

Acting the Part: Prosthetic Limbs

Act 4 of *Titus Andronicus* opens with Lavinia, tongueless and handless, running after Lucius' son as he carries a bundle of books under his arm. Using her stumps to turn to the page of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which describes the rape of Philomel, she is for the first time able to communicate something of the rape and mutilation enacted upon her. In an iconic sequence, Marcus sees an opportunity for Lavinia to reveal the names of her attackers:

MARCUS: My lord, look here. Look here, Lavinia,
This sandy plot is plain. Guide if thou canst
This after me.

He writes his name with his staff, and guides it with feet and mouth.

I here have writ my name
Without the help of any hand at all.
Cursed be that heart that forced us to this shift!
Write thou, good niece, and here display at last
What god will have discovered for revenge.
Heaven guide thy pen to print thy sorrows plain,
That we may know the traitors and the truth

She takes the staff in her mouth, and guides it with her stumps, and writes.

O, do ye read, my lord, what she hath writ?

[*Titus*] '*Stuprum* – Chiron – Demetrius.'(4.1.67–88)¹

Lavinia's taking up of the staff between mouth and hands is an imitation of Marcus' demonstration made with mouth and feet. Marcus' actions make sense. One cannot hold the stick between one's feet sufficiently securely to write, and he cannot show a means to use the stick 'without the

¹ I cite here from *The Oxford Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor, and Stanley Wells, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). However, the stage directions in this scene are remarkably stable. They appear identically, albeit with unmodernised spelling, in the First Folio (1623), Second Folio (1632), and First Quarto (1594), and are adopted without substantial differences by most modern editions.

help of any hand' otherwise, since his own hands are intact. When Lavinia takes up the staff, she understandably adapts the method Marcus has shown her, and instead of using her feet, she uses her stumps to guide the stick. However, Lavinia too takes up the staff in her mouth, and in her case, I argue that this action is *not* a simple case of utility. Wielding Marcus' staff in this way is a struggle. It is easier – or at least, no more difficult – to write in the sand with a stick held between one's stumps than one held in the mouth, particularly since this is not a mere twig but a large 'staff', perhaps hardly fitting in the mouth of the boy actor playing this role. Indeed, the whole action of the stick and stumps is somewhat curious, since there are other ways in which Lavinia might express herself. Before Marcus intervenes, Titus has begun to list possible assailants, a list to which Lavinia might nod or shake her head. Even writing with her toe in the sand would seem easier than using an implement. But if the stick in Lavinia's mouth is as much a hindrance as a help to the scene's action, why does Shakespeare place it there?

Titus is one of the most studied plays in the English canon, and generations of scholars have pored over the discursive significance of the drama's profusion of disembodied parts, gore, and horror. It is not my aim to attempt another analysis of *Titus*' violence in general. However, I will argue that Lavinia's experience – particularly her use of the staff – may be illuminated in new ways by a closer appreciation of the practical and ideological aspects of limb prostheses in early modern England. Such items were of social and economic as well as personal significance. Artificial arms and legs clearly performed a necessary function. Their use was widespread, and for most users, their 'meaning' seems to have been little thought of. In the discourses which circulate around the period's most sophisticated prostheses, however, one can trace the functions – and therefore the bodily attributes – which were of most concern to artificial limb users and makers. Prostheses, I will argue, may thus be thought of in terms of 'drag', as that word is used by Judith Butler to denote stylisations that make visible the performativity underpinning the 'natural' and 'normal' gendered (or in this case, able) body.² While the artificial limb is not a costume assumed willingly, those features which are exaggerated in prosthesis illuminate

² 'Disability drag' is discussed in the early modern context by Coker-Durso and Row-Heyveld. Lauren G. Coker-Durso, 'Metatheatricality and Disability Drag: Performing Bodily Difference on the Early Modern English Stage' Ph.D. (Saint Louis University, 2014); Lindsey Row-Heyveld, *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018). The issue of able-bodied actors 'cripping up' to play disabled parts is increasingly a topic of debate in contemporary theatre and film: see Mat Fraser, 'Crippling It Up', *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 12:3 (2013): 245–8; Frances

what are seen as the most valuable, most heavily reinscribed attributes of the able body. Thus, as we see clearly in Lavinia's case, properties and prostheses overlap. As prosthesis, an artificial leg, arm, hand, or foot can allow the user to avoid the stigmatisation associated with disability and reassert themselves as an agential subject. As prop, however, such items have a signifiatory life of their own, threatening to erase, as well as enable, the subject-user.

The Prosthetic in Society

Lavinia loses her limbs by force. Her attackers sever her hands and cut out her tongue so that she may not speak or write of their crime, but also so that she must live with the humiliation associated with rape and disability. While Lavinia's ordeal is grotesquely extreme, however, to lose a limb in early modern England may have been less unusual than it is today. The audience of *Titus* would likely have included people lacking fingers, hands, arms, or legs, or people who knew those people well. Moreover, while many amputations were the result of violence, and hastily undertaken on the battlefield or at sea, there is ample evidence of civilian cases in which the excision of a limb was a considered decision. In these cases, patients consented to a radical operation knowing that excruciating pain and risk of death lay ahead.

How did one make the decision to undergo an amputation while fully conscious? Clearly, only serious debility and disease can have warranted such a step. Patients who took this course did so as a last resort, to avoid imminent death by blood poisoning or spreading disease. In such circumstances, both surgeons and patients seem to have reconciled themselves to the horror of what lay ahead by framing the part to be excised as no longer belonging to their body. When the surgeon Hugh Ryder encountered a young patient afflicted with multiple fistulas and ulcers as the result of a poorly treated leg injury, for instance, he found the boy philosophical about his chances:

I told his Father, I had considered, the circumstances he lay under, were so severe, that I thought, there was no likelihood of his recovery, nor possibility of Cure; to which the Boy very heartily replied, he knew he should be

Ryan, 'We Wouldn't Accept Actors Blacking up, so Why Applaud "Crippling up"?', *The Guardian*, 13 January 2015.

well, if I would cut off his Thigh; and that if I would lend him a Knife, he would cut it off himself.³

Ryder agreed to undertake the amputation, and the boy was soon cured and 'very lively'. Though Ryder's account may smack of self-promotion, his description of the terrible sufferings which led his patient to this juncture is all too believable. Weeks of diarrhoea had left the boy a 'skeleton', and his leg was covered in ulcers 'stinking beyond all comparison, his Heel stuck to his Buttock, and his Knee disjointed . . . the Ligaments being all eaten asunder'.⁴

This extreme example demonstrates the way in which patients with long-term afflictions might experience the ill parts of their body as alien. Limbs which failed to move, which perceptibly rotted, stank, or seemed to threaten healthy adjacent parts – all of which were features of advanced gangrene, cancers, and other diseases – might be regarded in hostile terms. In John Woodall's *A Treatise of Gangraena*, for instance, the part of the body to be amputated was represented as having committed a 'fault' or 'error':

[I]t is just, that so much be amputated as deserveth expulsion, and not, as is said, to take away a sound and blamelesse legge, when it is innocent and free from fault, error, or disease: for the noblenesse of each member of mans body, and namely of the legge, is highly even in humanitie to be tendred and regarded.⁵

Woodall's point was that one ought not to amputate further up the leg than necessary, but rather preserve as much as possible. Nonetheless, he focused on the parts which 'deserveth expulsion', implying that diseased limbs were somehow morally reprehensible and divorced from the rest of the 'noble' body. This tactic allowed Woodall to frame his surgeries as necessary and even heroic; elsewhere, he described a diseased limb as like the 'dead bowes' of a tree, which were to be 'pruned off' to save the plant.⁶ The localised dysfunction effected by gangrene was particularly apt to encourage both sufferers and physicians to regard the diseased part as somehow foreign or hostile to the body proper. Alexander Read's *Somatographia Anthropine*, for instance, asserted that 'the rage and

³ Hugh Ryder, *New Practical Observations in Surgery* (London: printed for James Partridge, 1685), pp. 54–5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵ John Woodall, 'A Treatise of Gangraena', in *The Surgeons Mate, or, Military & Domestique Surgery: Discovering Faithfully & Plainly [the] Method and Order of [the] Surgeons Chest, [the] Vses of the Instruments, the Vertues and Operations of [the] Medicines, With [the] Exact Cures of Wounds Made by Gun-Shott; and Otherwise* (London: printed by Rob. Young, for Nicholas Bourne, 1639), p. 386.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 389–90.

malignity of [gangrene] is so great, that it will out of hand, not onely kill the part affected, but by contagion also seaze upon the neighbour parts, and in time upon the whole body'.⁷ With a curious turn of phrase, it advised the amputating surgeon to 'gather up the sound parts of [the patient's] body' before applying a ligature above the gangrenous area.⁸

The apparent facility of both patients and surgeons for imagining diseased limbs as separate from the rest of the body was in part a cultural phenomenon. As I have discussed elsewhere in relation to cancer, the image of post-mortem consumption by worms which ran through early modern Christian texts crossed over into medical language when cancers were described as worms eating living flesh.⁹ Gangrenous limbs generally provoked less colourful language, but their wounds could, if untended, breed maggots, and this propensity can only have enhanced patients' sense of their infected limb as more corpse than animated flesh. In addition, early modern patients arguably experienced their sick limbs as 'estranged' simply because they were strange, in the several senses of that word. Limbs affected by gangrene could progressively turn yellow or black, marking them apart from the neighbouring flesh. Gangrenous parts might also lose sensation. In so doing, they lost an aspect of what set them apart from other kinds of matter. In phenomenological terms, the fact that when one touches one's arm or leg, one also *feels* that touch, is crucial to the body's unique status as 'lived' matter, both object and subject.

Drew Leder's theory of bodily 'dys-appearance' usefully expands this notion of bodily estrangement. Under normal circumstances, argues Leder, we do not much notice our bodies functioning. In everyday actions – walking, seeing, eating – they recede from our consciousness, and may be said to dis-appear. We 'exist' our bodies, he argues, as a perceptual vanishing point, from which all experience seems to take place.¹⁰ Of necessity, '[m]y being-in-the-world depends upon my body's self-effacing transitivity'; one hardly notices one's legs while casually strolling.¹¹ By contrast, when we become aware of our bodies, it is generally because they 'dys-appear'. That is, they become prominent because they

⁷ Alexander Read, *Somatographia Anthropine, or, a Description of the Body of Man. With the Practise of Chirurgery, and the Use of Three and Fifty Instrument.* (London: printed by Thomas Cotes, and sold by Michael Sparke, 1634), p. 105.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁹ Alanna Skuse, *Constructions of Cancer in Early Modern England: Ravenous Natures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 61–73.

¹⁰ Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 12–13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

are in pain, or because they do not function as we expect. Dys-appearance, as Chapter 1 discussed, can also occur when the gazes or actions of others cause us to think closely about our bodies, whether because they are non-normative (the wheelchair user attracting whispers and stares) or otherwise deemed remarkable (the woman walking down the street to catcalls). Central to dys-appearance is the sense of alienation from one's own body, in part or whole, and the sense that a dysfunctional body part might be working against 'oneself'. Leder explains:

Whenever our body becomes an object of perception, even though it perceives itself, an element of distance is introduced. I no longer simply 'am' my body, the set of unthematized powers from which I exist. Now I 'have' a body, a perceived object in the world.¹²

Leder's description of the dysfunctional body emphasises how the 'object-ness' of the body may take over when illness takes hold. The subject may no longer feel themselves to be co-extensive with their flesh, but rather imagine their mind as somehow inhabiting that flesh as an occupant inhabits a house. As we have seen elsewhere in this book, material and cultural circumstances might cause the pendulum to swing between a vision of body, soul, and mind as fully integrated, and one in which the 'Complexion of the body . . . many times puts Yokes and Manacles upon the Soul; so that (at the best) it is but as a close Prison'.¹³

There were, of course, some limits to this mental flexibility. However dispassionately one might regard one's sickly limb, and however heartily one might wish to be rid of it, the realities of amputation were sobering. Patients rightly feared the procedure, and they were often distrustful of the motives and capabilities of the surgeons who carried it out. Predictably, given the number of amputations that took place in wartime, operators were often characterised as bloodthirsty sawbones, who severed limbs because they lacked the skill to heal them by other means. In 1703, for instance, 'T.D.' angrily denounced an over-eager surgeon as a 'Butcher', who thought no more of removing a body part 'than some Persons do to pair [pare] their Nails'.¹⁴ Tobias Smollet's 1748 *Roderick Random*

¹² Ibid., p. 77.

¹³ Thomas Case, *Movnt Pisgah, or, A Prospect of Heaven Being an Exposition on the Fourth Chapter of the First Epistle of St Paul to the Thessalonians, from the 13th Verse, to the End of the Chapter, Divided into Three Parts* (London: Thomas Milbourn, for Dorman Newman, 1670), p. 94.

¹⁴ T.D., *The Present State of Chyrurgery, with Some Short Remarks on the Abuses Committed under a Pretence to the Practice. And Reasons Offer'd for Regulating the Same* (London, 1703), p. 19.

capitalised on this perception in its depiction of the saw-happy surgeon, Mackshane:

the patient . . . pronounced with a woful countenance, ‘What! Is there no remedy, doctor? Must I be dock’d? can’t you splice it?’— ‘Assuredly, doctor Mackshane (said the first mate) with submission, and deference . . . I do apprehend, and conjecture, and aver, that there is no occasion nor necessity to smite off the poor man’s leg.’ . . . Mackshane, very much incensed at his mate’s differing in opinion from him so openly, answered, that he was not bound to give an account of his practice to him; and in a peremptory tone, ordered him to apply the tourniquet.¹⁵

Smollet’s account probably rang true at sea and on the battlefield, where time and resources were scarce. In a civilian context, however, there is evidence not only that surgeons suffered from the ‘sad schreeking’ of their patients, but that they made a concerted effort to amputate in ways that preserved as much post-operative function as possible.¹⁶ In effect, this usually meant ensuring that the stump could be readily fitted with a prosthesis. Thus, in contrast to Woodall’s exhortations to preserve as much of the limb as possible, surgeons commonly advocated amputating closer to the knee or elbow, even taking off healthy flesh. Joseph de la Charrière, for instance, advised in 1695 that

If it be the Leg, though only the Foot should be concern’d, you must Amputate 3 Fingers below the Knee . . . because of the long suppuration which rots the Tendons, and other accidents that may happen; and to put on an Artificial one more easily.¹⁷

His counsel was echoed in the 1699 *Compleat Body of Chirurgical Operations*, in which the author suggested: ‘The Leg must be cut off as near the Knee as possible . . . for the more commodious carrying a Wooden Legg . . . On the contrary cut as little as may be off the Arm, because it serves as an Ornament and Counterpoise to the Body, and an Artificial Hand may be made to be useful in some cases.’¹⁸

¹⁵ Tobias Smollet, *The Adventures of Roderick Random, in Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: John Osborn, 1748), pp. 256–7.

¹⁶ John Moyle, *Abstractum Chirurgiae Marinae, or, An Abstract of Sea Chirurgery* (London: printed by J. Richardson for Tho. Passinger, 1686), p. 25.

¹⁷ Joseph de la Charrière, *A Treatise of the Operations of Surgery. Wherein Are Mechanically Explain’d the Causes of the Diseases in Which They Are Needful, . . . To Which Is Added, a Treatise of Wounds, . . . Translated from the Third Edition of the French, Enlarg’d, Corrected and Revis’d by the Author, Joseph de La Charriere* (London: printed by R. Brugis, for D. Brown and W. Mears; and T. Ballard, 1712), pp. 283–4.

¹⁸ M. de la Vauguion, *A Compleat Body of Chirurgical Operations, Containing the Whole Practice of Surgery. With Observations and Remarks on Each Case. Amongst Which Are Inserted, the Several Ways of Delivering Women in Natural and Unnatural Labours. The Whole Illustrated with Copper Plates*,

Such advice suggests that prosthetic use was seen as the natural and desirable endpoint of amputation, at its best, offering a partial restoration to aesthetic and functional normality. This is borne out by hospital records which show prosthetic limbs being produced in large numbers for the use of wounded soldiers and sailors. In his work on Ely House military hospital during the civil war and interregnum, Eric Gruber von Arni finds that

In January 1653 an order was placed for, 144 crutches, 72 long and 72 short, at a total cost of £5 2s . . . The work of William Bradley, the hospital carpenter, who was frequently required to provide wooden legs and the associated attachments for them, is illustrated in the bills that he submitted for his work. For example, on 12 February 1654, a soldier named Fisher was provided with a wooden hand costing 5s. On 15 May 1654 he fitted Thomas Swain with a pair of legs with straps and buckles, adjusted the wooden legs of seven residents and supplied two spare pins for another.¹⁹

As Arni's research indicates, the vast majority of prosthesis users were equipped with simple peg legs and crutches, which were rudimentary but affordable. They were ubiquitous enough that the wooden-legged ex-soldier or -sailor became a trope which proliferated in early modern drama. In the 1599 *A Larum for London*, for instance, the protagonist 'Stump' describes his wooden leg as his 'passport', showing he has 'known the wars' (6.771–8).²⁰ Patricia Cahill observes that during this period of intense conflict, 'bodies like that of the play's lame soldier may have been a common sight in London'.²¹ Nearly a hundred years later, a fictional piece in the *Observer* periodical showed that dismemberment was still regarded as an occupational hazard for seamen. Two civilians are discussing the merits of a naval career. Explaining his reluctance to go to sea, one asserts:

I shou'd return Home like an Old Woman cut shorter . . . a poor Dismember'd Wretch, a meer hop-Frog; and suppose I should make good the Deficiencies of Nature by Art, and get a couple of Wooden Supporters,

Explaining the Several Bandages, Sutures, and Divers Useful Instruments (London: printed for Henry Bonwick, T. Goodwin, M. Wotton, B. Took, and S. Manship, 1699), p. 291.

¹⁹ Eric Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier: Nursing, Medical Care and Welfare for Sick and Wounded Soldiers and their Families during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2001), p. 185.

²⁰ On the institution of 'passports' for ex-servicemen, which allowed the bearers to travel freely through different parishes and receive aid on their journey to their home parish, see Audrey Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice under the Old Poor Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

²¹ Patricia A. Cahill, *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 190.

and Stump it about like the Devil upon two Sticks, how would the Country Fellows Laugh at me.²²

His concerns reflect not only the dangers of naval life, but the ignominy of visible disability and the helplessness associated therewith – a factor which, as I shall argue, drove innovation in prosthetics. As Chapter 3 detailed, huge numbers of early modern men served in the military, and the connection between military service and limb loss was well known.²³ This connection could have pragmatic use in marking out the bearer as among the ‘deserving poor’: Sarah Covington observes how ‘Veterans who found themselves vagrant . . . relied upon their wounds as the sole currency with which they could be brought over to the category of worthiness.’²⁴ The dark side to this ‘currency’ was that it could be employed fraudulently, as when Shakespeare’s Falstaff determines that his ‘hauling’ gait (brought on by gout, or pox, or both) will easily pass for a war wound, and ‘my pension shall seeme the more reasonable’. (2 *Henry IV*, 1.2.245–50). Lindsey Row-Heyveld discusses how itinerant beggars, claiming to have been maimed in the wars, were frequently described in rogue literature as hobbling around on one natural leg and one wooden, their other healthy limb being bent double inside their clothes.²⁵ As these renderings show, the possession of a wooden leg was partly pragmatic, partly performative. For the genuinely impaired, it allowed movement and garnered sympathy, but it also signalled the (male) user’s interpellation into the role of ‘maimed soldier’, with all the varied connotations that role entailed.²⁶

Despite their ubiquity, we know little about how wooden legs or hands were bought and fitted, or how they benefited the user. Instead, the written record tells us much more about the small subset of amputees who were able to afford more sophisticated artificial limbs. These items were, as the Ely House records suggest, far more expensive than their simpler counterparts. Von Arni relates how at Ely hospital, ‘George Matheson, who had suffered an above-knee amputation, was supplied with a prosthetic limb described as “a new artificial leg with a leather box, plated all over with iron, complete with swivels and pins” at a cost of

²² *Observer*, 13 January 1705.

²³ Geoffrey L. Hudson, ‘Disabled Veterans and the State in Early Modern England’, in *Disabled Veterans in History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 117–44; Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*.

²⁴ Sarah Covington, *Wounds, Flesh, and Metaphor in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009), p. 113.

²⁵ Row-Heyveld, *Disembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama*, especially pp. 2–5.

²⁶ Alanna Skuse, ‘Missing Parts in *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*’, *Renaissance Drama* 45:2 (2017): 161–79.

£3 3s 11d.²⁷ This single limb cost the same as around one hundred crutches from the same supplier. Nevertheless, articulated prostheses captured the imaginations of medical writers, who described them in fascinated detail. Ambroise Paré had been among the first to design such items in the late sixteenth century, including in his *Workes* drawings of mobile hands, arms, and legs that are extraordinary in their complexity. His design for an artificial hand, for instance, contains a series of tiny cogs and wheels which allow each finger to move individually. A blueprint for an artificial leg, while simpler, includes a pulley which moves the foot from a pointed to a flat position (see Figure 4.1). Paré's prostheses were, he argued, 'not onely profitable for the necessity of the body, but also for the decency and comelinesse thereof, facilitating 'the functions of going, standing and handling'.²⁸

When other medical practitioners advised on artificial limbs, they drew on Paré's work, presenting complicated articulate limbs as the ideal even when they recognised that such items might be unattainable. In 1662, for instance, James Cooke's *Mellificium Chirurgiæ* revealed its author's struggle between medical idealism and practicality. The surgeon affirmed 'Artificial [hands] must be framed, as also Legs', but immediately admitted that 'the former are seldom in use'.²⁹ Backtracking again, he then suggested 'Artificial armes and hands must of necessity be fram'd with many Scrues and Wheelles for to procure some kind of motion when set on work'.³⁰ Interestingly, Cooke did not appear to have the same high ideals when it came to artificial legs. Though he noted that legs might be made 'in form of a natural Leg' or 'all small downward' (i.e. a peg leg), the only real requirements were that they could be securely tied to the thigh, and that they contained a pillow for the stump to rest on.³¹ Just as Cooke had been inspired by Paré, he in turn influenced future writers. In 1698, William Salmon's *Ars Chirurgica* borrowed some phrasing – including that of being 'all small downward' – directly from Cooke's work, with other snippets culled from Paré himself. He, however, set aside financial concerns, and described with wonderment the full scope of prosthetic limbs:

²⁷ Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, p. 185.

²⁸ Ambroise Paré, *The Workes of That Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey Translated out of Latine and Compared with the French. by Th: Jobnson* (London: Th. Cotes and R. Young, 1634), p. 880.

²⁹ James Cooke, *Mellificium Chirurgiæ, or the Marrow of Many Good Authors Enlarged: Wherein Is Briefly, Fully, and Faithfully Handled the Art of Chirurgery in Its Four Parts, with All the Several Diseases unto Them Belonging: Their Definitions, Causes, Signes, Prognosticks, and Cures, Both General and Particular* (London: printed by T.R. for John Sherley, 1662), pp. 378–9.

³⁰ Ibid. ³¹ Ibid.

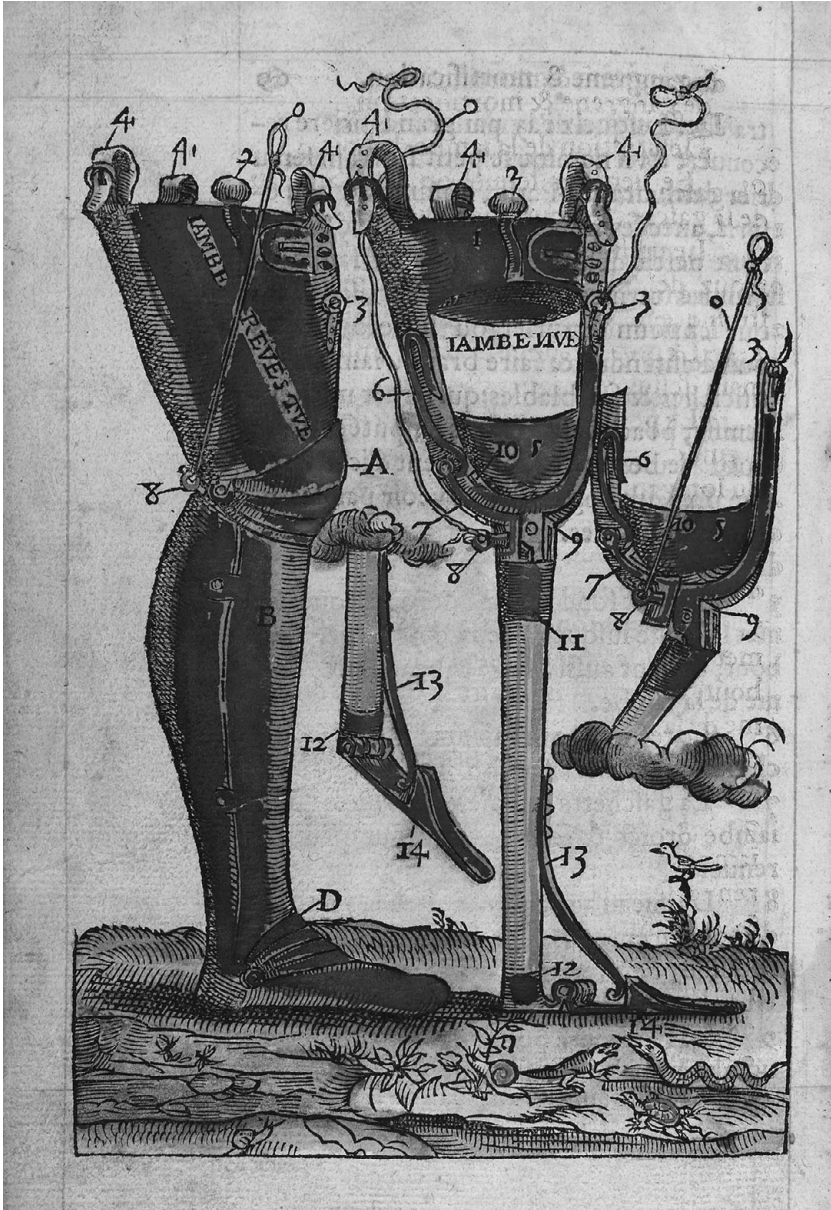


Figure 4.1 A. Paré, 'La maniere de traicter les plaies'.

Credit: Wellcome Collection. CC BY

it is necessity which investigates the means whereby we may help and imitate nature, and supply the defects of members, which are perished and lost; which in the case of arms or legs may well be done with silver, latten [copper alloy, e.g. brass], steel, copper, wood, or some other fit matter.

II. And some have been made by ingenious smiths, or other artificers, with which the party which wore them, have performed the proper functions of going, standing, and handling; and with their artificial legs, feet, arms and hands, have done other necessary flexions and extensions, beyond what can possibly be imagined, by any but such as have seen them . . .

IV. Arms, hands and fingers must be made of iron, or latten, with many wheels and screws, to make the required motion, that they may be the more useful when applied to the intention; and they are to be conveniently fixed to the shoulder, elbow or wrist, and be tied on with strings.

V. Legs, feet and toes are more frequently made use of, especially the first; some being made in the forms of natural legs, others all small downwards, with a seat, wherein are put small pillows or bolsters for the knee to rest on; which also are to be fastned with strings to the thigh.³²

The 'ideal' prostheses described by Paré, Salmon, and others all have in common that they are articulated, complex, and moveable. They allow the user to perform 'motion' and 'intention', that is, they allow them to perform able-bodiedness. In so doing, these descriptions reflect the abiding tendency of surgical texts to frame recovery from amputation in terms of a return to movement. In Paré's *Apologie*, for instance, he describes how one patient 'was happily cured without the application of hot irons, and walketh lustily on a wooden legge'.³³ Another amputee was 'at this present cured and in health, walking with a wooden Leg'.³⁴ In Woodall's idealistic description of an artificial leg, he expanded this idea, to paint the amputee as supremely capable:

[It is] a great honour and comfort to the man, when, if without a foot, by the helpe of Art, namely, of an hollow Case or the like, with an artificial foot adjoynd, a man may decently and comely walke, and ride, goe over a style, yea, and runne, and sit streight, and behave himselfe man-like in Bed, and at Boord, and doe good service for the defence of his country, or of himselfe: In regard whereof, I would esteeme that Artist a very unworthy, unwise, and wilfull person, who by any good

³² William Salmon, *Ars Chirurgica* (London, 1698), p. 125.

³³ Ambroise Paré, *The Apologie and Treatise of Ambroise Paré, Containing the Voyages Made into Divers Places, with Many of His Writings upon Surgery*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Falcon Educational Books, 1951), p. 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

meanes could keepe a profitable part of any member untaken off, and would presume to take it away.³⁵

In Woodall's depiction, an artificial leg enables a level of bodily functionality which is unavailable to even many able-bodied people, involving physical skill (at riding and fighting) as well as deportment (sitting up straight). It is also markedly gendered: this restored man can behave himself 'man-like' in diverse situations including the bedroom.³⁶

Woodall's description does not invoke any particular disabled person, and he does not seem to have a specific prosthesis in mind. Indeed, he conspicuously ignores the problems of fit and balance which must have attended many artificial limbs. His vision, and that of Paré and Salmon, is of a classically ideal body, complete and proportionate. This body is, as Bakhtin describes, diametrically opposite to the unbounded and changeable disabled body.³⁷ Where the Bakhtinian classical body is primarily an aesthetic construct, however, the 'ideal' prostheticised body is a body in motion, capable of economic and social activity. Woodall, for example, made clear the continuity between 'polite' and useful bodies when he recalled his treatment of a dying patient at St Bartholomew's hospital. After amputation of the leg, he wrote,

my poore patient grew more and more lusty and cheerefull; and to conclude, in the space of 10 weekes, he was perfectly healed, and being then sound and lusty, gave thanks to the Governour of the Hospitall, in full payment of his cure, and so departed from the Hospitall upon a legge of wood, he then being faire and fat, and very formall.³⁸

Woodall's patient had not only escaped death; he was restored to the polite world, capable of being 'lusty' and 'formall'. Notably, this patient was also solvent, able to pay his fee in full. He cuts a figure very different from the destitute 'cripples' which populate many early modern discussions of disability.

The social and economic importance of maintaining one's mobility was further underlined in a 1710 advertisement for John Sewers, an artificial limb-maker from London. After refuting some malicious

³⁵ Woodall, 'A Treatise of Gangraena', p. 396.

³⁶ On limb loss and male sexuality, see Skuse, 'Missing Parts in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*'.

³⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). See especially 'The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources', pp. 303–67.

³⁸ Woodall, 'A Treatise of Gangraena', pp. 389–90.

reports that he is dead, Sewers' advertisement assures readers that he still makes false legs on which

the Party may walk with the greatest Ease and Safety, and take as firm and large Steps as ever. They are so *Exact* as hardly to be discern'd, and so *Light* as in the whole proportion not to weigh more than Three Pound and half. Women may walk in Pattens [protective overshoes] with them.³⁹

Moreover, Sewers promised that he could provide prostheses even for people with short stumps, or unhealed stumps, on which they might walk 'safe and easy'. Repeatedly, Sewers stressed his ability to restore a normal gait, concluding that 'He undertakes to make the patient walk with such a Leg in Three or Four Hours time, without a Crutch.'⁴⁰

Sewers' conviction that one could learn to use an artificial leg in the course of an afternoon is evidently a marketing strategy.⁴¹ Nonetheless, it highlights the movement from conspicuous dys-appearance to unremarkable dis-appearance implicit in idealised visions of prostheses. What is promised here is not merely a transition from one kind of bodily difference to another, less debilitating kind. Rather, the use of one's false limb becomes so easy that it recedes from the notice of both user and onlookers – especially given that one's legs would always be clothed when in public. Leder views such 'incorporation' of prostheses, or of other broadly assistive technologies such as canes and telephones, as a remapping of the boundaries of the body, such that the item one relies upon becomes a part of one's phenomenological experience. By expanding one's possibilities for action – the possibility of walking further, or of communicating over distances – the use of tools can 'redesign one's extended body until the extremities expressly mesh with the world'.⁴² To become fully enmeshed or 'incorporated', however, the prosthetic should interact seamlessly with the natural body. Vivian Sobchack, herself a prosthesis user, describes how she experiences her artificial leg in this way: 'not "into" or "on" but "as" the subject, the prosthetic becomes an object only when a mechanical or social problem pushes it obtrusively into the foreground of

³⁹ John Sewers, 'Advertisement' (printed by John Cluer in Twelve-Bell-Court in Bow Church-Yard, Cheapside, 1710), EPH 528:3, Wellcome Library.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ As a twenty-first-century comparison, the Amputee Coalition (USA) estimates that learning to use a modern prosthetic leg may take anything from several weeks to six months or more ('Prosthetic FAQs for the New Amputee', *Amputee Coalition* (blog), accessed 11 May 2018, www.amputee-coalition.org/resources/prosthetic-faqs-for-the-new-amputee/)

⁴² Leder, *The Absent Body*, p. 34.

the user's consciousness'.⁴³ In the early modern context it is important to remember that, as I shall discuss, discourses about prostheses also include discussion of their engineered properties, their abiding difference as well as their assimilation. Nevertheless, it is evident that consumers and medical writers prized limbs which *worked*.

This emphasis seems natural – after all, we might think it self-evident that the greatest good of a prosthesis would be viewed as being the restoration of the user to motion and function. However, the fact that this was not necessarily the case is demonstrated by the rhetoric attached to other kinds of prosthetic. As Chapter 3 explored, facial prostheses were explicitly designed to recreate as closely as possible a natural appearance. They might also confer functional advantages, but these tended to be secondary. Likewise, in their 'Technologies of the Body', David Turner and Alun Withey describe how truss manufacture and promotion advanced in the eighteenth century such that a truss became not only a medical object but a consumer good. Trusses were, they argue, a means for 'passing' as able-bodied and attaining the straightness associated with 'polite', aristocratic bodies. As such,

a striking characteristic of advertisements was their use of the language of polite commerce, selling items such as prosthetics not merely as a means of alleviating suffering, but also as objects of taste and technological innovation that in turn defined the consumer in terms that went beyond the medicalized 'patient' . . . Products were sold as offering an aspirational ideal, of a body well trained and capable of pleasing (or at least not frightening) others, its defects smoothed out.⁴⁴

As Turner and Withey acknowledge, the market for prosthetic limbs also expanded during this period, with an eventual focus on undetectability that mirrored that surrounding trusses. However, it appears that this shift took place later in the eighteenth century, and that for the previous 150 years, surgeons' ideas about limb replacement had remained fairly stable. By contrast, trusses and other orthopaedic devices had from the seventeenth century been associated with bodily aesthetics for both sexes.

Prosthetic limbs, therefore, were imaginatively distinct in the privileging of movement over all other concerns, including weight, comfort, and

⁴³ Vivian Sobchack, 'A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality', in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, ed. Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 22.

⁴⁴ David Turner and Alun Withey, 'Technologies of the Body: Polite Consumption and the Correction of Deformity in Eighteenth-Century England', *History* 99: 338 (2014): 777, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12087>.

appearance. Indeed, early modern descriptions of artificial limbs rarely mention their appearance, though some would have been rendered more lifelike by being covered in leather or painted. Rather – and in addition to being markedly masculine – the vision of bodily functionality invoked by prosthesis narratives was distinctly mechanistic in emphasis. It is instructive that in the advertisement above, Sewers the prosthesis-maker declares that he will *make* the patient walk rather than *allow* them to do so. His project is thus framed as one which creates as well as restores the body. Other writers were more direct about the mechanical nature of their work. Salmon, for instance, imagined the amputee as potentially augmented by the work of ‘artificers’, with the prosthetic limb showing a range of movement which exceeded that of a natural limb.⁴⁵ Cooke likewise spoke of ‘Scrues and Wheelies’, while Paré’s blueprints for articulated hands and feet have as much in common with architectural plans as with medical illustrations.⁴⁶ This commonality partly bears out Jonathan Sawday’s contention that, following Descartes, mechanistic conceptions of the body tended to focus on its utility above all else; the ‘modern’ body, he argues, was ‘a body which worked rather than existed’.⁴⁷ However, it is equally evident that Cartesian dualist models were merely part of the milieu which promoted functionality as the highest value of the body. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the experimental splicing and dicing of bodies conducted by members of the Royal Society in the 1740s contributed to a vision of the body in which parts could be removed and replaced. Equally important (and themselves influenced by philosophical concerns) were the material circumstances in which prostheses were produced. As Reed Benhamou identifies, the most sophisticated articulated prostheses were marvels of engineering, requiring specialist manufacture:

It is no coincidence that these [materials used in prosthesis] are the same materials used in 18th-century automatons, for several of the clockmakers, locksmiths, and *mécaniciens* who used the lightweight materials and miniaturization techniques required by these devices also produced artificial limbs. Indeed, some 18th-century prostheses may be called spin-offs of this technology.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Salmon, *Ars Chirurgica*, p. 125. ⁴⁶ Cooke, *Mellificium Chirurgiae*, pp. 378–9; Paré, *The Workes*.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 32.

⁴⁸ Reed Benhamou, ‘The Artificial Limb in Preindustrial France’, *Technology and Culture* 35:4 (1994): 844.

To be associated with automata meant that the prostheticised body became associated with the man-made and precise – particularly in the later seventeenth century, when Wendy Beth Hyman argues that ‘mechanistic and even deterministic theories of natural phenomena . . . put the body, simply, back in its inanimate place’.⁴⁹ Certain functions of complex prostheses also recalled the tricks of which automata were capable. Benhamou describes how in 1732, the French clockmaker Kreigseissen was commissioned to make a limb for an amputee who had lost his arm below the elbow:

According to the meticulous description, the device, made from sheets of copper, bent at the wrist and at the first and second knuckle joints. The thumb moved only in a lateral direction (a palmar pinch). The mechanism consisted of pulleys turned by catgut cords that were activated by bending the elbow, one moving the palm and thumb, the other moving the fingers. Leaf springs mounted on the index finger permitted this digit to move at all joints. Bending the elbow brought the hand toward the body, causing the fingers to flex and the thumb to oppose the fingers. Straightening the elbow released the tension on the cords, and returned the hand to its original position.⁵⁰

It is unclear if such feats crossed the Channel. Nonetheless, even if marvels such as those Benhamou describes were not produced in Britain, they must have appeared as the gold standard of bodily restoration, just as Parisian surgery was esteemed among the best in the world. The effect of these rare creations, coupled with the ideal prostheses imagined in contemporary medical texts, was to reify a particular vision of how a ‘whole’ body ought to look and move. That is, they ideally allowed the user to perform able-bodiedness – to avoid looking disabled, and thus avoid the associations of economic and social exclusion which often accompanied disability. It is striking, for instance, that one specially commissioned arm from the early eighteenth century reportedly allowed the wearer to ‘raise his hand to his hat, remove it, and put it back’.⁵¹ This action can hardly have been the most pragmatic use of prosthetic technology, but it allowed the bearer to ‘pass’ as bodily normative. It also demonstrates how prostheses might become conducive to viewing the body as either/both object and/or subject. As a curious and wondrous device, the hat-raising arm made its user something like an automaton, a spectacular but empty vessel.

⁴⁹ Wendy Beth Hyman, ‘Introduction’, in *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Wendy Beth Hyman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 12.

⁵⁰ Benhamou, ‘The Artificial Limb in Preindustrial France’, 840. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 838.

On the other hand, the fact of being able to tip one's hat allowed the user to perform their normal social role, assuring onlookers that the same subject remained 'inside' their altered body.

Frustratingly, there is virtually no record of how early modern amputees felt about their own prostheses. The fact that complicated metal limbs were so rare may suggest that practical as well as financial considerations drove most amputees towards simpler devices. Wooden arms and legs did not have the same capabilities, but they were lighter, more comfortable, and probably as useful for many tasks. Texts *about* these people, however, show that onlookers believed that the strongest desire of the amputee was (or ought to be) to perform able-ness – to look like one's bodily alteration did not affect one's capability to act in socially prescribed ways. Unlike with naturalistic prostheses, one's dys-appearance might not vanish through the use of these items, but it could dis-appear – that is, it could cease to be constitutive of one's place in the world.

***Titus Andronicus* and the Point of the Staff**

The technologically advanced world of early modern artificial limbs may appear at first glance to have little to do with Lavinia's use of a simple staff to scrawl in the dirt. However, the extreme experience of this amputee character addresses issues of bodily normativity and anomaly in ways difficult to access in medical and commercial texts, emphasising the vexed relationship between sexuality, embodiment, and sociability. It may thus help to fill in some of the manifold gaps in our understanding of what limb loss *felt* like, both for the amputee and for those around them. Moreover, the driving force behind prosthetic innovation in the early modern period – that is, war – is also the context underlying Lavinia's rape and mutilation. While Lavinia's staff is the most rudimentary form of prosthesis, it, like the articulate arms and legs described above, shows how prosthetics revealed what was felt to be important about human agency in a given historical moment. Lavinia's rape and dismemberment is a horrific reminder of the prevalence of sexual violence in armed conflict. Her identity as *more* than a rape victim inheres in the ability to express herself, and her use of the staff becomes a symbolic and pragmatic reclamation of that capacity.

We have seen that the early modern period was one in which armed conflict affected a substantial portion of the male population. Consequently, women were also exposed to the hardships and cruelties associated with war. Barbara Donagan notes how in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, legislation surrounding conduct in wartime became

increasingly secular in tone, and increasingly detailed.⁵² These laws officially forbade ‘ravishing of women’ by soldiers, on pain of death. However, contemporary literature – including that by Shakespeare – demonstrates that rape was frequently understood as ‘a predictable side-effect of armed conflict’.⁵³ Written in 1599, *Henry V* dwells repeatedly on the possibility of rape being committed by besieging soldiers:

King Harry: The gates of mercy shall be all shut up,
And the fleshed soldier, rough and hard of heart,
In liberty of bloody hand shall range
With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass
Your fresh fair virgins and your flow’ring infants.

...

What is’t to me, when you yourselves are cause,
If your pure maidens fall into the hand
Of hot and forcing violation?
What rein can hold licentious wickedness
When down the hill he holds his fierce career?

(3.3.93–106)

As Jordi Coral observes of this passage, rape is here imagined exclusively in terms of the violation of virgins, as in *Titus Andronicus*. As in that play, it is also presented as potentially titillating. Moreover, Henry implicates potential rape victims in their own assault by protesting that he cannot control invading soldiers in the heat of battle. The women and girls under attack have apparently brought their misfortune on themselves by happening to live in a town which elects not to surrender to Henry’s siege. This notion that rape occurred during the frenzy of victory was widespread, becoming particularly strong in accounts of the Hundred Years War and Thirty Years War.⁵⁴ In *Titus*, however, Lavinia’s rape and dismemberment is framed differently: not as the spoils of war, but as a covert act of revenge by the defeated party, and a tactical means of striking at a more powerful captor. Violent rapes carried out by victorious soldiers were not sanctioned, but they were understood as a corollary of the blood-lust and hatred for the enemy necessary to conduct a successful campaign. By contrast, the extremes of violence Chiron and Demetrius inflict on Lavinia are inversely

⁵² Barbara Donagan, ‘Law, War and Women in Seventeenth-Century England’, in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth D. Heineman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 189.

⁵³ Jordi Coral, ‘“Maiden Walls That War Hath Never Entered”: Rape and Post-Chivalric Military Culture in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*’, *College Literature* 44:3 (2017): 410.

⁵⁴ Donagan, ‘Law, War and Women in Seventeenth-Century England’, pp. 190–1.

proportional to their martial power. It is thus necessary, in symbolic terms, that Chiron and Demetrius both rape and mutilate Lavinia. Where rape is imagined as dishonouring the family name, the attackers' decision to disable Lavinia is not only a pragmatic means of avoiding detection, but a symbolic retribution for the loss they have suffered at the hands and voice of her father.

Ironically, this treatment of Lavinia as a symbol or proxy repeats in horrific terms the objectification which Lavinia experiences from members of her family, both before and especially after her rape. Scholarship on *Titus* has frequently pointed out the fact that Lavinia begins as well as ends the play in a state of voicelessness – first, as a facet of her ideally submissive and compliant role, and later by dint of physical impairment. Lavinia begins the play as an object with exchange value, to be swapped between potential husbands as it becomes politically expedient (1.1). When she reappears ravished, tongueless, and handless, Lavinia's body is an object that provokes speech from others, prompting Marcus to make the play's longest speech and one of its most eloquent (2.4.11–57). Lavinia's body melds with the world of things as it is variously taken to evoke Philomel and Titan, a tree, a fountain, a Thracian poet. At the same time as it signifies so abundantly for onlookers, however, this body is unable to make aural or written signs, and therefore to bespeak Lavinia's own, subjective, presence.

After her mutilation, then, Lavinia's material and objective substance seems to exist apart from her lived body as an interactive and perceptive subject. Indeed, Marcus concludes as much when he tells Titus that 'this was thy daughter' (3.1.61). Lavinia, to outside eyes, seems no longer to 'live her body', no longer to be present 'inside' her mutilated flesh. Since she cannot be anywhere *but* her body, she is effectively non-existent. Marcus' conclusion, of course, is one which relies on his own perception of 'Lavinia-ness' as an identity which exists primarily in terms of relational object value. The things that make Lavinia, Lavinia, in Marcus' eyes, are her beauty and chastity, passive aspects of her selfhood which are identity-forming inasmuch as they mediate her relationship to other people. As Sallie Anglin argues, 'She can no longer play the part of maid or wife and retains no social or economic power as a widow because her mutilation makes her undesirable . . . She is a dead girl walking – a visible reminder of a life that no longer exists.'⁵⁵ Having lost the identity that made her 'Rome's rich ornament' and become something animal,

⁵⁵ Sallie J. Anglin, 'Generative Space: Embodiment and Identity at the Margins on the Early Modern Stage', Ph.D. (University of Mississippi, 2013), p. 133.

Lavinia is both still Lavinia and no longer Lavinia. For the characters, her body cannot represent the maid, the wife, the body of Rome, or the woman. Lavinia is a kind of *memento mori*, but in this case she is a visual reminder and harbinger of her own death, a death that is still in progress.⁵⁶

Marcus' view is, of course, partial: there is more involved in 'living a body' than he realises, and it is left to Titus to remind the assembled mourners that Lavinia remains his daughter. Nonetheless, Lavinia's spectacularly altered body speaks of its trauma so loudly that it drowns out all alternative narratives, including the narrative thread which links ornament-of-Rome Lavinia to victim-Lavinia to potential-future-Lavinia. This present state is so visually and emotionally arresting that it seems to sever ties to past identity and truncate the possibility of a future one. Marcus, Titus, and Lucius all seek to speak for Lavinia, interpreting her tears and claiming to 'understand her signs' (3.1.143). She is effectively ventriloquised by men who wish to speak through and about her body. In their speeches, however, they rehearse her muteness, such that their interventions only emphasise her erasure as a subject and her status as a readable object:

Titus: . . . What shall I do
 Now I behold thy lively body so?
 Thou hast no hands to wipe away thy tears,
 Nor tongue to tell me who hath martyred thee . . .
 Look Marcus, ah, son Lucius, look on her!

(3.1.105–10)

The symbolic meanings ascribed to Lavinia in this discourse recollect that which 'naturally' belongs to the play's racial Other, Aaron the Moor. As Lavinia's bodily difference motivates the slew of killings which follow, Aaron's blackness is understood as the driving force behind his Machiavellianism, imbuing him with the desire to do 'a thousand dreadful things' (5.1.141). His qualitative difference from other characters is identified by Jennifer Feathers as recollecting the concern with personal boundaries and interpersonal 'contagion' which permeates *Titus* as a whole.⁵⁷ Where blackness is singular in its alliance with devilishness, however, there remains potential for Lavinia's body to signify in different ways. To escape her status as a spectacle of woe requires Lavinia to reclaim

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

⁵⁷ Jennifer Feather, 'Contagious Pity: Cultural Difference and the Language of Contagion in *Titus Andronicus*', in *Contagion and the Shakespearean Stage*, ed. Darryl Chalk and Mary Floyd-Wilson, Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 169–87, especially 176–82, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14428-9>.

her body as not only a sign in itself, but a vehicle for *making* meaning, something which perceptibly looks upon the world as well as being looked at. This ability to make meaning is what is offered by Lavinia's use of the staff as prosthetic, and it is no accident that this comes in the form of reading and writing. As Mary Laughlin Fawcett contends, 'Words are embodied and disembodied throughout this work. One person becomes the text for another's explication, a challenge for interpretation.'⁵⁸ In her detailed work on the significance of hands on the early modern stage, Farah Karim-Cooper traces the connection between Lavinia's 'scrawl', which requires the already-written text of the *Metamorphosis* for its explication, and the nature of hand-writing in early modern culture.⁵⁹ One's 'hand', she argues, conveys one's character in all senses of that word, and the proliferation of pointing hands (manicules) in early modern texts serves as a visual reminder of the link between writing and thinking, body and text.⁶⁰ The agential significance of hands has also been emphasised by Katherine Rowe, who argues that the hand represents the juncture between mechanistic and analogical understandings of human intention and action. Early modern anatomies, she observes, privileged the hand as the pre-eminent example of divine design; 'the hand becomes the prominent vehicle for integrating sacred mystery with corporeal mechanism'.⁶¹ Severing Lavinia's hands is therefore a symbolic as well as pragmatic act of disempowerment – replacing them, however crudely, is equally significant.

How does this solve the problem of the staff? In light of the above, I argue that including the staff in Act 4 Scene 1 reiterates both possibilities of response to Lavinia's body: as a sign to be read, and as a sign-maker. That is, the scene highlights Lavinia's status as both object and subject. Lavinia's mutilated body has been the text which others attempt to read. With the acquisition of the book and stick, however, she becomes able to make signs, and thus to demarcate herself as a subject with an interior life. Karim-Cooper describes how 'The act of writing produces [Lavinia's] "hand"'. Here she is re-remembered properly through her script, her "character".⁶² Immediately after she writes on the sand, Lavinia is invited by

⁵⁸ Mary Laughlin Fawcett, 'Arms/Words/Tears: Language and the Body in Titus Andronicus', *ELH* 50:2 (1983): 263.

⁵⁹ Farah Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 226–32.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶¹ Katherine Rowe, 'God's Handy Worke', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David A. Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 287.

⁶² Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage*, p. 233.

Marcus to kneel alongside him with young Lucius and her father to swear revenge. Though she has no voice to swear, it is now recognised that she is still 'inside' her mute body, and is capable of making a vow if not of uttering it. Titus' simple command at the end of the scene – 'Lavinia, come' – marks the end of the characters' dwelling on her alteration and the beginning of Lavinia's inclusion in the play's revenge plot. Admittedly, Titus' plan does not reach very far ahead, but it has intention and impetus, and sharing in it affords Lavinia some, albeit imperfect, agency.

Lavinia's staff redraws the limits of her phenomenological encounters with the world. In a limited way, therefore, the staff, the book, and Lavinia's body are 'incorporated', just as we have seen that more sophisticated artificial limbs could be incorporated with the natural bodies of their users. In criticism of *Titus*, much has been made of the potential melding of Lavinia's natural body with these man-made objects. Likening these items to 'phantom limbs', Shawn Huffman writes

The *Metamorphosis* is her phantom limb . . . giving immaterial and fictional existence to the hands and to the tongue that Lavinia no longer has. As the scene [4.1] unfolds, she writes the names of her attackers on the sand with Marcus' wooden staff. When her entourage finally makes sense of the signs being produced through her phantom limbs, these limbs take on a material presence, yet always as an Ovidian textual ghost, the wooden staff literally a limb trimmed from the transformed Daphne, a phantom tongue through which Lavinia speaks the names of her rapists.⁶³

Huffman is right to see how the *Metamorphosis* extends Lavinia's agential scope, and may thus be said to be imbued with her subjectivity despite its object status. The historical specificity of the phantom limb metaphor which he uses is discussed at length in Chapter 6 of this book. Nonetheless, I argue that it is equally important to consider the status of those prosthetic items as non-human and distinct from Lavinia's body. Lavinia uses the stick awkwardly; her powers of expression, and her utterance ('*Stuprum* – Chiron – Demetrius'), remain stunted. Though the interweaving of material goods and corporeal abilities is, as I have shown, crucial to narratives of prosthesis, Lavinia's stick is also significant because it is *not* her body. This means that when Lavinia makes meaning via those items – and is then able to discard them – she shifts the burden of object-hood on to these mute materials. Her body is thus able to be reinstated as a 'lived body', with the particular combination of subject- and

⁶³ Shawn Huffman, 'Amputation, Phantom Limbs, and Spectral Agency in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Normand Chaurette's *Les Reines*', *Modern Drama* 47:1 (2004): 71.

object-hood that that entails. Her status as a thinking subject with an interior life can come to the fore only when she is able to direct the way in which her body ‘speaks’.

This moment of reclaiming the voice is a powerful one. It is not, however, a straightforward rehabilitation. As we have seen, Lavinia’s staff is a prosthetic, which enables some reclamation of subjecthood. Nonetheless, it is also a prop, which comes with its own signifiatory history, and the potential to make meaning in ways unintended by its user. Karim-Cooper and Caroline Lamb have both observed that Lavinia’s attaining agency via material technologies has something in common with early modern narratives which show disabled people accomplishing ‘normal’ tasks by displaying incredible dexterity or tenacity. They read this connection as signalling the possibility of Lavinia’s rehabilitation, even her emancipation. Karim-Cooper states: ‘If the body is able to transcend manual dismemberment, an amputee might still be an active force expressing identity and intention,’ and she indicates Paré’s prosthesis writings as evidence of early modern people coping with limb loss.⁶⁴ Lamb similarly describes *Titus* as featuring ‘a notable attentiveness to the personal and social negotiations disability engenders, especially in terms of how Titus and Lavinia face the potential of losing normative modes of corporeal expression (speech, gesture, writing)’.⁶⁵ The ability to physically adapt shown by Titus and Lavinia is, she argues, allied with ‘a subject’s ability to cultivate personal ability and agency’.⁶⁶

However, if there is emancipatory potential here (and there is, albeit fleeting), there is also the potential for Lavinia’s writing prowess to be read as a freak show, for the gaze to rest on the spectacle of a disabled body ‘performing’ rather than attending to the subjectivity of that body. This tendency is strongly evident in early modern renderings of the ‘supercrip’ trope of the very sort that Karim-Cooper cites. The ‘supercrip’ described in Paré’s *Workes* displays amazing facility without his hands, as the surgeon relates:

A few yeeres agoe there was a man of forty yeeres old to be seene at *Paris*, who although he wanted his armes, notwithstanding did indifferently performe all those things which are usually done with the hands, for with the top of his shoulder, head and necke, hee would strike an Axe or Hatchet

⁶⁴ Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage*, pp. 229, 230–1.

⁶⁵ Caroline Lamb, ‘Physical Trauma and (Adapt)Ability in *Titus Andronicus*’, *Critical Survey* 22:1 (2010): 48.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

with as sure and strong a blow into a poast, as any other man could doe with his hand; and hee would lash a coach-mans whip, that he would make it give a great crack . . . but he ate, drunke, plaid at cardes, and such like, with his feet.⁶⁷

This narrative, as Karim-Cooper argues, ‘attests to the sense that the body, in spite of its disability or disfigurement, could somehow adapt itself to its new condition’.⁶⁸ However, there is also a sense that the tasks undertaken here – cracking a whip and wielding a hatchet – are performed for the gratification of the beholders rather than as a facet of normal life. Moreover, Paré concludes the tale with a twist: ‘at last he was taken for a thiefe and murderer, was hanged and fastened to a wheele’.⁶⁹ Frequently in narratives about such ‘supercrips’, adaptability was matched by deviance, so that onlookers might feel themselves justified in staring at the adaptive body for signs of criminality or fakery. People with disabilities were often characterised as morally perverse, such that those who were capable of remarkable physical feats might also be capable of extraordinary crimes. This was, for example, the case when the disabled vagrant John Arthur was convicted in 1614 of having strangled his (also disabled) lover, despite being both ‘lame and limblesse’.⁷⁰ The agency this man showed in attracting a lover and leading an itinerant lifestyle was understood as of a piece with the agency required to commit murder: ‘The Cripple . . . tooke the womans owne girdle, and putting the same slyly about her necke, where though nature had denied him strength and limbes, yet by the help of the divell . . . he made meanes in her sleep to strangle her.’⁷¹ ‘Super-able’ altered bodies were by no means regarded as unequivocally positive.

The visibly prostheticised person was thus always already an object of visual interest, an artefact signalling adaptability, ingenuity, and physical and economic limitation. However, Lavinia’s prop-prosthetic has yet

⁶⁷ Paré, *The Workes*, p. 976.

⁶⁸ Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage*, p. 229.

⁶⁹ Paré, *The Workes*, p. 976.

⁷⁰ Anon., *Deeds against Nature, and Monsters by Kinde Tryed at the Goale Deliuerie of Newgate, at the Sessions in the Old Bayly, the 18. and 19. of Iuly Last, 1614. the One of a London Cripple Named Iohn Arthur, That to Hide His Shame and Lust, Strangled His Betrothed Wife. The Other of a Lasciuious Young Damsell Named Martha Scambler, Which Made Away the Fru[i]t of Her Own Womb, That the World Might Not See the Seed of Her Owne Shame: Which Two Persons with Diuers Others Vvere Executed at Tyburne the 21. of Iuly Following. With Two Sorrowfull Ditties of These Two Aforesaid Persons, Made by Themselues in Newgate, the Night before Their Execution* (London: printed [by G. Eld] for Edward Wright, 1614), f. A2r

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, f. A3r

another signifiatory element which exceeds the control of its user. That is, the temptation to gaze at Lavinia's supplemented body as an extraordinary object is exacerbated by the particular phallic potential of the stick in her mouth. If the stick in this instance is a pen, it is also, as numerous scholars have noted, a pen-is, and its use is implicated in the obsessive rehashing of Lavinia's trauma that runs throughout the play. As King describes,

Lavinia's inability to bear witness becomes a pornographic fetish through the repeated invocation of her traumatized mouth. Even when Lavinia is granted limited agency . . . the text demands an explicit and vulgar re-enactment of the offstage crime. In Lavinia's attempt to communicate, she takes the phallic staff into her mouth, mimicking not only an act of fellatio but gesturing towards the original trauma of rape with her wounded mouth/vagina.⁷²

We may read this spectacle as a rehashing of the sexual objectification which has dogged Lavinia since the play's beginning and culminated in her rape and mutilation. This time, moreover, the audience is directly implicated in Lavinia's ordeal; having seen only the spectacular effects of the original rape, a symbolic version of that violation now mixes pity and revulsion with fascination, even arousal. Imagining the staff as having an 'agenda' of its own, making meaning independently of the user, raises further problems. To view objects as having an interactional 'life' of their own, as proponents of object-oriented ontology advocate, is necessarily to remove the distinction between 'subject' and 'object', such that subject-object relations are replaced by object-object relations.⁷³ To place Lavinia and her staff on the same plane, however, feels like reducing this sympathetic character to an instrument, in the same way that Chiron and Demetrius, Marcus, and even Titus have already attempted. The audience who see Lavinia's staff acting with and upon her body are thus complicit in her object-ification. If the body and the staff are the same sort of *thing*, there is no reason why one may be used and abused and not the other. Lavinia's prop-prosthesis may enable her to turn from a passive

⁷² Emily King, 'The Female Muselmann: Desire, Violence and Spectatorship in *Titus Andronicus*', in *Titus out of Joint: Reading the Fragmented Titus Andronicus*, ed. Liberty Stanavage and Paxton Hehmyer (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), p. 135; See also Kim Solga, *Violence against Women in Early Modern Performance: Invisible Acts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 49.

⁷³ Andrew Cole, 'The Call of Things: a Critique of Object-Oriented Ontologies', *Minnesota Review* no. 80 (2013): 106–18.

sign into an active sign-maker, from mute object to expressive subject. Inevitably, however, the meanings attached to such an item exceed the control of the character-user and even of the author. Lavinia's relationship to the 'thing' she exploits may thus turn out to be one of mutual manipulation.

Conclusion

In real life and on stage, people with altered bodies – including amputees – faced the problem of bodily dys-appearance. By looking and working differently, their bodies invited scrutiny as remarkable objects. The lived body was, as we have seen, always both object and subject. However, physical anomaly could obscure the 'subject' part of that equation, rendering the body alien to oneself, and merely a mute object in the eyes of others. Ideally, prostheses could turn this dys-appearance to dis-appearance, allowing the user to interact with the world as a feeling, thinking person, rather than being viewed principally as a curious, exotic, or pathetic *thing*. This was not necessarily a dis-appearance effected by covering up the anomalous part. We have seen how complex artificial limbs did not so much disguise disability as obviate it by promising a return to bodily functionality. Likewise, Lavinia's prosthetic staff does not hide her mutilation but only reminds her family that someone remains 'inside' that injured body. In both cases, prostheses showed what was deemed important about being human.

The irony of prosthesis use, however, was that these items could themselves attract the objectifying gaze. The engineering which made some early modern artificial limbs able to move and grasp objects also made them objects of wonder, to be verbally and visually anatomised in medical literature. Lavinia's unsophisticated writing aid attracts the gaze in a different way, as a freakish or sexual spectacle. Prosthetic limbs therefore amplify issues of subjectivity and objectivity which we have seen arise throughout this book. On one hand, depictions of prosthesis use seem to suggest that there is a person 'inside' the body, for whom a prosthesis – and the body in general – is an expressive tool. On the other, the matter of the body is viewed as integral to identity, such that the object-hood of the prosthesis, which includes its history and associations, only renders the user more open to objectification themselves. Indeed, it is only the observations made by able-bodied people about prostheses and their users which survive for modern analysis. The majority of people who used unremarkable wooden limbs have no voice

in the historical record. Attempts by able-bodied authors to imagine how such voices might sound offer another perspective on attitudes towards the non-normative body, but one that nonetheless reflects an ableist bias. We may surmise that 'real' people with disabilities thought little about the relationship of their prosthetics to their natural body; but we cannot know for certain.