prosthetics and their firms’ artificial limbs. These limb makers literalise Hood’s representation of an artificial leg but do so in an attempt to implant their prostheses in the popular imagination as real life solutions to the issues that Miss Kilmansegg encounters in Hood’s poem. A. A. Marks and Drake hoped that amputees would think of their artificial limbs when reading, or listening to, popular pieces of verse, such as *Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg* and “The Cork Leg”. Though implicit in the use of such texts, as I show below, this kind of literary engagement also bolstered the intellectual property protection of Marks’s prostheses, which were already protected by a patent.

Medical historian Claire L. Jones has shown us how eponymously named devices were deployed by medical men in trade catalogues as an informal and respectable means of enforcing intellectual property protection (146–50). While neither *Miss Kilmansegg* nor “The Cork Leg” directly mention Marks’s patented artificial legs with rubber feet in order to further enforce the proprietary ownership of Marks’s design, the incorporation of these stories in Marks’s advertising texts did implant into the imagination of the reader a negative image of an artificial leg against which the maker’s innovative and “superior” leg could stand. In other “Literary Amenities” appended in Marks’s treatise, however, more direct reference was made to the firm’s artificial legs. For instance, in the poem mentioned above by Mrs S. E. Silley, the speaker references Marks directly and draws attention to his devices’ patented aspect: “I tried it on; it fitted neat, / With rubber foot and straps complete” (qtd. in George E. Marks 287). Elsewhere, a humorous (though problematic) literary sketch called “A Part of Stewart’s Body” was printed in full, which, like Silley’s poem, praised the capacities of Marks’s rubber-footed artificial legs. Once again drawing our attention to the conspicuously gendered discourse of Marks’s treatise, the firm’s rubber feet enable the protagonist Stewart to “run, skate, play billiards, drink . . . and spend money as well as any of the boys” (qtd. in George E. Marks 169). Specially crafted literary texts were therefore included in Marks’s trade catalogues as endorsements for, and reminders of, the manufacturer’s patented features. Meanwhile, internationally recognised literary depictions of suspect prostheses were included to contrast Mark’s limbs and therefore emphasise the ingenuity of the firm’s products.

The American artificial limb makers were not the only ones to utilise literature in the nineteenth century. Indeed, from the mid-century when the

fashion for artificial hair was at its height (Ofek 37–8), British wig makers such as Thomas Elliott and “Professor Brown” used poetry for advertising purposes. One of Thomas Elliott’s circa-1860 advertisement posters included a ballad entitled “The Baffler of Time”, which pondered

’Tis rueful when we think how Time pursues his reckless way,
In hast’ning Locks on youthful heads to premature decay;
And as for older heads, not he would let a hair remain,
If Art or Science could not check his too encroaching reign.

Professor Brown’s 1863 advertisement poster, on the other hand, used a poem written “In something like a measur’d verse” to assure readers that “Hereafter you’ll patronize no one but Brown, / And soon have fine Tresses of Hair”. Capitalising on the anxieties of “incomplete” women evoked by contemporary marriage plots, such as “Kitty the Careless” or “Was She False?”, while also using such stories as familiar and popular frameworks for expressing more commercially driven messages about prosthetics, such literary components of nineteenth-century prosthesis advertising promised female users restored youthfulness, beauty, and the ability to go unnoticed as “incomplete” women. Such poems emphasise the link between women and the visible erasure of physical defects while using witty verse to make the eponymous devices of wig makers memorable.

Corresponding with the increase in medical trade catalogues towards the end of the nineteenth century identified by Jones, other literature to do with prosthesis responded directly to such commercial messages and the commodification of artificial body parts. Such sources can be read in context with the ethical resistance to medical advertising described by Anne Digby (39–68) and Jones. The 1881 *Punch* poem “To Lydia’s Glass Eye”, for instance,

includes an epigraph quoted from the *Times* that explains, “From particulars supplied to the reporter of a Chicago paper by a dealer in glass eyes in that city, it appears that there are as many as a thousand wearers of these eyes in Chicago” (193). Purporting to be a poetic advertisement for a Chicago ocularist, the proceeding poem draws from both contemporary marriage plots that include prosthesis users and the commercial poetry published by prosthesis makers as it comically portrays a glass-eye-using speaker addressing his lover, who also wears a glass eye.

The poem mocks the commercial rhetoric of contemporary prosthesis manufacturers as the speaker tells his lover,

I sent thee late a new glass eye,
Impervious to the tear,
Tinged with some new aesthetic dye,
And quite “too utter” dear. (193)

Here the poem directly evokes contemporary ocularists, who like artificial limb, teeth, and hair makers made bold claims about the abilities of their devices to mimic nature, function correctly, and resist wear and tear. Indeed, in the 1850s and 1860s, French artificial eye maker Auguste Boissonneau, who was very much a market leader in Europe at the time, described in his 1854 British patent specification an important innovation that made his artificial eyes, to use the words of the *Punch* poem, “impervious to the tear”: “[by means of a notch or aperture] on any point of the inferior palpebral section of the artificial eye[,] . . . communication is established between the internal and external parts of the artificial eye which prevents the stagnation and decomposition of the tears in the concavity of the eye” (“Specification” 2–3). In less technical terms, Boissonneau’s 1864 *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*

advertisement posited “the unpleasant, dirty appearance of a glass eye” against his superior enamel artificial eyes (314). It seems to be such bold claims and the use of jargon seen in contemporary advertisements that make the prosthesis market the target of *Punch*’s humour in “To Lydia’s Glass Eye”.

In addition to its satirising of the contemporary prosthesis market, “To Lydia’s Glass Eye” also draws attention, in a humorous and hyperbolic manner, to the absurd results that the privileging of physical wholeness drives society towards: artificiality. The piece parodies the love poem, a genre in which the speaker often uses natural imagery to dote upon the organic beauty of a lover, as it juxtaposes tenderness with a grotesque image:

Wink at me only with glass eye,
And I’ll respond with mine,
And smile not when the harmless fly
Goes crawling over thine.

Humorously inverting tradition, the poem uses a natural image (of a fly) to highlight not the organic beauty but rather the artificiality of the subject. The fact that both speaker and subject have glass eyes suggests that such devices are ubiquitous. Such an image evokes comic shock while subtly reminding the reader that societal pressures for physical uniformity encourage the use of artificial contrivances like glass eyes.

As we can see from the range of fictional texts explored in this chapter, literature intersected with the contemporary prosthesis market in a number of ways: it echoed and cashed in on messages directed at women in commercial texts that advised that more silent/indivisible prosthetics are superior; it suggested that women should avoid outdated and frankly dangerous devices, such as partial dental plates, as well as ostentatious prostheses, such as overly

white false teeth, which could jeopardise their anonymity as invisible prosthesis users; it provided catchy lyrics, memorable images, and endorsements of devices when commissioned for advertising purposes or when hijacked for similar commercial endeavours; it provided a critique of the contemporary prosthesis market, which was seen by some as hyperbolic in the claims that it made regarding the reparative capacities of devices and by others as an industry based on encouraging fraudulence and deception. Though the relationship between literature and the prosthesis market was certainly complex, literature provided a conflicting but nonetheless socially informed guide for selecting prostheses in nineteenth-century Britain and America. Above all, literary texts and the prosthesis market together propounded the troubling ableist message that women who could best conceal their physical imperfections were better off in the world than those who could not convincingly hide their physical losses. However, such tales complicated commitments to privileging organic wholeness by drawing attention to the paradox of augmenting one's appearance by using artifice that such preferences brought to the fore.

As this chapter has shown, literary representations of prosthesis users provided readers with guides for managing bodily loss. While in late Victorian and Edwardian adventure narratives, amputee pirates, such as Long John Silver and Captain Hook, are displayed as role models for dealing with physical loss—since they do not let impairment stop them from earning a living—marriage plots involving female prosthesis users tend to reveal the penalties of being discovered as a user of artifice thus highlighting the importance of using devices that were mimetic enough to avoid detection. These stories show that suffering physical loss and using a prosthesis could have significantly different

implications depending on your gender. According to the fictional stories and cultural texts discussed in this chapter, it was imperative for the majority of men to maintain physical functionality in order to work and thus accrue capital, whereas for most women it was key to look as healthy, attractive, and therefore “whole” as possible in order to secure or maintain a marriage. Both the pirate and marriage narratives are underpinned by ableism: the pirate narratives associate physical loss with moral decrepitude whereas the marriage plots promote an erasure of the visible signs of physical loss. But both genres also complicate the nineteenth-century dominance of wholeness. The pirate stories present robust, active, and ambitious disabled anti-heroes in the form of Long John Silver and Captain Hood, whose impressiveness questions preferences of physical wholeness. The marriage plots draw our attention to instabilities and self-contradictions implicit in privileging wholeness. These stories comically explore the anxieties that resonate from pressures to exhibit physical wholeness; in an increasingly artificial world, these stories paradoxically stigmatise artifice while providing advice on how to use artifice more effectively. This chapter shows, then, that prosthesis narratives perpetuated complex and often contradictory messages regarding male and female prosthesis users, which on the surface aligned with conservative views in favour of physical wholeness, but, upon closer inspection, also embodied implicit challenges to such a system.

5 Signs of Decline? Prostheses and the Ageing Subject

Hail thou! who liest so snug in this old box;
 With sacred awe I bend before thy shrine!
 Oh! 't is not clos'd with glue, nor nails, nor locks,
 And hence the bliss of viewing thee is mine.

Like my poor aunt, thou haft seen better days!
 Well curl'd and powder'd. once it was thy lot
 Balls to frequent, and masquerades, and plays,
 And panoramas, and the Lord knows what!

Oh! thou hast heard e'en Madam Mara sing,
 And oft-times visited my *Lord Mayor's* treat;
 And once, at court, wast notic'd by the *King*,
 Thy form was so commodious, and so neat.

Alas! what art thou now? a mere old mop!
 With which our housemaid Nan, who hates a broom,
 Dusts all the chamber in my little shop,
 Then slyly hides thee in this lumber-room!

Such is the fate of *wigs!* and *mortals* too!
 After a few more years than thine are past,
 The Turk, the Christian, Pagan, and the Jew,
 Must all be shut up in a *box* at last!

Vain *man!* to talk so loud, and look so big!
 How small's the difference 'twixt thee and a *wig!*
 How small indeed! for speak the truth I must,
Wigs turn to *dusters*, and *man* turns to *dust*.
 —“Modern Sonnet. To an Old Wig” (1802).

The poem above, which appeared a number of times in the periodical press during the nineteenth century,¹ provides an intriguing starting point for a chapter about prosthesis use and ageing. Published first at the very beginning of the century, 1802, this poem sets out a number of themes that would be developed and drawn upon repeatedly in depictions of elderly prosthesis users during the course of the century: namely, the elision of age and prosthesis use, a repugnance of vanity and falsehood, and a tension between the natural and the artificial. This poem equates the aged with redundancy, an association that

¹ The poem appeared in *New England Quarterly*, *Spirit of the Public Journal*, and *Sporting Magazine* in 1802. It then appeared in full, abridged, or adulterated form in the following: *Monthly Review* in 1803, *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1804, *Lady's Monthly Magazine* in 1807, *Satirist* in 1837, and *Penny Satirist* in 1838.

would be buttressed by many texts in the following years. Although we see the prostheses of the elderly depicted as somewhat useless devices in many other depictions—because of their inability to successfully mask the visible signs of physical decline—in a move that emphasises the increasing marginality of the elderly in society at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in this poem it is suggested that an old wig has more use (and longevity) than an old person: while man “turns to *dust*”, wigs “turn to *dusters*”. Old wigs, this poem suggests, retain at least a degree of purpose and function while old people are rendered utterly useless—detritus, in fact.

Though as Pat Thane observes, in the nineteenth century “people aged over sixty were a smaller proportion of the population than for several centuries” (“Epilogue” 232–33), a significant share of the prosthesis users that we see depicted in nineteenth-century fiction and cultural texts are elderly. To cite a few famous examples, see Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Man That Was Used Up” (1839), Captain Cuttle and Mrs Skewton in Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (1846–48), and Mr Bashwood and Mrs Milroy in Wilkie Collins’s *Armadale* (1864–66). From these select examples alone we see a range of users, including elderly spinsters, ageing aesthetes, and maimed war veterans. These individuals use a range of devices, from wigs, false teeth, and make-up to artificial legs, hook hands, and even mechanical palates. In spite of their differences these characters are bound by the plots that involve them, which centre on themes such as decline, deception, and discrepancy (between old and young, and organic and artificial).

While attempts to resist senescence today are often applauded,² as I show, during the nineteenth century, the use of prostheses by those experiencing physical decline to hide signs of ageing was regularly lambasted as an act of vanity or, worse, fraudulence. Though such attitudes are fairly commonplace in the literature of this period, as I argue, ageing prosthesis users and artificial body parts themselves performed a variety of roles in fictional texts, functioning interchangeably as comic motifs, signifiers for a variety of character traits—including vanity, duplicitousness, and credulousness—and synecdoche for critiquing the overwhelming physical hegemony of youth and wholeness.

One of my main contentions in this chapter is that ageing and prosthesis-use come hand in hand in many accounts in nineteenth-century fiction and culture. To an extent this point seems an obvious one since the body tends to decline during the latter stages of ageing, meaning that the “need” (which as I have discussed is often socially constructed) for using prosthesis is often heightened. But there were, of course, many that lost body parts during youth or midlife—in particular, factory workers, soldiers, sailors, navy men, miners, rail engineers, and other manual workers.³ Furthermore impairments such as losing a limb are not usually age-related. Nevertheless, due to discursive factors, including those related to work, physical capacity, and the marriage market, which elided the old body with the impaired one, those with impairments

² As sociologists Tony Calasanti and Kathleen Slevin suggest, many old people today feel compelled to take action against senescence because old age is believed to imply ill health: “Besides ingesting nutritional supplements and testosterone or human growth hormone, increasing numbers of people spend hours at the gym, undergo cosmetic surgery, and use lotions, creams, and hair dyes to erase the physical and mental decline that visible markers of age”. Calasanti and Slevin argue that “Such is the equation of old age with disease and physical and mental decline that visible signs of aging serve to justify limitations of the rights and authority of old people” (8).

³ See Williams-Searle; O’Connor, “Fractions of Men”; Cooter and Luckin; Figg and Farrell Beck; Herschbach; Kirkup 91–3; Rosenburg; Slavishak; Bronstein.

unrelated to biological processes of ageing were conceptually enmeshed with those who exhibited physical symptoms of decline linked to ageing. As I show, the association of ageing and prosthesis use was so strong that even those who might not be considered old in terms of years lived were depicted as aged or past their best as a result of their use of a prosthetic device. As we might expect, cosmetic prostheses in particular, including wigs, false teeth, and artificial eyes, became synonymous with representations of ageing in cultural depictions.

Before we turn to representations of ageing prosthesis users, it is important to ground such discussions in context with nineteenth-century understandings of and attitudes to the elderly. A growing body of work on ageing in nineteenth-century culture provides some helpful resources for such an endeavour. To look first, then, at some facts and figures, George R. Boyer and Timothy P. Schmidle's study "Poverty among the Elderly in Late Victorian England" (2009) shows us that in 1861 "there were 932,000 persons aged 65 and over in England and Wales, representing 4.6 per cent of the population. By 1891 there were nearly 1.4 million persons aged 65 and over in England and Wales, or 4.7 per cent of the population" (250). As Anne-Julia Zwierlein, Katharina Boehm, and Anna Farkas suggest in the introduction to their important edited collection *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Aging in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (2014), "the percentage of older people among the population was less pronounced during the nineteenth century" (1). However, as they show, a number of factors contributed to what they describe as "an unprecedented level of cultural attention on the experience of aging and old age" in the nineteenth century (1). Zwierlein, Boehm, and Farkas point to factors such as the expanding market for print publications, social reform movements

that laid the ground work for the emergence of the welfare state, and the growth of new scientific and medical modes of inquiry (including gerontology). Karen Chase argues similarly that cultural attention to the elderly reached a peak at the end of the nineteenth century (*The Victorians*).

The elderly certainly came to cultural prominence in the Victorian period but it is harder to pinpoint exactly what the prevailing attitudes to old age were.

As Thane explains,

In all times there have been competing optimistic and pessimistic paradigms of old age and we cannot readily determine whether one or the other was culturally dominant. All cultures have a variety of images of ageing available to them from which individuals and groups shape their expectations. These images shift and compete and if any one of them gains hegemony it does not necessarily do so for long. (*Old Age* 6)

Indeed, as Chase shows us, attitudes to ageing were split by a number of elements: the continuing resonance of the Ciceronian ideal of old age as a period of dignity, serenity, wisdom, respect and self-respect versus growing examples of old age as misery, bewilderment, loneliness, and disempowerment; the spreading deprivation of the aged at the bottom of the social ladder versus the power of ageing figures such as Queen Victoria, William Ewart Gladstone, and Benjamin Disraeli; and cross-generational relationships as a preoccupation of imaginative life vs. generational fractures becoming apparent, especially when partisans of the New contested the iconography of the old, in particular at the moment of the Queen's Jubilees and the retrospection of the *fin de siècle* (*The Victorians* 6). While this chapter resists a monolithic view of ageing in the nineteenth century, as I show, many literary responses to the prostheses of the elderly cast a negative light on both the aged and the means of artifice that they

used to mask their bodily losses. Such responses ironically attacked the very devices brought to life by privileging youth and wholeness.

Chapter One of this thesis went into detail about how and why physical wholeness emerged as such a vital measure of human worth in the nineteenth century, but it is worth returning to the topic here to consider how the concept of completeness became conceptually intertwined with an emerging cultural preference for youth. To cast our minds back quickly, a number of scholars over the last forty or so years have drawn our attention to the privileging of bodily wholeness in Victorian society: Bruce Haley has shown us how the very concept of health, an incredibly popular topic in the nineteenth century, was bulwarked by an understanding of the body as structural “whole” (20); Charles E. Rosenberg emphasises the importance of dynamic exchange, a concept that relied on “every part” of the body working in sync, to understandings of health and illness (40); Erin O’Connor links the notion of wholeness to what she calls the “physical economy” of the nineteenth-century, which valued individuals, in particular men, for their capacity to perform work and accrue capital (*Raw Material* 104); Lennard J. Davis argues that the emergence of bodily statistics spawned the concept of bodily normalcy, which led to the castigation of those with aberrant bodies (*Enforcing Normalcy*).

In addition to the above, we must also bear in mind the immense cultural impact of physiognomy in the nineteenth-century as a factor that drew together both a preference for youth and a predilection for bodily (in particular facial) integrity and conformity to certain ideals. Historians such as Graeme Tytler, Lucy Hartley, and Sherrona Pearl have each staked a claim for the importance of physiognomy as a tool for understanding the world in the Victorian period. Drawing from the legacy of Johann Kaspar Lavater’s pioneering physiognomical

work in the eighteenth century, Tytler identifies the period beginning in the early 1770s and ending roughly in the 1880s as “essentially ‘Lavaterian’” (xiv). Pearl reveals that “In the nineteenth century, physiognomy provided a new code for conformity as people became concerned not just with judging others, but with how others were judging them” (33). It was such cultural pressure for conformity, Pearl suggests, that led to the proliferation of forms of artifice as means by which individuals could blend into the crowd thereby negating unwanted attention. As Pearl rightly identifies, the often poor lighting of urban centres aided such attempts at conformity: “Few middle- and upper-class Victorians, especially women, were seen in full light beyond the first blush of youth; they dimmed their oil lamps and gaslights, dressed in the dark, and kept their houses in semilight. Aside from physiognomic revelations, full light would uncover the truths of age and fading beauty and the artifice that attempted to hide them” (37). Of course, looking young, “whole”, and attractive was of particular importance to women in this period. As Amy M. King argues, the botanical metaphor of bloom became a popular measure of attractiveness for women.

With regard to men, a number of factors generated increased pressure to avoid an impression of “infirmity” whether it be brought about by injury or old age. Kay Heath helpfully summarises a number of key factors in her monograph *Aging by the Book* (2009). Heath identifies the following issues, which for her reveal why men at midlife experienced particular anxiety about reaching old age: Smilesian and Carlylian understandings of masculinity as one’s capacity to work; the focus on physical toughness that emerged from the mid-century with the rise of Muscular Christianity; the associated demand for physical fitness mandated by Britain’s imperial engagements; the also linked development of a

“cult of sporting manliness” that arose in the mid-to-late century;⁴ fears, particularly towards the end of the century, that degeneration was causing weakness and early ageing; the emergence of women as a threat to male employment (28–31). Though Heath uses these historical contexts to reveal the developing predominance of youth in the nineteenth-century, such factors also draw our attention to the privileging of physical wholeness, a concept entwined with ageing. The increasing demand for exhibiting physical strength and stamina that Heath draws our attention to meant that bodily loss, whether it be the result of ageing, disease, or injury came at a greater cost for men.

The nineteenth-century prosthesis market itself drew together concepts of ageing and physical loss in its advertising rhetoric. Cashing in on the insecurities of those showing signs of physical decline, contemporary prosthesis makers marketed their devices directly at those wishing to disguise losses resulting from senescence. An advertisement for Mr Scott, Surgeon and Mechanical Dentist, published in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* in 1830, for instance, begins, “IMPORTANT to all desirous of Perfection, Comfort and Economy” (2; emphasis original). In the advertisement section of a single 1858 copy of *Lady's Magazine*, a periodical written for well-to-do mature women, we see two adverts for false teeth next to adverts for hair dye, hair serum, and a baldness cure (Multiple Classified Advertisements 399). An 1867 advertisement also in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* for Messrs Mosley's “Teeth and Painless Dentistry” assures potential customers, many of whom we would assume were in mid-to-late life, that “artificial teeth (from one to a complete set) can be inserted with so exact a semblance to nature that detection is impossible, the original proportions of the face and mouth being

⁴ See Walvin 246.

restored to their pristine perfection” (2; emphasis added). Significant here is the promise to *restore* “pristine perfection” thus aligning youth with wholeness and therefore perfection. Intriguingly, as we will see, cultural depictions of false teeth and other prosthesis users tended not to agree with the bold promises of such advertisements. In fact, we see the obviously false and thus abhorrent prosthesis become a popular shorthand for the ageing subject across a number of literary and cultural texts.

Curiously, it was not only devices that we might call primarily cosmetic prostheses, such as wigs and dentures, which became insignias for old age in this period. Indeed, peg legs (rather than their more expensive and sophisticated counterparts, artificial legs) were also often associated with old age. Such an association stems in part from the proliferation of images of Greenwich and Chelsea pensioners, and other maimed war veterans, who were often represented as decrepit street beggars.⁵ Due to the kind of amputation surgery performed on many maimed military men and the relatively basic prostheses provided by the state,⁶ British veterans tended to be rendered unable to work after sustaining their injuries, reducing them to a similar state to elderly men, who were also excluded from the workplace. Legislation such as the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 reinforced associations between the elderly and the disabled as it exempted unemployed subjects from both groups from the workhouse. In terms of masculinity, then, “infirmity” caused by disability

⁵ For aged wooden-legged Greenwich and Chelsea pensioners, see Gruff and Glum in Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), the illustrated *Judy* poem “Laid up at Greenwich” (1868), and Hubert von Herkomer’s prize-winning painting *The Last Muster* (1875), for example. For aged peg-legged beggars, see the *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* story “Thrift, or Nothing Is Useless” (1844), the *Household Words* short story “Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed” (1850), and the *All the Year Round* article “Mr. Wegg and His Class” (1877).

⁶ Regarding military surgery, in 1885 Heather Bigg wrote, “many a soldier comes home with what is surgically a splendid stump, but a most inappropriate one mechanically, and to my knowledge it has frequently been found advisable by medical officers attached to the military hospitals at home to re-operate . . . in order to get better ones” (*Artificial Limbs* 103).

and “infirmity” caused by old age were conceptually linked in as much as both states represented a perceived inability to work. For women, the use of false limbs had a similar ageing effect as conspicuous physical incompleteness excluded them from the marriage market, an arena open primarily to women in their teens and twenties.

Though a relatively new approach, this study is not the first to explore the representational intersections of age and disability in a cultural context. Indeed, Sally Chivers’s study of old age in contemporary cinema, *The Silvering Screen* (2011), productively adapts David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder’s disability studies framework of narrative prosthesis to consider representations of old age in Hollywood film. Centring on cultural shorthands for physical decline such as grey hairs, Chivers writes, “‘old age’ requires disability to be legible within an ‘efficient’ capitalist society. Without disability as what disability studies scholars David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder might call the narrative prosthesis of old age—the crutch that stories require in order to seem complete—old people are simply ‘in the way,’ excessive or illegible within contemporary society” (8). Highlighting the intersections of disabled and ageing populations in terms of the way that society has and remains to perpetuate negative images of both, Chivers shows how the elderly and disabled are often marginalised due to ableist beliefs about their productivity. “[D]isability exists separately from old age, but old age does not ever escape the stigma and restraints imposed upon disability” (Chivers 8). The following borrows from Chivers’s approach but argues that representations of ageing prosthesis users from the Victorian period asked questions of the social mandate for those experiencing physical decline to use prostheses in order to look younger since doing such was shown to have ludicrous results.

Given that the absurdity of prosthesis use is a focus of the literature analysed in this chapter, it is a truism that humour is a prevalent aspect of the sources under discussion. This chapter understands humour primarily by way of incongruity theory, the current pre-eminent approach in humour studies.⁷ As John Morreall explains, “What makes . . . situation[s] . . . humorous, according to the Incongruity Theory, is that there is something odd, abnormal or out of place, which we enjoy in some way. In its simplest form, the theory says that humorous amusement is the enjoyment of incongruity” (66).⁸ Foundational humour studies writer Stephen Leacock saw Victorian humour as emblematic of such a theory: “[It] finds its basis in the incongruity of life itself, the contrast between the fretting cares and the petty sorrows of the day and the long mystery of tomorrow” (15). Since this chapter, and indeed this thesis as a whole, takes physical difference as one of its central issues, the following bears in mind the compatibility of the incongruity theory of humour with David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder’s disability studies methodology of “narrative prosthesis”, a comity exposed by Tom Coogan and Rebecca Mallet. Highlighting the overlap in such approaches, Coogan and Mallet write, “Narrative prosthesis identifies disability as the crutch upon which narratives lean for their representational power; incongruity theory, as Morreall explains, attributes humour to situations where “there is something odd, abnormal or out of place, which we enjoy in some way”” (68). What both theories have in common, then, is a notion that the placement of the non-normative is a key

⁷ See Morreall.

⁸ The incongruity model differs from the superiority model, which dominated from the time of Plato to the eighteenth century. The superiority model suggests that humour emanates from a feeling of superiority over either someone else or a former state of ourselves. A third model for understanding how humour functions is the relief model, which suggests that laughter is the release of energy in the nervous system that has been suddenly rendered unneeded (Morreall 65–8). Morreall shows how the release model overlaps with the incongruity model (67–8).

component of affect. I show how the prosthetic part and its user are deployed as incongruous comic motifs that provide further evidence for the narrative power of bodily difference in cultural texts thereby supporting Mitchell and Snyder's seminal thesis.

In this chapter the prostheticised body or prosthetic body part is the incongruity at the comic centre, an oddness that is emphasised by the age of the subject. The use of a prosthetic device is sometimes revealed suddenly in an unveiling scene that uses a period of suspense beforehand to heighten comic release—providing further evidence for the compatibility of incongruity and relief models of humour.⁹ In such instances, the unveiling scene often occurs at a moment or in particular setting that exacerbates the incongruousness of the prosthesis and therefore the embarrassment of the prosthesis user. Elsewhere, the prosthetic body part is drawn attention to early on in the representation of the user and it is the incongruousness of the artificial part, as signalled by the extent to which it stands out—because it looks unreal, does not suit the appearance of the user, or is being used in a non-normative way—that draws the readers' laughs. Another comic trope draws laughs from the incongruousness of a non-prosthesis user's inability to distinguish the artificial from the real, a distinction that is blatant to "everyone else", including the reader. In disability studies terms, one might argue that each representational type draws attention to "a pattern of cultural representation which always maintains physically different people as other, as alien, as the object of curiosity or hostility or pity, rather than as part of the group" (Shakespeare, "Joking a Part" 49). However, as this chapter reveals, behind the ableist veneer of comical representations of ageing prosthesis users is a

⁹ See previous note.

critique of the privileging of the young and “whole” body, physical states that are shown to be ephemeral and unstable. Such depictions draw our attention to the absurd situations and displays that a cultural pressure to maintain such standards leads to.

In addition to engaging with the intersection of humour theory and disability studies, this chapter also contributes to the historiography of humour. Despite recent work by Bob Nicholson, Hannah L. R. Brayford, and Tom Scriven, Victorian humour, in both visual and written form, remains an under-researched aspect of Victorian culture.¹⁰ Indeed, as Nicholson writes in 2012, “The idea that the Victorian era was oppressively serious, though long since challenged, remains in popular circulation and sometimes underpins the assumptions of even the best work in the field” (35). Brain Maidment, whose 2013 book *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order, 1820–50* is one of the few book-length studies on Victorian humour, writes in more alarmist terms that “a purblind approach to visual satire in the early Victorian period remains endemic” (18). The infrequent work that has been done on Victorian humour has tended to focus on high-profile authors, such as William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and Oscar Wilde.¹¹ Notable research has been done on *Punch*, a comic periodical often held to capture the mood of the period, but as Nicholson reminds us, *Punch’s* politically engaged brand of satirical wit “was representative of just one form of Victorian joke-telling and most Victorians were consuming very different gags” (35). This chapter expands on this existing work on Victorian humour, using a broad source base to show how across a wide range of textual and visual sources, produced for an eclectic mix of readers and

¹⁰ Stage humour, by contrast, has seen a fairly substantial amount of critical attention. See Bailey, Bratton, Kift, Jim Davis, O’Brien, Milner Davis, and Bratton and Featherstone. The most significant study of Victorian humour remains Roger B. Henkle’s *Comedy and Culture* (1980).

¹¹ See Henkle and Wagner-Lawlor.

viewers, the motif of the ageing prosthesis user consistently comically probed the contemporary hegemony of youth and physical completeness. In spite of the consistency of this implicit transgressive engagement, this chapter does, however, also trace changes in comic engagement with the topic of prosthesis. Matching a shift from vulgar and often spiteful humour to a gentler and more respectable comic mode observed elsewhere by historians of Victorian humour such as Ricard D. Altick, Marcus Wood, Roger B. Henkle, and Richard Noakes, this chapter shows how though elderly prosthesis users remained at the comic centre until and beyond the end of the Victorian period, their representations became less cruel, grotesque, and repugnant, though still punctuated by stigma.¹²

In terms of Victorian humour that targets the ageing or aberrant body, even less has been written. Of the work that has been done, in terms of age, Chase observes how Dickens “sifts and shifts relations between physical and social age” to produce often humorous singularities of character: “age makes pronounced the noisy humor of Mr. Micawber or the quiet humor of Augustus Twemlow” (*The Victorians* 13). Similarly, Heath writes about Dickens’s depiction of midlife women such as Mrs Nickleby and Mrs Skewton who the author satirises “for failing the menopausal standard” (81).¹³ Heath also discusses *Punch*’s humorous investigation of male midlife anxiety but, like Chase, age humour is not a primary focus of her study. In terms of disability, Paul Marchbanks describes how Dickens’s sometime comic writing concerning the character Smike fails to brighten his otherwise “bleak portrait of this

¹² See Altick, *Punch* 4; Marcus Wood; Henkle 185–95; Noakes.

¹³ As Heath writes, “The special task of midlife women is guiding the next generation’s mating, a job that requires them to put aside their own attractions” (80). Dickensian characters such as Mrs Nickleby and Mrs Skewton are figures of satire since they are “neither effectively serviceable nor willingly sexless” (81).

intellectually disadvantaged character” (13). Moving away from Dickens and more directly confronting the issue of ableism in nineteenth-century humour, Simon Dickie reveals how the popular jestbook *Joe Miller’s Jests* retained its most cruel jokes about the disabled up until 1836, but his work focuses primarily on the eighteenth century. This study therefore picks up on an under-researched area, showing, on the one hand, how the non-normative body remained a source of humour throughout the nineteenth century and, on the other, how such representations ironically complicated the contemporary hegemony of youth and physical completeness.

Despite the scant attention that Victorian age and disability humour has received, a strong body of work covers science and humour in the nineteenth-century periodical press. Providing a platform for my argument in this chapter, Richard Noakes, who alongside Brayford and James G. Paradis has explored the representation of scientific topics in *Punch*, argues that the journal’s comic engagement with medical and technological developments was far from whimsical; according to Noakes,

its sober and comic commentaries on science implicitly and explicitly invited readers to ask serious questions about the cultural place of science, whether it was the actual human costs and social benefits of technological and medical ‘progress’ or the implications of scientific reasoning for man’s relation to nature or for the moral order. (96)

Noakes’s argument is in fact not dissimilar to Maidment’s and Nicholson’s since both critics affirm that Victorian humour is an important source with which to explore topics of social and cultural significance—for Nicholson, transatlantic attitudes and relationships; for Maidment, Britain’s response to rapid social developments. The following builds on this work by showing how the ageing

prosthesis user was not merely an ephemeral motif for inducing light laughs in the periodical press and beyond; it was an enduring paradigm that satirised the results of a propensity in Victorian society to privilege youth and wholeness at the expense of taste and logic. In ironically ableist terms, such representations problematised the impact of such social preferences.

A considerable proportion of research devoted to the history of prosthesis has focussed on army and navy veterans.¹⁴ Though one could argue that despite this thorough coverage there is still room for work that sees the prosthesis-using veterans through the lens of age studies, the focus of this chapter is primarily (but not exclusively) on ageing and elderly prosthesis users from non-military backgrounds. The chapter does, however, stray into military territory with discussions of Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839) and prosthesis users in imperial adventure stories, such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), though the focus in these analyses is primarily on cosmetic prostheses, thus departing from the precedence of artificial limbs in existing scholarship on war veterans. Indeed, for the most part, the attention of this chapter is on prostheses in domestic life—the usual setting of the elderly in society. With a particular interest in cosmetic prostheses, such as wigs, artificial eyes, and false teeth, this chapter builds on the work of Galia Ofek, John Woodforde, Katherine Ott, Neil Handley, and Lisa Niles, but differs significantly in that it considers false teeth and wigs prostheses and analyses them alongside glass eyes and artificial limbs, devices considered prostheses in the traditional sense.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Herschbach; Yuan; Rosenburg; Youngquist; David Serlin, "Engineering Masculinity" and "Disability, Masculinity, and the Prosthetics"; Heather R. Perry; Davis McDaid; Elspeth Brown; Julia Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation*; Hasegawa.

The rest of this chapter traces the trope of the ageing prosthesis user from the 1830s through to the *fin de siècle*. I begin by investigating Edgar Allan Poe's representations of grotesque artificially constructed elderly subjects, portrayals that I show drew from the harsh humour of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century caricature and satire while redirecting laughs towards those unable to perceive the difference between the artificial and the organic. I next show how ageing prosthesis users were reconceptualised in sensation fiction, a genre that borrowed much from the Gothic mode that underpinned Poe's fiction. In the Wilkie Collins narratives discussed, wigs are used simultaneously as light comic props, which at surface value further stigmatise the old and physically "incomplete", and synecdoches through which wider social structures are critiqued. Turning to the late nineteenth-century periodical press, I then show how the trope of the ageing prosthesis user had become a popular culture icon, one that was both less vulgar than earlier deployments but nonetheless still critical of the absurdities that social pressures to conform to hegemonic norms could bring about. Finally, I turn to late-century imperial adventure fiction, another genre that I show utilised the prevalent prosthetic motif. Revealing an increased consciousness of age anxiety, I show how certain imperial adventure tales continued to laugh at ageing prosthesis consumers by transgressively flipping preferences for wholeness on their head.

Vanity and Calamity

Despite the proliferation of ageing prosthesis users in Victorian literary and cultural texts, the Victorians were not the first to poke fun at the elderly's use of prosthetics. Images of the elderly undressing and removing their prostheses were popular comical tropes during the golden age of caricature,

which extended from the 1760s through to the 1820s, a period in which artists such as James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, and George Cruikshank achieved notable success.¹⁵ In P. Roberts's 1807 coloured etching after G. M. Woodward, *Celia Retiring* (see Figure 5.1), a bald, toothless, and overall dishevelled-looking elderly woman gives precise instructions to her servant about laying out her wig, false bosom, dentures, and false eyebrows so that she can get ready to meet "[her] Lord Ban" in good time the next day. Similarly, F. S. Delpech's 1825 coloured lithograph after L. L. Boilly, *Les époux assortis* (see Figure 5.2), displays an elderly couple removing their various prostheses—wigs, a sets of false teeth, and a glass eye. An even earlier but remarkably similar literary example of such a scene is described in detail in Jonathan Swift's satirical poem "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" (1731). There is an undoubted grotesqueness in each of these examples, which is characteristic of the era, a period that Dickie has shown us was remarkably spiteful towards the physically aberrant. The body, in its most unsightly, vulnerable, and non-normative forms, is an aspect that Dickie shows is central to eighteenth-century humour in spite of the period's demure pretensions.¹⁶ Importantly for this chapter, in Boilly, Woodward, and Swift, the ageing body is revealed as frail and abhorrent without prostheses. The prostheses themselves are simultaneously uncanny, deceitful, and concealing devices, which pertain to a grotesque aesthetic. The elderly are unceremoniously mocked while the culture of artifice is lambasted.

Though by no means a Victorian invention, we see this trope of the elderly with prosthetic extended (more on this later) and perpetuated from the

¹⁵ For more on the rise of this genre, see Donald.

¹⁶ Elsewhere, as Amelia F. Rauser has shown us, caricature focussing on the excessiveness of wigs was used as a medium through which to criticise macaronis.



Figure 5.1 A lady retiring to bed and ordering her maid to look after her artificial aids to beauty (wig, teeth, glass eye etc.). Coloured etching by P. Roberts after G.M Woodward c. 1807. Image courtesy of the Wellcome Library via their electronic resource Wellcome Images.



Figure 5.2 *Les époux assortis.* An elderly man and an old woman removing their respective prostheses. 1825 lithograph after Louis Leopold Boilly. Image courtesy of the Wellcome Library via their electronic resource Wellcome Images.

1830s onwards. In her book *The Victorians and Old Age*, Chase shows us how the theme of ageing became increasingly central in the social consciousness as the nineteenth century progressed. As she suggests, a number of events brought about “the ripening consciousness of age”, which she calls “the invention of the elderly subject” (276). Such factors include the legislative movement toward the Pensions Act; the ageing and then the death of the Queen Victoria; the “ethological” investigations conducted by Charles Booth; the emergence of gerontology as a medical sub-discipline; the increasing perception of a generational divide; and the proliferating images of ageing bodies. The increase in cultural representations of the elderly with prosthetics maps roughly onto Chase’s trajectory, which sees the elderly become a mainstream concern at the *fin de siècle*, though there are notable and by no means isolated depictions of “made up” older people from much earlier in the century. In terms of historical factors contributing to the rise of the elderly prosthesis user in the nineteenth-century consciousness from the 1830s onwards, we can add the following factors to Chase’s list: the entering into old age of Britain’s amputee veterans of the Napoleonic wars and the continued cultural presence of war veterans, including Greenwich and Chelsea pensioners, due to Britain’s ongoing colonial campaign and involvement with conflicts overseas; the development of post-Regency puritanism, which decreed the use of false teeth a vanity (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 2); “the era of false teeth for the masses”, which was inaugurated in 1850s by the American invention of sulphur-hardened rubber, Vulcanite, which became the most popular material for manufacturing the bases of dentures (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 87–92); the fashion for wig-wearing, which for women in particular took

off in the 1860s and 1870s as they sought to “emphasize[] their femininity through masquerade” (Ofek 28).

Highlighting the extent to which old age was becoming a concern on both sides of the Atlantic in the early to mid-nineteenth century,¹⁷ American author Edgar Allan Poe provides a couple examples of grotesque elderly characters, which evoke those depicted in the earlier works of Woodward, Boilly, and Swift. “The Man That Was Used Up” (1839) and “The Spectacles” (1844) both depict aged characters whose bodies are substantially made up with prostheses. Like Swift’s “Young Nymph”, the artificiality of the prosthesis-using characters described in Poe’s stories is revealed in undressing scenes (of sorts). In “The Man That Was Used Up”, Brevet Brigadier General John A. B. C. Smith, a retired and venerated war veteran, appears a mystery to the tale’s curious narrator until the latter witnesses the former get dressed one morning. As it is revealed, the veteran is as much an assembly of many components as his long name: a number of his body parts are prosthetic, including one leg, one arm, both shoulders, his bosom, his hair, his teeth, one eye, and his palate. Despite his extreme dependence on prosthesis, Smith is earlier described as rather remarkable, striking, in fact, in appearance: “There was an air *distingué* pervading the whole man, which spoke of high breeding, and hinted at high birth” (315). Likewise, in “The Spectacles”, Madame Eugénie Lalande is presented as an enticingly beautiful physical specimen. Also like Smith, she turns out to be the user of many prostheses. Eugénie’s “perfect fullness and *tournure*” (164) turns out to be the work of a “false *tournure*” (195); her “beautiful black hair”, the work of a wig (194); and her “pearly teeth”, the work of dentures

¹⁷ For more on how old age was becoming a united concern across Europe and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Troyanski 67–73.

(172). These devices allow Eugénie to trick the narrator, Simpson, who it is revealed is the attractive woman's great, great grandson. Eugénie agrees to marry Simpson in order to teach him a lesson about the importance of vision as a physiognomic tool of selection. Her rather heavy-handed moral is that Simpson should wear spectacles to make up for his poor eyesight. As in "The Man That Was Used Up", the ability of prostheses to mimic a younger, natural physical appearance provides the aged user with a specific kind of technologically enabled agency. Indeed, one could argue that "The Spectacles" is a story all about the importance of keeping up to date with technologies that enhance or supplement the body, since the eponymous assistive aid ultimately makes Simpson better off—at the very least less prone to making erroneous misreadings of those around him.

These representations by Poe, which can both be read as reworkings of the mistaking-artifice-for-reality narrative "The Sandman" by E. T. A. Hoffmann (1817), reveal anxieties about the increasing dominance of technology and distrust towards deceitful aged subjects who become reliant on prostheses to attain a youthful aesthetic. Using a conspicuously grotesque mode of satire not dissimilar to the visual style shown by the caricaturists described above, these stories poke fun at society's reliance on technology while problematising the social pressure to use such devices, a pressure that stems from the privileging of youth and physical wholeness. The practice of prostheticising the body is displayed as grotesque by the dismantling and rebuilding scenes of both texts while those who are unable to perceive the artificial are also mocked. As much as Madame Lalande's and Smith's prostheses are shown to be curiously incongruous when detached, therefore making them amusing devices that juxtapose with the aged and "incomplete" bodies of their users, the narrators of

each tale are placed at the comic centre for being unable to distinguish the false from the real. Physiognomic adjustment is shown to be needed in a world where appearances can be misleading. Relating to nineteenth-century physiognomy and visual modes of judging today, Sherrona Pearl has shown us that “What one sees in others tells a great deal about oneself” (221). The humour in these stories stems, in part, from what we learn about the narrator through his physiognomic judgements: that he is dangerously (but also hilariously) unperceptive. Critically, however, in both stories the privileging of youth and wholeness is shown to be a self-defeating system since the pressure caused by such leads the elderly and physically “incomplete” to prostheticise their bodies thereby duping the normate into thinking that they are also physically “complete”. In these specific cases, the ability of the prosthesis to enhance the appearance of the subject complicates the hegemony of wholeness as the false takes precedence over the organic: prostheses achieve a better-than-reality aesthetic for Poe’s cyborgian elderly subjects, confounding the subject group who are supposed to be dominant. The normate becomes a victim of his own prejudices.

False Part, Flawed Whole

Drawing from the Gothic, a mode that underpins much of Poe’s work, sensation fiction is another genre that offers much to the discussion of bodies, ageing, and artifice in the Victorian period. Such does not come as a shock when one considers the central role that the body takes in sensation fiction novels. As Martha Stoddard Holmes and Mark Mossman write, “Sensation fiction’s relationship to embodiment has been overdetermined from the start, given that its poetics, its plotting and characterization, and its critical reception

have used the body as a nexus of expression, experience, and meaning-making” (493). Though the prosthetic body part, in this case the wig, takes a less centralised position in the narratives that I will discuss in this section, the stance taken by the author of such representations is no less transgressive than one would expect from a sensation fiction writer. Indeed, such representations comically mock vain ageing users of artifice while subtly delivering a double assault on both social pressures to conform to normative physical standards and the linked matrimonial preferences for good looks and wealth that such a society purports.

The well-known sensation fiction author whom this section will concern is Wilkie Collins, a writer who has attracted increased consideration in recent years for his attention to the body, in particular the disabled one.¹⁸ In his novels *Armadale* (1864–66), *The Law and the Lady* (1875), and *The Black Robe* (1881), Collins depicts a variety of ageing male and female characters who the author mocks for their vanity. In her 2010 essay “Owning ‘the dreadful truth’”, Lisa Niles makes a convincing argument about the way that cosmetics are deployed in Collins’s *Armadale* as a false threat that serves to draw the reader’s attention to what she identifies as the real threat: a criminal, ageing body that successfully passes as a younger body in a marriage market that relies on age being clearly demarcated. According to Niles, “Collins challenges the terms upon which society constructs a middle-class, marriageable female identity” (68). This section of the chapter expands on Niles’s points, showing how Collins’s critique of Victorian society’s paradoxical engagement with ageing is not restricted to women. In some ways, then, this section adds historical texture

¹⁸ See Stoddard Holmes 74–93; Flint, “Disability and Difference”; Miele Rodas, “Mainstreaming Disability Studies?”; Mossman; Wagner; Esmail.

to Susan Sontag's observation concerning the "double standard of ageing".¹⁹ As Collins shows through his depictions of unmarried ageing male characters—such as Bashwood from *Armada* and Major Fitz David from *The Law and the Lady*—single ageing (usually middle-class) men also often felt afflicted by social prejudices against "incomplete" and ageing bodies, inclining them to use artificial adornments. However, Collins's attitude to prosthesis-using ageing male characters is far from sympathetic: he critiques both the culture that encourages ageing men (and women) to use cosmetic aids (including artificial body parts) to look younger and fuller and, in particular, the men who are foolish enough to give into the weight of such pressures. Both stories underline the foolishness of male vanity by suggesting that physical appearances are not as important for men as they might think; in both tales, wealth is critically exposed as a fundamental criterion for women when choosing their partners. Collins thus displays consternation towards a system that pressurises ageing men to use cosmetic adornments, thereby in his eyes making themselves look absurd, and the marriage system in which appearances (for men) and wealth (for women) are privileged over deeper personal qualities.

Before looking at Collins's depictions of ageing male prosthesis users, let us first turn to his representations of ageing female prosthesis users. As I show here, Collins packages his depictions as fairly conventional responses to artifice

¹⁹ In her essay "The Double Standard of Aging" (1972), Susan Sontag argues that ageing has severer implications for women than it does for men. According to Sontag, throughout their lifespan women are judged more by physical appearance than men. The diminishing of physical beauty is therefore more painful for women according to Sontag's theory. Moreover, she claims that signs of physical decline, such as the appearance of wrinkles, affect judgements of men and women in diametrically opposed ways. For women, such changes bring into motion a gradual process of "sexual disqualification"—as women get older, their sexual desirability is thought to decrease and their sexual desire becomes viewed as increasingly inappropriate. In contrast, men's sexual desirability is enhanced by intelligence, fame, money, and power, all of which are likely to increase with increasing age. Even the standards of physical attractiveness differ for men and women, according to Sontag. Those for men are less connected to youth, whereas for women any sign of advancing age is viewed as an indication of diminished attractiveness.

as a means of disguising ageing. Collins represents elderly female prosthesis users as ridiculous characters whose attempts to mask signs of decline are ineffective and illogical.

Collins deploys two female characters who conspicuously use cosmetic prostheses: Mrs Milroy from *Armadale* and Miss Notman from *The Black Robe*. Mrs Milroy, the bedridden and paranoiac mother of Miss Neelie Milroy (the eventual wife of the protagonist Allan Armadale), is discussed at some length by Niles in her essay on age and the marriageable body in *Armadale*. The wig- and rouge-wearing Mrs Milroy is posited by Niles as a character who reaffirms prejudices against old women attempting to defy the process of ageing (77–9). To put this assertion in context—and borrow from Niles—Lola Montez, Countess von Landsfeld, advised in 1858 that “in no case can even rouge be used by ladies who have passed the age of life when roses are natural to the cheek. A rouged old woman is a horrible sight—a distortion of nature’s harmony!” (qtd. in Niles 78).²⁰ Niles, however, also contends that Mrs Milroy “provides readers with a false sense of surety in the ability to detect artifice, as her self-presentation appears to reduce the threat of cosmetics from something fearful to something ridiculous” (79).

While Mrs Milroy is both married and impaired by illness, making her vanity, in Victorian terms, all the more preposterous, Miss Notman from *The Black Robe* is single but also depicted as absurd for using a wig—in this case, especially, it would appear, due to her lowly position as a housekeeper. Collins’s first significant description of Miss Notman reveals that her use of a wig is a fairly translucent metaphor for her character flaws:

²⁰ In evoking the imagery of roses in this passage, Montez provides evidence for Amy M. King’s thesis that Victorian female beauty was assessed by the botanical metaphor of “bloom”. For a consideration of this symbolism in relation to age, see Heath (11, 14, and 80).

When Miss Notman assumed the post of housekeeper in Lady Loring's service, she was accurately described as "a competent and respectable person;" and was praised, with perfect truth, for her incorruptible devotion to the interests of her employers. On its weaker side, her character was represented by the wearing of a youthful wig, and the erroneous conviction that she still possessed a fine figure. The ruling idea in her narrow little mind was the idea of her own dignity. Any offence offered in this direction oppressed her memory for days together, and found its way outwards in speech to any human being whose attention she could secure. (67–8)

The syndetic pairing of "wearing . . . a youthful wig" and "the erroneous conviction that she still possessed a fine figure" puts her very much in the same boat as vain yet ageing prosthesis-using women depicted elsewhere in Victorian fiction, such as Lady Maria Esmond from William Makepeace Thackeray's *Virginians* (1859), Mrs Skewton from *Dombey and Son*, and Lady Carbury from Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1874–75). However, unlike Lady Maria, Mrs Skewton, Lady Carbury, or even Mrs Milroy, Miss Notman is of a lower social station, making her vanity seem all the more pointless. Whereas upper-class and middling female characters, including Lady Maria, Lady Carbury, and Mrs Skewton, face increased public scrutiny as respectable women of polite society, thereby pressuring them to try and look more youthful,²¹ Miss Notman's work confines her to domestic spaces, thereby necessitating a neat and tidy but not showy appearance. Her vanity thus

²¹ Well-to-do women were targeted by establishments such as Madame Rachel's in New Bond Street, which promised to "remove all personal defects" and "put a bloom on old visages" (*The Extraordinary Life and Trial* v–vi). Such businesses often made fraudulent claims about their products, cashing in on the insecurities of women, particularly ageing women, who faced the public eye. Madame Rachel, who the cosmetician Mrs Oldershaw from Collins's *Armada* is based on, was trailed thrice and convicted twice for fraud in the period 1868–78 (Pal-Lapinski 116).

exposes her as someone with ideas above her station. Such a trait combined with the view that she is “old” (67) makes her an object of ridicule for Collins.

Miss Notman’s “youthful wig” in her mind matches what she believes is a “fine” youthful figure. This stance positions her among the many who tried (and often failed) to disguise visible signs of ageing, believing that looking younger would bring rewards. Unfortunately, Miss Notman is not Lydia Gwilt—a Collins character able to disguise her true age, thanks, in part, to her resistance to using wigs and other cosmetics. Notman’s performance of youth is mocked by Collins from an angle not too dissimilar to Margaret Morganroth Gullette, who problematises the logic of the performance of youth through cosmetic surgery in the twenty-first century:

The men and women who get facelifts or liposuction . . . try on a crude appliance to pass for “younger” to stereotyped eyes. Whatever else is wrong with this, it’s like stuffing in falsies or a pair of socks to represent gender. It’s both bad acting and a misreading of culture. They are treating “age”—or in this case “youth”—as a wholly separable identity. Obliterating a few of the obvious signals that everyone knows comes solely from the age code, like “wrinkles” or “love handles,” they try to forget that in our culture the hypercritical age gaze notices all the more obsessively their other decline-linked signals. (161–62)

For Collins, Notman’s “youthful wig” is also a result of “bad acting” and “a misreading of culture”. Her wig is conspicuous: through contrast to her otherwise ageing appearance it actually draws attention to her as an imposter. She misreads culture not only by thinking that people will be duped by her ploy but by presuming that it is necessary for her to maintain an appearance of youth in the first place. However, when one considers the overwhelming social pressure that there was for women to display youthful and physically “whole”

appearances, we begin both to pity Miss Notman and to see Collins's deeper critique of social pressures with regard to physical presentation.

The most poignant aspect of Collins's depiction of Miss Notman is the way that her youthful wig is used as a symbol of her weaknesses as a character. Notman is revealed to be both frivolous and pompous by her actions: she unwittingly reveals information to the novel's villain, Father Benwell, that allows him to conspire against Collins's protagonist and Notman almost quits her position after feeling that her dignity is affronted following a disagreement of whether or not to serve an oyster omelette before or after pudding. The early conviction that "her character was represented by the wearing of a youthful wig, and the erroneous conviction that she still possessed a fine figure" thus stands true.

At face value, then, Collins's past-their-best female prosthesis users seem to provide historical evidence for Sontag's "double standard" of ageing. Indeed, Collins's depictions suggest that in the high-Victorian period, some ageing women felt the need to look younger even in social positions where it might seem unnecessary. In *Armada*, an already married and bedridden woman sees it fit to wear artificial hair and rouge; in *The Black Robe*, a lowly house servant uses a youthful wig. The portrayals of these characters also expose a typically unsympathetic, condemnatory attitude to those who attempt to negate the physical signs of decline. Such figures according to Collins are vain, unthinking, and, most concerningly, untrustworthy. However, as the following paragraphs show, Collins's critique of cosmetic prostheses as a mode of disguising decline extends beyond women. Through his depiction of foolish ageing male aesthetes, Collins associates the problem that he sees not with a specific gender but with the social system more generally.

Major Fitz David from *The Law and the Lady* is again a comic character, though his eventual fate exposes the sorry results of an ageing aesthete's use of cosmetics. When the novel's protagonist and narrator, Valeria Woodville, an attractive but intelligent and driven young woman, first approaches the Major for help uncovering the mystery behind her husband's decision to conceal his true surname (Macallan), the Major is described in flamboyant terms as

a well-preserved old gentleman of, say, sixty years old, little and lean, and chiefly remarkable by the extraordinary length of his nose. After this feature, I noticed next his beautiful brown wig; his sparkling little gray eyes; his rosy complexion; his short military whisker, dyed to match his wig; his white teeth and his winning smile; his smart blue frock-coat, with a camellia in the button-hole; and his splendid ring, a ruby, flashing on his little finger as he courteously signed to me to take a chair. (59–60)

A little later we learn that the Major's eyebrows are also "dyed to match his whiskers" (62). Fitz David's impressively made-up, pristine appearance—not too dissimilar to the also military Captain Good from Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*—is concomitant with his youthful, showy persona. At one point, the Major is described as "speaking in the character of a youth of five-and-twenty" (190). In addition to his *faux*-young appearance, aided by a wig and hair dye, he also has a taste for women somewhat younger than he is. Indeed, one of his admirers, the girl whom he eventually marries, is described by Valeria as "a plump, round-eyed overdressed girl, with a florid complexion and straw colored hair" (64). Valeria herself is described as "young" by the Major's servant, Oliver, priming the former for his first encounter with Collins's heroine:

"Is she young, Oliver?"

"Yes, sir."

"And—pretty?"

“Better than pretty, sir, to my thinking.”

“Aye? aye? What you call a fine woman—eh, Oliver?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“Tall?”

“Nearly as tall as I am, Major.”

“Aye? aye? aye? A good figure?”

“As slim as a sapling, sir, and as upright as a dart.”

“On second thoughts, I am at home, Oliver. Show her in! show her in!” (59)

Here and elsewhere, the Major’s weakness for women, a characteristic usually associated with youth, is depicted as comically absurd in much the same way that his decision to use cosmetic aids, such as a wig and hair dye, is portrayed as ridiculous.

In spite of the fact that artificial hair sales soared in the years leading up to the serialised publishing of *The Law and the Lady*—Galia Ofek reveals that sales of false hair went up by four-hundred percent from 1855 to 1868 (37)—we can place Collins’s comic portrayal of the modern/elderly “Don Juan” (189, 263, 408), Major Fitz David, amidst a cultural context in which the wearing of wigs was often treated with comic disdain. As John Woodforde observes in *The Strange Story of False Hair* (1971), for men in the nineteenth-century, “Wigs, like false teeth, were considered a shameful vanity” (76). In *Punch*, a reliable source of jokes about prosthetics, an article appeared in 1855 that mocked a new West-end hairdresser who had recently opened a “New Wig Club”, which opened its door to only the “titled, the wealthy, and persons of fashion” (“The New Wig Club” 209). The writer of the *Punch* article exposed this “fashionable” clientele as elderly, vain, and entirely pompous through a slanderous list of imagined rules for the club:

1. The New Wig Club is instituted for the purpose of promoting the privacy of persons who wear wigs or ornamental hair, or who resort to the dyeing process to conceal their greyness.
2. The New Wig Club shall consist of any number of members, who shall be either grey or bald, and any one with black hair who is not bald will be black-balled.
3. Ladies and gentlemen whose hair is beginning to fall off or turn grey may be admitted as honorary members for one month, after which they must either purchase a wig or a bottle of hair-dye, in order to continue to enjoy the privilege of admission.
4. Each candidate for admission shall be proposed by one member who is bald or grey, and seconded by another; and a lock of the candidate's hair, or if bald, a curl of his wig, shall be hung up for at least one week before the day of the election in the Club-room.
5. No member shall be allowed to vote at an election whose hair has not been dyed, or his wig dressed, within one month from the day of voting.
6. No wash or dye except that supplied by the Club, shall be made up in the Club on any pretence whatever.
7. No member shall bring a stranger into the Club on any pretence whatever.
8. The Club shall be open for the dyeing and hair-dressing of members from ten in the morning until ten at night, except during the London season, when the Club shall be open till midnight.
9. Any defect in a wig or a hair-dye, must be complained of to the Manager of the Club; and if a head is badly dressed, or not done to the turn of a hair, the complaining member may put the curl on the Secretary's box, which must be kept under lock till the complaint is verified. ("The New Wig Club" 209)

The emphasis in this piece is very much on the grey and the bald rather than the stylish and/or fashionable, thereby equating wig use with ageing and (supposedly) resulting desperation. Rule number seven draws our attention to the commercial aspect of wig use, exacerbating the stranglehold that prosthetists had over those unhappy with their "incomplete" physical appearances.

A much earlier poem, which appeared in the aptly named magazine the *Age* in 1832, expressed similar concerns about the propensity of ageing men to get ripped off by greedy wig sellers. The poem in question, “The Old Man and His Grey Wig”, tells the story of “An old gentleman, bless’d with a good crop of hair”, whose barber “insisted a wig he must wear”. The barber disingenuously tells the old man that he will lose his hair without the aid of a wig. When the old man dismisses the barber’s advice, the latter ironically claims that using a wig will save the old man hairdressing expenses. This promise proves, unsurprisingly, to be an utter lie. The old man eventually agrees to shave his head and purchase a grey wig, but after a year he is shocked when an extortionate bill arrives, including costs for

. . . bleeding, for purge, cauterizing,
 For pills anti-*bil*-ions, and black drafts to swig,
 Head-shaving, and trimming, and wig-modernizing,
 And lengthy pig-tail to the fusty *grey wig*. (emphasis original)

Such a poem exposes what the anonymous speaker sees as a ruthless cashing in on those susceptible to being conned: in this case the elderly. Echoing today’s phone or internet scams, which often target the elderly, in this poem the old man is victim not just to the barber, but a society that both demands aesthetic normativity (youth and wholeness) and is willing to capitalise (literally) on those “in need” of adornments to enable them to attain or maintain a normal appearance.

While Collins’s depiction of Major Fitz David is arguably less sympathetic to the victim (the Major) of such a morally bankrupt system, the author does appear to be troubled by a related and, to him, equally immoral financial

concern: the concept of marrying for money. In the final chapter of *The Law and the Lady*, we learn that the Major has successfully married, but we soon realise that his success had little to do with his *faux*-youthful looks. His new wife, the “plump, round-eyed overdressed girl” aforementioned, reveals to Valeria that she married the Major for financial security:

it was a great deal easier to get the money by marrying the old gentleman. Here I am, provided for—and there's all my family provided for, too—and nothing to do but to spend the money. I am fond of my family; I'm a good daughter and sister—I am! See how I'm dressed; look at the furniture: I haven't played my cards badly, have I? It's a great advantage to marry an old man—you can twist him round your little finger. Happy? Oh, yes! (409)

While Valeria, and perhaps a lofty Victorian reader, is disgusted by this young woman's conduct—Valeria states, “When a woman sells herself to a man, that vile bargain is none the less infamous (to my mind), because it happens to be made under the sanction of the Church and the Law” (409–10)—the real point that Collins is getting to here is not that this individual is morally reprehensible, though such is a given, but that society more widely is at fault. For Collins, this woman's behaviour is undesirable but painfully savvy: she has herself and her family to look after and the easiest and (ironically) most respectful way to achieve financial security is to marry a wealthy, and thus, more often than not, older man. One could argue that such a situation provides historical evidence for Sontag's argument about the double standard of ageing—because of the financial hegemony of the male, the Major remains sexually attractive for longer—but Collins, in fact, shows that such a culture is also detrimental to men as well as women: the married Major is a shadow of his former self, both physically, looking “hopelessly and undisguisedly” an old man, and

behaviourally: following his marriage, Valeria describes how the Major “looked at [his wife] submissively between every two words that he addressed to me” (408). The Major’s financial status makes him a target for what we today call “gold diggers” (women who form relationships with men for financial reasons alone); his status as an aged bachelor makes him desperate for the attention of women. Such a combination, Collins shows, lays the foundations for what the reader imagines will be an unhappy marriage.

To return, then, to Collins’s representation of cosmetic prosthesis, in this case “a beautiful brown wig”, it is clear that Collins uses the device as a comic signifier for the Major’s desperateness in regards to women. For the Major, the wig makes him look younger, thereby increasing his chances of winning the heart of an attractive young woman. Collins, however, shows that the logic behind such a move is absurd. Younger women are only attracted to the Major, as revealed by his eventual marriage, because of his wealth. Though Collins’s scornful tone makes it clear that it is not the Major’s physical attractiveness that makes him, in the words of Miserrimus Dexter, an “elderly human lap-dog” for women (257), one could make the argument that the Major’s wig is a significant aspect of his appearance that makes him look affluent and therefore attractive to younger women seeking a higher station and/or financial security. After all, the Major’s wig is not just any old wig: it is “a beautiful brown wig”, suggesting that it is of a standout quality. Writing in 1851, Alexander Rowland wrote that “a peruke, containing only three ounces of hair . . . is frequently sold at the price of twenty-five to thirty shillings” (159).²² Considering that average annual nominal earnings in 1851 were £33.58 (Clark), meaning that a wig according to Rowland

²² Thomas Elliott, “Hair Cutter, Hair Grower, Wig Maker, and Perfumer”, of Fenchurch Street, London, advertised his “Feather-weight wigs” for £1 10s circa 1860, verifying Rowland’s estimate.

cost on average over double average weekly earnings, it becomes clear that the Major's wig was a sign of affluence—even if one considers the higher average annual nominal earnings of £53.86 when *The Law and the Lady* was published in 1875, twenty-five to thirty shillings remains a high commodity price.

Despite its high commodity value, in Collins's earlier novel *Armada*, Bashwood's youthful wig does not signify nearly enough wealth for Collins's ambitious femme fatale anti-heroine Lydia Gwilt. Indeed, in this earlier sensation novel, published serially in *Cornhill Magazine* from November 1864 to June 1866, Collins's infamous anti-hero sets her sights on marrying Allan Armadale, inheritor of the large estate Thorpe Ambrose. When her plan to marry Armadale fails, she concocts another plan to gain possession of Thorpe Ambrose, this time by way of marriage to Ozias Midwinter, whose real name is also Allan Armadale—he is, in fact, among four Allan Armadales mentioned in the novel. While putting her designs into action, Lydia Gwilt attracts the help of the elder former steward of Thorpe Ambrose, Mr Bashwood, who is infatuated with her. Bashwood performs duties as a spy for Gwilt. During the course of his infatuation with Gwilt, Bashwood's wig and false teeth, signifiers of his old age and illegitimacy as a viable match for Gwilt, become indexes of the intensity of his passion. These devices are also comic motifs through which Collins again critiques the social pressure that drives individuals to present themselves in such a manner.

When we first meet Bashwood, in Chapter Four of Book the First, he is described in the following manner:

He was a lean, elderly, miserably respectable man. He wore a poor old black dress-coat, and a cheap brown wig, which made no pretence of being his own natural hair. Short black trousers clung like attached old servants round his wizen legs; and rusty black

gaiters hid all they could of his knobbed, ungainly feet. Black crape added its mite to the decayed and dingy wretchedness of his old beaver hat; black mohair in the obsolete form of a stock drearily encircled his neck and rose as high as his haggard jaws. The one morsel of colour he carried about him was a lawyer's bag of blue serge, as lean and limp as himself. The one attractive feature in his clean-shaven, weary old face was a neat set of teeth—teeth (as honest as his wig) which said plainly to all inquiring eyes, "We pass our nights on his looking-glass, and our days in his mouth." (236–37)

As with Miss Notman's wig, here we see Bashwood's false hair and teeth reflect his personality: "honest", "cheap", and unconvincing. We get the sense that even though he uses devices that would be considered vestiges of vanity, he has more likely than not been tricked or otherwise coerced into using these cosmetic prostheses: his appearance is otherwise a little on the shabby side of neat and rather reserved, suggesting that he is not vain per se.

Amidst his humble attire, Bashwood's anomalous prostheses provide a subtle reference, on one hand, to the social pressure to look young and physically "complete", and, on the other, to the persuasiveness of contemporary commercial prosthesis rhetoric. Contemporary wig makers, such as Thomas Elliott of Fenchurch Street, London—who published advertisements in London-based periodicals, such *Punch*, *Morning Chronicle*, and *Daily News* from the late 1850s through to the mid-1870s—targeted the elderly directly with their advertisements. On one flier, Elliott included a ballad, entitled "The Baffler of Time". In this ballad, "thousands" are said to be "indebted for his care" since he has saved them from "rueful . . . premature decay":

For oft as he a Crown espies which may be turning grey,
With rich Melana, Golden call'd, he chases grey away.

Or, should he see the tender roots untimely growing weak
 And sending forth no healthy shoots to grace the manly cheek,
 Again the Golden Treasure he without delay applies,
 And with new vigour, health, and strength, the Locks he soon
 supplies. (Thomas Elliott)

Also evoking the necessity of looking younger, dental surgeon Mr Eskell's 1837 *Bradford Observer* advert for artificial teeth promised that his device would "restore the features to that uniformity so essentially requisite to a *youthful appearance and perfect articulation*" (1; original emphasis). As we learn from the aforementioned poem "The Old Man and His Grey Wig" and other cultural, literary, and medical texts, including "The Miseries of Artificial Teeth" (1834), "Lodgement of False Teeth in the Œsophagus" (1864), J. Crawford Scott's "The Flaxen Wig" (1889), and R. H. Rozenzweig's "False Teeth Swallowed" (1891),²³ wigs and false teeth often did not function in the ways that they were promised to, at times causing more harm than good to their users.

The conspicuousness of Bashwood's prostheses, considered alongside his weak persona, shows that he may have fallen victim to the misleading marketing of prostheses. When we read Collins's next description of Bashwood it becomes even clearer that his cosmetic prostheses are analogous to his feebleness as a character:

There, perched comfortless on the edge of his chair, sat the poor broken-down, nervous wretch, in his worn black garments, with his watery eyes, his honest old outspoken wig, his miserable mohair stock, and his false teeth that were incapable of deceiving anybody—there he sat, politely ill at ease; now shrinking in the glare of the lamp, now wincing under the shock of Allan's sturdy voice; a man with the wrinkles of sixty years in his face, and the

²³ See ch. 2.

manners of a child in the presence of strangers; an object of pity surely, if ever there was a pitiable object yet! (279)

Here Collins emphasises Bashwood's unfortunateness through a series of oxymoronic descriptions. The old steward has an "outspoken wig", "false teeth that were incapable of deceiving anyone", and though "a man with the wrinkles of sixty years" has the "manners of a child in the presence of strangers" (279). His appearance thus fails him on several accounts: his prostheses are blatant and his haggard face, often a symbol of experience, self-assuredness, and sagacity, contrasts his timid and withdrawn behaviour. Bashwood's prostheses do not enable him to pass as young and "whole"; instead they expose him as an old man trying to look young.

However, the appearance of Bashwood's prostheses changes significantly after he runs errands for his beloved Miss Gwilt. By the time this change of relationship happens in the novel, Bashwood's affections have matured to a stage whereby he quite literally worships the ground that Gwilt walks on—when catching sight of her prior to a rendezvous, Bashwood mutters to himself, "I wish I was the ground she treads on! I wish I was the glove she's got on her hand!" (454). His prostheses, as well as his appearance in general, are presented in more refined but nonetheless ridiculous terms: "His personal appearance had been apparently made the object of some special attention. His false teeth were brilliantly white; his wig was carefully brushed; his mourning garments, renewed throughout, gleamed with the hideous and slimy gloss of cheap black cloth. He moved with a nervous jauntiness, and looked about him with a vacant smile" (454). Here, in an ironic shift, Bashwood's finely groomed prostheses accentuate the artificiality and grotesqueness of his appearance. His

dentures appear “brilliant white”, a colour of teeth that few would have maintained in this period.²⁴ While many strove for white teeth, as we can see from the burgeoning of the teeth-whitening-powder industry in this period, few managed to maintain “pearly whites”—due, in part, to the often damaging role played by falsely heralded whitening powders, which were often so gritty that they wore away tooth enamel as well as stains (Woodforde, *False Teeth* 43). Those who did achieve teeth whiteness from a rigorous hygiene routine, or the use of artifice, were not always depicted in the most positive lights. Mr Carker, for instance, from Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* is described at regular intervals as bestial due to the immaculate whiteness of his teeth. Such representations can perhaps be placed in context with earlier depictions of white-toothed vampire figures, such as Sir Frances Varney from James Malcom Rymer’s popular penny dreadful *Varney the Vampire* (1845–47).²⁵ Bashwood’s white teeth thus not only appear out of place in context with his ageing face but also signify an almost parasitic element to his character, associating him with earlier vampire and vampire-like figures, such as Varney and Heathcliff from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).²⁶ The notion of a creepy, old, white-toothed man who preys on younger women is thus conjured, but ultimately it is Bashwood who is the victim to Gwilt’s almost mesmeric influence over him.

Above all, Bashwood’s prostheses provide the reader with an index for the old steward’s desperate passion for Gwilt. As his prostheses become more groomed, and ironically more visible, his feelings towards Gwilt also intensify.

²⁴ As Woodforde notes, “[toothbrushes] were rarities, or at any rate luxuries, till after about 1850” (*False Teeth* 45); Satish and Shaleen Chandra suggest that the term “oral hygiene” was not even coined until 1884 (7).

²⁵ Varney is described at one point as having an “almost beautiful smile, which displayed his white glistening teeth to perfection” (ch. 8).

²⁶ In ch. 34 of Brontë’s novel, Heathcliff is described as having “sharp white teeth”. For more on the way that Brontë evokes debates about whether or not Heathcliff is a vampire, see Senf 75–93.

Notably, when Bashwood eventually realises that he is being played by Gwilt, he “lift[s] his youthful wig a little from his bald old head” (566), highlighting its symbolic closeness to his passions. To use Bill Brown’s framework, here “we begin to confront the thingness” of Bashwood’s wig: the object “stops working” for Bashwood thereby further emphasising its “thingness” to the reader (4)—the “thingness” of the device was, of course, brought to our attention much earlier since it never functioned effectively. The wig’s pretence as a natural part of Bashwood is obliterated through action. The lifting of the wig is an act of resignation. Bashwood’s attempts to look younger are no longer needed as he knows for good that his chances with Gwilt, while non-existent to begin with, are clear to him at last. The torment that Bashwood experiences is simultaneously cruelly humorous and pitiful, underlining Collins’s complex satire of the social pressures that have encouraged such behaviour from Bashwood.

In the depictions of his prosthesis users, Collins comically and quite cruelly exposes the ludicrousness of a culture that privileges an aesthetic of youth and wholeness to an extent where even those whose oldness and/or physical incompleteness is undisguisable attempt to pass as young and “complete”. Collins shows that such figures do not provide a threat to the predominant physiognomic mode of assessing by looks since “youthful” prostheses are all the more visible on ageing bodies. The users of such devices are simultaneously depicted as objects of humour and pity. The reader is intended to laugh at their ridiculous looks but feel sorry for situation that society has put them in. Collins’s ageing prosthesis users are thus depicted as an all too visible by-product of a culture that places too much emphasis on vanity.

Losing One's Wig

Of course, Collins was not the only Victorian writer to make fun of ageing prosthesis users. Indeed, the late nineteenth-century periodical press uses the prosthesis mishap—like a wardrobe malfunction but all the more embarrassing—as a major trope. The use of this trope, though popular from early in the century, really took off from the 1870s onwards, reflecting developments in journalistic style and prosthesis manufacture. “New journalism” emerged in the 1870s and 1880s as late Victorian newspapers responded to the increasingly competitive marketplace by becoming more sensitive to popular taste. As Mark Hampton notes, savvy editors recognised that readers “cared less about Home Rule or Bulgarian atrocities” than about “football scores, divorce cases, murder trials, and fashionable dresses” (119). “As a result”, Nicholson writes, “parliamentary reports, financial bulletins and local news items gave way to serialised fiction, household tips, children’s pages, gardening advice, poetry, competitions and comic clippings” (37). Alongside these developments in the contemporary press, cosmetic prostheses, such as dentures and wigs, became increasingly prevalent in society. The use of vulcanite in the manufacture of false teeth bases from the 1840s onward made such devices cheaper and easier to produce. By 1878, one could purchase a complete set of teeth in vulcanite form from £4 4s—half the price of a set that had gold uppers.²⁷ Furthermore, as previously stated, the fashion for wig-wearing amongst women reached its height in the 1860s and 1870s (Ofek 28).

²⁷ See advertisement for Mr H. Lyon and Mr Tindall, Dentists. Before the introduction of vulcanite, gold and ivory were the most popular materials used for making denture bases. See Woodforde, *False Teeth* 87–8. Considering that average annual nominal earnings in 1878 were £58.78 (Clark), £4 4s still represents a relatively high commodity expense. According to Measuring Worth, the relative real price to such in 2014 is £364.10 (Officer and Williamson).

In the stories that appeared in contemporary periodicals alongside such developments we often see ageing or elderly prosthesis users, usually men but occasionally women too, whose wigs blow off in the wind, whose false teeth fall out or otherwise malfunction, or whose cover is blown by an innocent observer—often a child or animal. Such depictions, like Collins's, at surface level display an unsympathetic attitude to those in physical decline while reinforcing a conceptual tension and divide between the organic and the artificial. However, though presented in a predominantly ableist and often ageist fashion, such stories, especially when read together, implicitly challenge the predominant regime of privileging physical wholeness and youth since they draw our attention to the incongruity of the false body part on the aged subject. Such depictions, though clearly spiteful to those caught in a similar predicament to those presented—ageing subjects who attempt to attain an impression of youth and wholeness through using prosthetics—shed light on the preposterous results of a culture that pressurises elderly and “incomplete” subjects to prostheticise their bodies.

Central to the representations from the periodical press that will be analysed in this section is the incompatibility of the human with the technological appendage, a topic approached through humour. My contention is that such representations, while clearly humorous, are not simply frivolous depictions used to stimulate easy laughs; rather, these engagements with prostheses use humour as a vehicle through which to call into question both the proliferation of certain cosmetic prosthetic technologies and the very logic behind using such devices. The critical engagement of nineteenth-century humorous periodicals with scientific, medical, and technological topics is an

area that has been explored by scholars such as James G. Paradis, Richard Noakes, and Hannah L. R. Brayford.

The image of a prosthesis—often a wig—inadvertently falling off an elderly figure became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century. We see this image replicated a number of times in sources such as Grace Goldney's 1870 serialised novella *Marion's Choice* (Figure 5.3), William Henry Archibald Chasemore's 1878 *Judy* cartoon "Wicklebury's Wig" (Figure 5.4), the 1891 *Funny Folks* short story "Mr. Sagtooth's First Appearance", and Harold Copping's circa 1895 illustration for F. Scarlett Potter's 1895 novel *Hazelbrake Hollow* "It caught his wig and jerked it into the air" (Figure 5.5). In each of these cases, the prosthesis is used primarily as a motif of light amusement. Laughter is stimulated by the irony of such a scenario: a device used solely to disguise physical loss and thereby hide one's "shame" when stripped away unwittingly exacerbates the embarrassment of the user, who is not only unveiled as "incomplete" but is also exposed as vain and/or fraudulent to boot. The shock, panic, and/or embarrassment of the prosthesis user losing his or her artificial body part adds to the hilarity of the scenario. The facial expression and body language of Wicklebury, in Chasemore's cartoon, for instance (Figure 5.4), highlighting the incongruity of such a scenario, is typically stunned and thus conducive of laughter.

But behind the façade of humour, such depictions display entrenched negative views about the elderly and also about human-technology integration. These depictions are thus ripe with paradox: on the one hand they mock the elderly and the physically "incomplete" in ageist and ableist terms but on the other they lampoon the very notion of using prosthesis, which is to some extent an ableist construction itself because it relies upon a medical rather than social



"ALMOST AT THE SAME MOMENT A GENTLEMAN'S HAT WENT BOWLING BY US FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY AN IRON-GREY WIG." Page 645.

Figure 5.4 Illustration from Grace Goldney's *Marion's Choice* (1870). An elderly man's wig and hat are blown off by a strong gust of wind. From *Aunt Judy's Magazine* 8.113 (1870): 642. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals* (Series 1).



"It caught his wig and jerked it into the air."

p. 19.

Figure 5.6 Harold Copping illustration for F. Scarlett Potter's 1895 novel *Hazelbrake Hollow*. From *The Children's Friend* (1895): 19. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals* (Series 1).

understanding of physical difference. Those who are declining physically are highlighted as unattractive, deluded, and helpless. While Teresa Mangum has argued that the old are rarely the focus of Victorian paintings, we see several examples (see Figures) of artworks, visual and literary, in which an old character is narratively centralised albeit as the butt of a joke. As previously noted in this chapter, contrasting Mangum's argument, Chase argues that old age saw increased attention as the nineteenth century progressed (*The Victorians*). As Chase observes in her 2014 essay for the edited collection *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Aging in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, "In literature, for every sentimentalized portrait of moderate, contented old age, there are dozens of instances in which the persistence of sexual interest leads to some form of resistance: comic, [G]othic, sensational, or ironic" ("Senile' Sexuality" 133). (As we have seen, often wigs are used by single elderly characters looking for partners.) The comic exposure and ridicule of the old who try to look younger underlines the hegemony of youth and wholeness, providing evidence for an ironic side-effect for what is known as a shift from the stages-of-life model of ageing.²⁸ Youth and wholeness were privileged, encouraging those who were ageing and/or physically "incomplete" to use means of artifice to appear closer to such ideals, but this meant that using artifice came to be seen as fraudulence since it was a way to cheat the system, thereby threatening the hegemony of "healthy" youth.²⁹

²⁸ See Thane, *A History of Old Age*: "British concern with longevity and with averting bodily decline as long as possible ultimately replaced the chronological stages-of-life model and produced a preoccupation with behaviour and lifestyle that was extensively explored by lay writers on the subject" (246).

²⁹ As Bruce Haley has shown us, the Victorians believed that "health is a state of functional and structural wholeness. In an organism the two are related, for a structure becomes functional when viewed as part of a living whole" (20)

With regard to the humorous treatment of the ageing and physically “incomplete” subject, it is worth noting that the tone of the mid-to-late nineteenth-century periodical representations, though undoubtedly problematic due to the way that they make fun on the basis of physical appearance and old age, are decidedly less vulgar than the earlier humorous representations discussed in the first section of this chapter. Whereas the Boilly and Woodward caricatures, for instance, were intended to shock and cause revulsion as well as comic delight, the later periodical representations were less harsh in terms of their presentation of the elderly subject. These later portrayals tended to rely more on the social setting of the prosthesis unveiling as a locale for humorous revelation. In other words, the incongruity causing the humour in these later examples stems less from the grotesque appearance of the stigmatised subject than from the unfortunate, usually public, setting in which the prosthesis user’s physical incompleteness, and thus often old age, is revealed. Though certainly still a marginalising force, such a change in comedic tone aligns with the trend identified in Henkle’s *Comedy and Culture* of Victorian humour moving towards a comedy of “domestic trials and tribulations” in the mid-to-late century (235). This kind of humour, according to Henkle, centred on social mishaps, such as “gaffes, lapses of taste, and unforeseen humiliations”, simultaneously reflecting bourgeois anxieties while creating a “literature of harmless human mediocrity” (230, 235). Certainly not harmless, we can nonetheless see how the popular trope of the ageing prosthesis user fitted within the comedic climate described by Henkle.

In terms of the human-technology relationship, the wig, in particular, is more often than not depicted as a device that almost never manages to successfully convince those around it that it is natural. As C. D. Shanly wrote in

an article for *The Treasure of Literature and the Ladies' Treasury* in 1872, "Few things adopted with intention to deceive are less deceptive than wigs" (84). Its shortcomings in this respect are exacerbated when it falls off. Such instances of prosthesis failure suggest that there is too great a discrepancy between the real and the artificial for the latter to ever successfully mimic and integrate fully with the former. The losing of one's wig shows, on the one hand, a practical dilemma with regard to fixing a wig to an often bald head, and, on the other, a conceptual contrast between the natural and the manmade. Woodforde shows us that those ordering wigs to disguise baldness were asked to provide very precise measurements to wig makers in order to ensure a good fit, natural-looking appearance, and reduce the risk of peruke slippage (*False Hair* 78). There were also a variety of fixatives available to secure wigs to heads, including springs, strings, pastes, gums, and even the "Golden Cement", a product that according to advertisements would "stick [a wig] tight on the head, and not move, as if it had grown there" ("To Wearers of False Hair" 139). But cultural depictions suggest that wigs fell off at an embarrassing rate.

In addition to a wig wearer's cover being blown by a peruke flying off, we also see the artificial part's unconvincingness revealed by instances where they are noticed and/or removed by seemingly innocent parties such as animals or children. A humorous example of such a scenario comes in the form of G. Renaud's 1887 cartoon "Waggles's Wig" (Figure 5.6). In this story, a vain ageing dandy visits a woman named Lady Trabazon, clearly with the intention of wooing her and/or her companion. Upon his arrival, Lady Trabazon's pet marmoset takes a clear interest in the well-presented man. During Waggles's conversation with Trabazon, the marmoset mischievously steals his wig, causing a scene of chaos to ensue. Animals are also responsible for the



Figure 5.7 "Waggles's Wig", an 1887 cartoon for *Judy* by G. Renaud. From *Judy* [London] 9 Mar. 1887: 119. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals* (Series 1).

removal of wigs in several other stories (curiously, all of which published in the 1870s): in “The Story of Gaffer Grey” (1871), an old man’s wig goes missing after a jackdaw takes it to make a nest with; in C. E. Pearce’s “Princess Prettytype” (1873), a mischievous Princess plays a trick on her music Professor by tying his wig to a sleeping dog, which when awoken by cries of “cats”, wakes up and tears the false hair to shreds (590); in “The General’s Wig” (1875), an elderly General’s wig is stolen and destroyed by a cockatoo. Along similar lines, in the 1880 *Boys of England* serialised novel *The Good-Natured Boy; or, What Came of It*, a mischievous parrot directs an innocent boy into a matron’s room while she is getting changed. As the boy discovers, much to the matron’s chagrin, the lady wears false teeth and a glass eye. She whips him with a wet towel as a punishment.

What these similar representations, in particular the ones featuring monkeys, suggest is that even unenlightened non-human creatures can perceive the anomalousness of a youthful prosthesis on an old person. Easily distinguishing the difference between the human and the artificial, the Renaud cartoon goes so far as to show its marmoset finding amusement from revealing the protagonist’s baldness to the women whom he is trying to impress. The parrot in *The Good-Natured Boy* finds similar pleasure in revealing the matron as a glass eye and false teeth user. Such anthropomorphic representations once again highlight the marginalised position of the elderly in Victorian society since here even animals, whose world position in Victorian period was subject to “imaginative [human] possession in the realm of fiction representation in writing, performance, and visual art as well as the rule of physical force manifested in hunting, killing, vivisection, and even zoo-keeping” (Denenholz Morse 5), mock the hopeless position of the elderly. Indeed, such depictions flirt

with the idea that, due to their comical reliance on technologies to make themselves “whole”, the elderly are a group lower in the social hierarchy than animals.

These representations bring to mind an observation of Mark Twain, who held critical views about the human race when compared to “Higher Animals”. In his 1896 essay “Man’s Place in the Animal World”, Twain compares humankind’s frailty and reliance on technology to the adaptive prowess of “Higher Animals”:

For style, look at the Bengal tiger—that ideal of grace, beauty, physical perfection, majesty. And then look at Man—that poor thing. He is the Animal of the Wig, the Trepanned Skull, the Ear Trumpet, the Glass Eye, the Pasteboard Nose, the Porcelain Teeth, the Silver Windpipe, the Wooden Leg—a creature that is mended and patched all over, from top to bottom. If he can’t get renewals of his bric-a-brac in the next world, what will he look like? (124)

When considered alongside the representations above, Twain’s words chime particularly loudly with a critique of how humans deal with the physical decline that accompanies old age. The examples that Twain provides, including ear trumpets, false teeth, and artificial legs, in addition to his choice of verbs to describe the process of fighting senescence—“mended” and “patched”—again draws our attention to the widely held transatlantic view that the human body cannot successfully integrate with technology; at best, its blemishes can be patched up with non-human parts, but even then its reconstitution is but a temporary—and unconvincing—fix. Of course, Twain was not one to miss out on mocking the fashion for “fixing” the body in physical decline. In his semi-autobiographical 1872 travel book, *Roughing It*, for instance, Twain described in

grotesque terms a group of elderly women who happily lend each other prostheses for social occasions: “[Miss Jefferson] had a glass eye and used to lend to old Miss Wagner, that hadn’t any, to receive company in; it warn’t big enough, and when Miss Wagner warn’t noticing, it would get twisted around in the socket, and look up, maybe, or out to one side, and every which way, while t’ other one was looking as straight ahead as a spy-glass” (sic; 386–87). This grotesque use, or rather misuse, of artifice to Twain exemplifies the shabbiness of the human condition.

Twain’s depiction of prosthesis misuse—lending ill-fitting prostheses to friends—brings us to a final comic trope of nineteenth-century ageing-prosthesis-user representation. Again drawing our attention both to a flawed system that simultaneously necessitated and castigated the use of prostheses, and the perception that body and technology are incompatible, a number of tales focussed on the inability of the old to use prostheses correctly. In typical comic fashion, in Alfred Edersheim’s 1873 novel *Shorn to the Wind*, a one-armed pastor’s wife carries her wooden arm in her shopping basket rather than the basket in her false arm. Similarly, a popular anecdote, reprinted several times,³⁰ told the story of an elderly woman who had been taken to court by an ocularist after she refused to pay for a glass eye. As she explains, the eye “is not half the use of my wig and artificial teeth, for I cannot see out of it a bit” (“A Glass Eye Expected to See!” 4). In another humorous sketch, an elderly woman asks a friend that wears a glass eye why she did not ask for her eye to be made out of more transparent glass so that she could see out of it (“An’ they tell me” 2). Such stories once again open up a conceptual divide between the natural

³⁰ The story was printed under different titles in the *Standard* in 1846, the *Bristol Mercury* in 1862, and *Bow Bells* in 1867.

and the artificial and, in fact, complicate the cultural association of the ageing with the prosthetic. These examples suggest that the old are out of touch with technology and thus unable to use prosthetic devices to their full potential. This theme touches on a stereotypical trope common in modern culture: the elderly technophobe.

Dazzling Devices and Unlikely Heroes

The non-normative use of a prosthetic device by a subject experiencing physical decline is a motif taken up a surprising number of times in late-century imperial adventure stories. As I will show in the final section of this chapter, such depictions drew from the contemporary cultural mocking of vain elderly prosthesis users while further complicating the social pressures that encouraged such behaviour by presenting past-their-best prosthesis-using male imperialists as unlikely heroes.

The combination of a device that is perceived to be remarkable with an unlikely ageing hero provides a fascinating comic contrast. In a number of imperial adventure stories, including *King Solomon's Mines* (1885; by H. Rider Haggard), "A Wig and a Wooden Leg" (1886; by D. B. McKean), and "A Cure for Cannibalism" (1889) the artificial body parts of ageing imperialists are perceived by non-Westernised subjects as objects of awe in comical and narratively significant scenes. In Haggard's novel, Captain John Good's false teeth save the lives of him and his comrades after the dentures are seen by some hostile Kukuanaland natives as signifiers of divinity. Similarly, and perhaps derivatively, McKean's probably fictional article tells the story of a wig wearer and a wooden leg user, who while working for the same imperial trader are saved in separate attacks from aggressive "Indians" thanks to their respective prostheses being

perceived as magical. In the *Pick-Me-Up* magazine narrative poem “A Cure for Cannibalism”, an artificial eye saves one Mr Brown from being eaten by cannibals in Central Africa:

The savages were thunderstruck, and marvelled at the fellow
Who made them turn a colour that approached a greeny-yellow.
With many gestures indicating the consensus of the meeting,
That such a clever party was by far too good for eating. (171)

Though such misreadings of prostheses, especially the one in *King Solomon’s Mines*, have been read traditionally as examples of ethnocentrism—revelatory of non-Westerners’ supposed absurd beliefs regarding, or unenlightened approaches to, technology—key comic aspects of such stories have been neglected.³¹ Humour stems from a couple of factors relating to the intersections of ageing and prosthesis use: namely, from the way that prostheses become symbols of ageing, thus making their users appear unlikely heroes; from the unlikelihood of the prosthesis itself as a device that incites fear.

Throughout this section I use Heath’s work on midlife as a template to discuss the transitional life stage between youth and old age that the imperial prosthesis users embody. As Heath has shown us, midlife, though first defined in an English language dictionary in 1895, was very much a part of the social consciousness for much of the nineteenth century (2). Heath states, “Whereas old age is depicted as a final stage increasingly associated with the end of certain activities and identities—lessened marriageability, waning sexuality, and retirement from work—midlife . . . stress[es] the possibility that character’s [sic] fortunes may go either way, from acquiescent decline to a sustained

³¹ See Kestner 67 and Patteson 113.

youthfulness” (13). Each of the imperialists described tread this liminal stage of ageing as they perform adventurous deeds, displaying youthful vitality, while their bodies show visible signs of decline. Most significantly, it is the “past-one’s-best” persona of each character discussed in this section that is key to both the laughter produced by his interactions with prosthesis and the challenging of physical preferences that each story contributes to.

To justify the midlife status that I label Haggard, McKean, and the *Pick-Me-Up* poem’s characters with, we must first identify the signs of ageing that are displayed by these figures. For a start, we are given the impression that all four imperialists are vastly experienced. Good was in the navy for seventeen years before being “turned out” (ch. 1)—a sign in itself that he is past his prime when the reader meets him.³² In McKean’s story, it is apparent that the wig-wearer is an imperialist of considerable experience as it is reported that he was scalped by Native Americans “several years before” his second encounter with the violent indigenous people (27). In “A Cure for Cannibalism”, we learn that Mr Brown is an experienced explorer, implying that he is not youthful. Furthermore, after escaping death, he is called “father” by the cannibals (171).

Each character also displays the physical cost of years of work overseas. Good is probably the best exemplar of this. Haggard’s narrator, Quatermain, describes him as an extremely neat but “curious man to look at” (ch. 1). Good is physically unimpressive in comparison to his companion Sir Henry Curtis, “the biggest-chested and longest-armed man [that Quatermain] ever saw” (ch. 1).

³² The narrator and protagonist of Haggard’s novel, Quatermain, suggests that Good’s release from the navy came because “it was impossible that he should be promoted” (ch. 1), alluding, possibly, to the fact that the Captain was not from a prestigious enough family to be promoted further. But such a conclusion does not really explain why he was let go. His deficiencies seem to better explain this decision. Despite his reputation as a “marvellous shot”—established after shooting a moving giraffe calf from three-hundred yards with his last shot—Quatermain reveals that his companion was in fact a bad shot, hinting that Good may be past his best in terms of military prowess.

Good is of a medium height and stout. He is later described as having a “sickly” face by a bewildered Kukuanaaland native (ch. 7). More pressingly, Good is extremely reliant on technological adornments—not just a pair of false teeth but also an eye glass. Quatermain alludes to Good’s heavy reliance on his eye glass when he jokes, “I thought he used to sleep in it, but afterwards I found that this was a mistake” (ch. 1). Prostheses and assistive technologies are thus indicators of Good’s deteriorating physical capacities and thereby his premature ageing. Equally these devices are synecdoches for his midlife status since they are representative of his attempts to stave off the functional and aesthetic signs of ageing, highlighting his liminal status between youth and old age. In this same way, we can see Mr Brown’s use of an artificial eye and the traders’ use of prostheses in McKean’s sketch as indicators of physical decline—though eye and limb loss are not signifiers of ageing per se, in this context they imply that the adventurers are worn out by their excursions. In a time when a healthy body was seen as a measure of youth, vigour, and self-assertion, perceived prosthesis use became cultural shorthand for waning vitality, since, as Haley and O’Connor have shown us, nineteenth-century concepts of health relied upon an ideal of physical integrity. Thus the characters described are not old, but they display signs of decline, indicators that they try to efface by using prostheses. Because they become visible, such devices become insignias of ageing. To some extent the characters also show that sometimes it is not the number of miles on the clock but how difficult those miles have been to traverse that determines one’s age in cultural terms. These imperial adventurers show signs of wear, undoubtedly as a result of their physically taxing and mentally stressful lives, which, one could argue, make them appear old beyond their years. Their prostheses embody an attempt to combat exhibiting signs of

decrepitude, a condition associated with old age—an impending state that threatens their ability to continue as swashbuckling crusaders.

Appearing past their peaks, the imperial prosthesis users of *King Solomon's Mines*, “A Cure for Cannibalism”, and “A Wig and a Wooden Leg” are depicted as unlikely heroes. It is therefore the irony of each figure’s bizarre success that makes his story such a source of intrigue and comic amusement. Heath has shown us that as the nineteenth century progressed, male midlife became an increasingly stressful time as growing emphasis was placed on physicality as a fundamental aspect of masculinity (13, 29). The emergence and popularity of muscular Christianity with its emphasis on physical brawn, which as Norman Vance argues came about amidst a climate of “emerging individual possibility” between the 1832 and 1867 reform bill (166), is an important context that Heath shows cultivated anxiety about declining physical prowess among men entering midlife (29). Furthermore, the fact that “manliness became defined by profession and capacity to work” meant that “waning strength and a sense of unfitness for new times feminized older men, excluding them from power” (Heath 28). With particular regard to the empire, John Tosh notes that strength and endurance were seen as essential traits for maintaining colonial rule—a point that clearly relates to each midlife male prosthesis user described in this section. Because each imperialist is a prosthesis user and thus physically “incomplete”, he appears diminished when considered alongside late Victorian idols of male physicality such as Eugen Sandow or Sir Henry Curtis from Haggard’s novel. Sandow and Sir Henry are both imposing and conspicuously physically complete. What is thus amusing, and somewhat transgressive, in the stories under discussion is that unassuming midlife men are action heroes—in

some cases ironically thanks to the very prostheses that signify their physical decline.

Good again provides the best example to illustrate this point. Despite being a poor shot and somewhat of a bumbling fool in general in terms of his interactions with technological devices, such as his adornments, in several instances, to the surprise of both his Western comrades and the reader, his actions save the day. For instance, most memorably, Good's bizarre, half-dressed attire—with half of his face shaven and his white legs exposed—and idiosyncratic use of false teeth ("dragging the top set down and allowing them to fly back to his jaw with a snap"; ch. 7) frighten the Kukuanaland natives into thinking that he and his friends are spirits who should be worshipped and respected rather than attacked. In Haggard's novel, Good also provides medical attention to himself and his friends after their violent escapades in the Kukuanaland civil war.

Such heroic deeds provide an ironic contrast to the numerous points in the narrative where Good is shown to be the weak link out of Haggard's three white adventurers: in Chapter Four, Good "[falls] a victim to his passion for civilised dress", almost getting trampled to death by a wounded elephant after being "cumbered" by his inappropriate choice of trousers. He then falls over after his polished boots give way under him. In Chapter Five, while leading his companions through the desert, Good—literally—stumbles upon a herd of sleeping quagga (a subspecies of zebra) resulting in him being whisked off into the distance on the back of one. In Chapter Fourteen, Good is injured in battle against Twala's army causing him to fall into a life-threatening high fever. In Chapter Eighteen, after Gagool entraps the white men in Solomon's treasure chamber, Good is the first to give up hope, reasoning, "What is the good in

eating? . . . the sooner we die and get it over the better". We can associate nearly all of Good's shortcomings with contemporary cultural stereotypes of ageing, such as attempting to look younger (exemplified by his "passions for civilised dress"), mental decline (shown by his mishap with the quagga), and inherent pessimism (displayed by his giving up on hope in the treasure chamber scene).³³ It is thus surprising, amusing, and somewhat transgressive in terms of the cultural preoccupation with youth, physical integrity, and strength that a character with such apparent flaws manages to perform the important heroic deeds listed previously.

The fact that it is a pair of false teeth that elicits awe from the Kukuanaland natives is also ironic and therefore comical. Dentures are seemingly innocuous devices that are elsewhere used as comic motifs in Victorian culture. Figure 5.7, which shows an 1877 *Punch* illustration of a dentist whose springless dentures startle a squeamish customer is one of many examples that I could use to illustrate the comic value that false teeth are imbued with in the nineteenth century. To provide another example, a joke published in Thomas Hood's magazine *Fun* in 1872 reads, "The most natural way of inserting false teeth:—Gum them in, to be sure!" ("The most natural way" 12). Another joke from *Fun* in 1881 announces, "The poor lady who was found suffocated in bed the other morning through swallowing her false teeth ought to be a warning to others, *by gum!*" ("Curt Comments" 187). Good's false teeth have been read in various compelling ways by critics but few have considered the device's comic purpose, in particular with regard to its association with ageing. Joseph Kestner sees Good's use of his dentures as evidence for what

³³ Helen Small has shown us that many of these stereotypes have existed since Aristotelean times (52–88).



Figure 5.8 A dentist showing off his springless false teeth. From *Punch* [London] 3 Nov. 1877: 201. Courtesy of Gale Cengage Learning from their electronic resource *Nineteenth-Century UK Periodicals* (Series 1).

Richard F. Patteson's earlier identified as a key imperial trope of Haggard's fiction: that is, the way that the "heroes establish their influence over natives through a technological device" (Kestner 67; Patteson 113). Merrick Burrow, on the other hand, suggests that Good's teeth are emblematic of "metropolitan artifice", which are perceived as "sacred relics" by the Kukuanaaland natives. The white men are forced to accept such a position in order to survive thereby, for Burrow, valorising a masculine adoption of barbarism (a stance aligning his work with that of Bradley Deane);³⁴ for Burrow, Good's commodity fetishism becomes a fetish "in the anthropological sense" (85). Deane elsewhere observes that "Good's fastidiousness begins to make him a figure of fun" ("Imperial Barbarians" 221n11), but that is as close as we get in Haggard scholarship to an acknowledgement that Good's teeth are a comic prop representative of a widely used humorous trope in Victorian literature and culture.

The teeth themselves are funny for several reasons. First, they are read as signifiers of status, a higher order, and danger by the Kukuanaaland natives—supporting Patteson's thesis about technology as a signifier of Western enlightenment and thus dominance—when in Victorian Britain they had many negative associations: with deficiency, fraudulence, and old age.³⁵ To the Victorian reader there is thus a great irony in the natives' response to a prosthetic device: their reaction is entirely incongruous. Second, and linked to the above, the false teeth of *King Solomon's Mines* carry an uncanny element. Robert Pfaller has shown us that the uncanny and the comic are linked: "In the

³⁴ See Deane "Imperial Barbarians" and *Masculinity*.

³⁵ False teeth were sometimes associated with danger but for different reasons. Though the natives fear Good because they believe that he is a spirit due to his ability to detach his teeth, in Britain teeth were often depicted as faulty devices that often caused swallowing and choking accidents. See ch. 2 and 4.

comic, we laugh about those who are unable to elude the illusion of the comic, and who therefore are defenceless, at the mercy of the effect of the uncanny” (212). In the case of *King Solomon’s Mines*, the reader laughs at the natives because they are unable to perceive the artifice of Good’s teeth; they think that the teeth are real and that Good can remove them at will because he possesses magical powers. Such a stance places the natives “at the mercy of the effect of the uncanny”. A final comic aspect of Good, which is linked to his use of false teeth, is his extreme vanity—a trait commonly mocked in relation to ageing in Victorian literature and culture. Many of the comic moments in the story, including the scene in which Good’s bizarre, half-dressed appearance convinces the Kukuani natives that he and his friends are spirits, can be linked to this aspect of his character. His near misses with death, such as when he “[falls] a victim to his passion for civilised dress” can also be linked to his vanity. Good is thus depicted as absurd, as someone who uses cosmetic aids in inappropriate environments—according to Quatermain, he is “the neatest man [he] ever had to do with in the wilderness” (ch. 4). But, for many Victorians, Good’s inclination towards cosmetics would have seemed absurd not just because of his decision to use them “in the wilderness”; the ageing and vain were often represented and discussed as a hilariously hopeless group deserving of mockery. We can therefore read Good in context with other lampooned ageing male prosthesis users, such as Collins’s characters Major Fitz-David and Bashwood senior, and Mr Waggles from Renaud’s cartoon discussed earlier in this chapter.

It is important, however, to read representations such as Haggard’s portrayal of Good as not simply cruel slights at those who were deemed past their best, who attempted in vain to achieve impressions of youth by using

artificial contrivances, such as false teeth. Indeed, these portrayals fit within a wider cultural critique of vanity, a condition brought about by a privileging of ableism—ableism being a concept hallmarked by strength, youth, and wholeness. In terms of Good's portrayal, his ironic success as a character, which in part stems from his use of a prosthetic device, functions as a subtle, playful, and humorous curveball against the hegemony of youth and ableism. His depiction therefore complicates the idolatry displayed towards the conspicuously able bodies of Sir Henry and Umboppa in Haggard's novel. It is well documented that Haggard's adventure story, like its inspiration Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881–82), was written for "boys of all ages".³⁶ Good's representation as an unlikely hero whose signs of physical decline are all too apparent, provided humorous appeal to Haggard's spectrum of readers but also particular fantasy appeal, and perhaps hope, to his Victorian midlife male readers.

Like gender and class, age provides a representational lens through which we can read that ways in which prosthesis users were depicted as motifs that simultaneously affirmed and problematised the hegemony of the young, able-bodied, and middle-class male—the normate. In a similar way to how peg legs became cultural shorthand for beggary, cosmetic prostheses such as glass eyes, wigs, and false teeth became motifs of ageing. This elision thus brought together two already marginalised groups (the physically "incomplete" and the elderly), emphasising the difference of both from the hegemonic healthy body, which, of course, was youthful.

³⁶ As Mavis Reimer writes, "Stevenson's novel prompted H. Rider Haggard to define his novel, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), as intended for 'all the big and little boys who read', a readership he saw as distinguishing his work from that of 'people who write books for little girls in the school-room'" (44).

The representations of the ageing prosthesis users analysed in this chapter were replete with paradoxes. First, it is ironic that even as prosthetic devices of nearly all types improved in sophistication and quality as the century progressed, in many cases becoming less perceivable, they became more abundant and visible than ever before in the literary and cultural imagination towards the end of the century. Second, by privileging naturalness, youthfulness, and physical completeness in the nineteenth-century discourse of ageing, artifice (a castigated concept) became a necessity for many who wished to attain or maintain a respectable position in society. Third, as exposed in Collins's characterisations of prosthesis users, in mocking the ageing for their use, and perceived misuse of prosthetics, fictional tales at times draw our attention to the ludicrous results that a privileging of the normate brought about. As we have seen, certain narratives, such as the imperial adventure stories discussed above, used such ludicrousness to their advantage, subverting preferences for the strong, physically "complete", and youthful by presenting midlife prosthesis users as hilariously unlikely heroes. By and large, the texts that represented ageing prosthesis users challenged the social mandate on youth and wholeness by laughing at the absurd results that such demands effected. As shown in this chapter, the association of old age with prosthetics pervaded nineteenth-century narratives. The depictions described here created momentum for such an association, forming a trope that continues to saturate cultural images of the elderly today.

Conclusion

Disabled people don't have to play the villain. The Superhumans Return.

—Advertisement for Channel 4 coverage of the Paralympic Games 2016 (2015)

Channel 4's provocative advert for the 2016 Paralympic Games, branded "The Superhumans Return", intentionally draws attention to and problematises the still-dominant trope of the disabled villain, but it also unwittingly reifies another problematic stereotype: the supercrip.¹ The advert takes to task the predilection in television and film, especially Hollywood cinema, for villains to be marked physically as evil. The advert depicts five subjects: two artificial limb users, a wheelchair user, a person with a congenital deformity of the arm, and a person of small stature, who each play stereotypical melodramatic villains. Such a critical stance towards this mode of representation aligns the advert with the work of disability studies scholars and activists, such as Paul K. Longmore, Jenny Morris, David T. Mitchell, Sharon L. Snyder, Ato Quayson, and David Roche, who have brought attention to and critiqued the trend for using physical difference as a metaphor for moral corruption. Bringing such a critical attitude to disability representation into the popular consciousness is certainly encouraging. But in labelling Paralympic athletes "superhumans", extending its advertising campaign for the 2012 Paralympic Games that used the same contentious branding, Channel 4 falls into a trap of undermining the humanity of Paralympic athletes by overemphasising their "overcoming the odds"

¹ R.J. Berger describes supercrips as "those individuals whose inspirational stories of courage, dedication, and hard work prove that it can be done, that one can defy the odds and accomplish the impossible" (648). For Marie Myers Hardin and Brent Hardin, such a model involves presenting the disabled person as heroic due to his or her ability to perform feats normally considered impossible for people with disabilities or by virtue of the person living a "regular" life in spite of a disability (5.3). In Carla Filomena Silva and P. David Howe's article, supercrip "implies a stereotyping process that requires an individual 'to fight against his/her impairment' in order to overcome it and achieve unlikely 'success'" (175).

backstories. This label presents disabled athletes as more than human, spectacular, freakish even—the “super” in “superhuman” after all derives from the use of “super” in classical Latin when the term was used chiefly with the sense “above, over” (of place) (“super-, prefix”). Is it no doubt good that those living with physical impairments are being provided a popular and engagingly promoted public platform upon which to gain recognition for their achievements, but the very term “superhuman” weakens such a project by reinforcing the ableist language that often surrounds disabled athletes: “it’s amazing what s/he has achieved *given* . . .”. As Carla Filomena Silva and P. David Howe explain in their recent article “The (In)validity of Supercrip Representation of Paralympian Athletes”, “supercrip narratives may have a negative impact on the physical and social development of disabled individuals by reinforcing what could be termed ‘achievement syndrome’—the impaired are successful in spite of their disability” (174). In an enlightening companion video, available on the Channel 4 website and on YouTube, which accompanies “The Superhumans Return” advert, the disabled actors that star in the ad provide comments on current attitudes to physical difference, drawing in particular on their experience of applying for acting roles in film and television. The actors reveal how they often struggle to get roles that do not programmatically exploit their physical differences for narrative purposes. The film ends provocatively with one female actor stating, “Just because I’m 4 foot 6 and you’re not. We’re just still human beings. We’re still connected” (“Meet the Cast”). Unfortunately, such an empathetic recognition is not matched by the advert itself.

Clearly representations of physical difference have moved on in a number of ways since 1908, the year when this study ends. But there remain overlaps between the representations of prosthesis users in “The Superhumans

Return” and those found in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary sources investigated in this thesis. For instance, the trope of the prosthesis-using villain is evoked, a trope that we have seen has deep historical roots, featuring Victorian predecessors such as Silas Wegg from Charles Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65) and Jonathan Small from Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes novel *The Sign of Four* (1890). Similarly, the motif of the weaponised prosthetic body part is also redeployed. Reminiscent of Robocop, one male artificial leg user is shown to have a conspicuously robotic prosthesis that incorporates a holster for a pistol. As shown in Chapter Two, this icon remains popular in cultural depictions of prosthetic body parts, in particular as we move towards what some have called a transhuman age. We live in a time now when adverts such as “The Superhumans Return” are released to the public with the intent of challenging assumptions about what it means to be able-bodied or disabled. The non-normative, often prostheticised body, is presented to us as a viable alternative to physical wholeness, which, though increasingly challenged, remains hegemonic. However, as we have seen in this thesis, ever since the prosthetic assumed major presence in the popular imagination in the nineteenth century, the dominance of physical completeness has been placed under scrutiny.

The thesis has argued that prosthesis narratives from the very time in which prostheses saw their most significant technological changes threw into question the cultural privilege for physical wholeness that existed in Britain and America. Entrenched with prejudice against those deemed to be missing body parts, from hair to limbs, literary depictions of prostheses simultaneously validated negative views of physical incompleteness while questioning both the process of prostheticisation and its end products, which were seen

interchangeably as either blatantly unconvincing or threatening. As made manifest by the sheer number of literary sources that included prosthesis-using characters, of which this thesis has only scratched the surface, what is clear is that the prosthetic part became a source of fascination in Britain and America in the period 1832 to 1908.

In terms of how representations of prostheses changed during the period 1832 to 1908, it is hard to come to definite conclusions. As the thematic case studies that make up the chapters of this thesis show, representational tropes, such as that of the peg-legged beggar (explored in depth in ch. 3) or the failing cosmetic prosthesis (investigated in detail in ch. 4 and 5) endured throughout the period and beyond. Particular historical and cultural factors, such as the 1860s fashion for false hair, informed particular manifestations of prosthesis tropes and yet the majority of representations drew from previous depictions and more often than not put into question the dominance of physical wholeness. Certain tropes even linger in reconceptualised ways today. What is true, however, is that the number of prosthesis representations that we see in cultural and literary sources spiked around periods when such devices saw major innovation or increased circulation. For instance, even in Britain, the period 1860 to 1869 saw an increase in mentions of the term “artificial leg” according to an “entire document” search of the ProQuest source *British Periodicals Online* (Collections I, II, and III)—the period 1860 to 1869 produces fourteen results compared to nine in the period 1850 to 1859 and eight in the period 1870 to 1879. Such a spike correlates with the developments in prosthesis manufacture and distribution to American Civil War amputees covered by Guy Hasegawa in his study *Mending Broken Soldiers* (2012). A search of the same source using the same method but replacing the term “artificial leg” with

“artificial eye” also yields a peak in the years 1860 to 1869—sixteen results as opposed to seven in 1850–59 and four in 1870–79. This increase can be attributed to the presence in England of Parisian artificial eye maker Auguste Boissonneau, whose enamel artificial eyes dominated the European market in the 1840s, '50s, and '60s.

With regard to the particular ways that the hegemony of wholeness was challenged by the prosthesis narratives analysed in this thesis, we have seen a variety of approaches. Chapter One showed how the trope of the poor prosthesis, a representational type that extended across all of the prosthesis types explored in this thesis, coextensively endorsed demands for physical wholeness by perpetuating fears of physical loss while critiquing the very devices whose existence was underpinned by such discourse. Chapter Two revealed the ways in which representations of highly effective prostheses, prostheses that could be used as weapons, and self-acting devices provided challenges to the hegemonic concept of physical wholeness by presenting menacingly powerful and at times intelligent devices, non-human parts that threatened to usurp the organic “whole”. Chapter Three then explored prosthesis users who threatened to upset the cultural applecart by climbing the social ladder. What was most transgressive about the stories explored in this chapter was the fact that the success that several of the prosthesis users achieved stemmed precisely from the conspicuousness of their artificial body parts rather than from their ability to enable their users to pass. Chapter Four turned to the differences between the messages presented to male and female users in prosthesis narratives. This chapter exposed the conspicuously impaired and yet able characters of pirate adventure fiction who resisted demands for prostheses that could enable them to pass. The chapter also

explored the paradoxes inherent in prosthesis plots concerning female users. Artifice was lambasted while more effective ways to use it were simultaneously suggested. The demand for organic physical wholeness ironically brought about a proliferation of fakeness. Such paradoxes inherent in the social system that privileged wholeness were interrogated, as Chapter Five shows, by narratives that humorously depicted ageing prosthesis users. As this chapter argues, for many Victorian writers, the privileging of wholeness had brought about an army of aged prosthesis users, a group seen as absurd, who provided much material for comic representations.

In drawing attention to the way that literary representations of prostheses asked questions of the very mandate that brought about an explosion in this form of technology, this thesis adds to our understanding of the history of disability, the construction of normalcy, and the relationship between literature and science, technology, and medicine. The prosthetic has been popular as both a critical metaphor and material artefact for scholarly study in the past twenty years,² but there remains much to be said, especially about the longer literary history concerning this technology. This thesis provides part of the story, as much as any critical study can do, but many angles remain uncovered. How were literary representations of prosthesis affected by World War I, World War II, and cultural trends of the twentieth century such as modernism? How does race affect representations of prosthesis users? What do French and German literary histories of prostheses look like? Humans are not the only species to use prostheses. Today cats and dogs with artificial body parts are not

² Katherine Ott writes, "Many scholars use the term 'prosthesis' regularly, and often reductively, as a synonym for common forms of body-machine interface" ("The Sum of Its Parts" 2). Texts that use prostheses as such a critical metaphor include Mark Seltzer's *Bodies and Machines* (1992), Gabriel Brahm and Mark Driscoll's anthology *Prosthetic Territories* (1995), and Celia Lury's *Prosthetic Culture* (1998). For other work that opposes such metaphors, see Jain; Kurzman; Sobchack, "A Leg".

uncommon. What can be said about the cultural history of this phenomenon?

There remains much to be said, but adding to literary history of prosthesis forged by scholars including Vanessa Warne, Erin O'Connor, Herbert Sussman, Gerhard Joseph, and Adrienne E. Gavin, this thesis provides what I hope will be a provocative set of ideas surrounding the potentiality of the prosthetic to answer back, disrupt, and unsettle. David Willis showed us how complex the concept of prosthesis is when he wrote, "the writing of prosthesis . . . is inevitably caught in a complex play of displacements; prosthesis being about nothing if not placement, displacement, replacement, standing, dislodging, substituting, setting, amputating, supplementing" (9). This thesis, I hope, has shown how complicated, fascinating, and at times troubling the literary history of prosthesis is.

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