

3-2018

## The Victorian Body

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Capuano, Peter J., "The Victorian Body" (2018). *Faculty Publications -- Department of English*. 201.  
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# The Victorian Body

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## Introduction

The nineteenth century is extremely important for the study of embodiment because it is the period in which the modern body, as we currently understand it, was most thoroughly explored. This was the era when modern medical models of the body were developed and disseminated, when modern political relations to the body were instantiated, and when modern identities in relation to class, race, and gender were inscribed. While questions about the distinctions between personhood and the body were studied by the ancients, nineteenth-century developments in technology, economics, medicine, and science rendered such categories newly important for Britons who were the first to experience a fully industrialized society. This entry is designed to outline the changing experiences of embodiment in the Victorian period, and is therefore divided into the following sections: anatomy, gender, femininity, masculinity, health and sickness, industrialized and technologized bodies, physiology and reading, evolution and race, disability, adolescence, and old age.

## General Overviews

**Gilbert, Pamela K.** “The Body.” *Victorian Network*. 6:1 (Summer 2015): 1-6.

A brief sketch of how “body studies” was initiated by inquiries into gender and biopolitics, but how the field has grown through materialist concerns ranging from the ergonomic and the economic, evolution and industrialism, disease and health, medical and legal history, sexuality, and very recent “neuro-humanities.”

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Published in *Oxford Bibliographies in Victorian Literature*. Ed. Juliet John. Oxford University Press. (March 2018) <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199799558/obo-9780199799558-0148.xml>  
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**Taylor, Jenny Bourne. “Body and mind.”** In *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1830-1914*. Ed. Joanne Shattock. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 184-204.

A succinct account of how representations of the body rendered the dense social world of the Victorian period legible. Includes sections devoted to the visible codes of phrenology and physiognomy; the subtle internal processes linking nerves to the mind and the brain; the power of reflex and instinctive response, and the embodiment of memory.

**Zemka, Sue. “The Body.”** In *The Encyclopedia of Victorian Literature*. Eds. Dino Felluga, Pamela K. Gilbert, Linda K. Hughes. Malden: Blackwell, 2015. 147-160.

A longer appraisal of the ways in which materialist scholarship has impacted studies of the Victorian body. By analyzing topics such as industrial and political economics, evolution and neurology, disease and disability, technology and race, this introduction shows how emotional, psychological, and even spiritual experience in the Victorian period was imagined—if not explained—in terms of physiological processes.

## General Anatomy

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the study of human anatomy was performed as a means for multiple ends. The most famous and successful medical advance was made by Henry Gray with *Gray’s Anatomy: Descriptive and Surgical* 1973. Richardson 2008 surveys this book’s historical impact. Rifkin, Ackerman, and Folkenberg 2006, though broad in its focus, includes helpful biographies of influential anatomists. Kemp and Wallace 2000 offers a catalogued presentation of historical bodily artifacts. The religious, political, and scientific understandings of the body in the early nineteenth century are encapsulated in Paley 2008. Bell 2009 extends Paley’s notion of godly “design” in the natural world by focusing on the hand’s physiological intricacies as proof of God’s existence. Capuano 2012 posits that Bell’s decision to treat the hand in a Bridgewater Treatise was also affected by his concern for the mutilation of hands in England’s early factories.

Bell, Charles. *The Hand: Its Mechanisms and Endowments as Evincing Design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Library Editions, 2009. Originally published in 1833.

This 1833 study interprets the creation of the human hand as evidence of God’s design in the natural world. It is a Bridgewater Treatise written by a leading professor of surgery and anatomy.

Capuano, Peter J. "On Sir Charles Bell's The Hand, 1833." BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth-Century History. Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net, 2012. <http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps-articles=peter-capuano-on-sir-charles-bells-the-hand-1833>

Explores the cultural context of Bell's work and argues that The Hand was not merely an extension of design-oriented natural theology, but also an important response to the era's struggle with the grim physical reality of the supersession of manual labor by automatic manufacture.

Gray, Henry. *Anatomy: Descriptive and Surgical*. Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1973. Originally published in 1858.

Far better known as *Gray's Anatomy*, this text is so comprehensive that it has not been out of print since it was first published in London in 1858. It is still the cornerstone text used to teach today's medical students about human anatomy.

Kemp, Martin, and Marina Wallace. *Spectacular Bodies: The Art and Science of the Human Body, from Leonardo to Now*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Derived from exhibitions at London's Hayward Gallery, this catalogue-style book presents the reader with more than 300 anatomical drawings, wax models, medical charts, instruments, prints, photos, video stills, and other forms of preserved body parts.

Paley, William. *Natural Theology; or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Originally published in 1802.

This influential text's basic assertion is that contrivance in the natural world shows the presence of a designing intelligence. Paley stakes his entire argument on the "evidence" provided in the divinely constructed human eye.

Richardson, Ruth. *The Making of Mr. Gray's Anatomy: Bodies, Books, Fortune, Fame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

An interesting and clearly-written account of the history of Henry Gray's famous Anatomy textbook (Gray 1973). It also helps sketch the rise and development of anatomical medicine in the nineteenth century.

Rifkin, Benjamin A., and Michael J. Ackerman, and Judith Folkenberg. *Human Anatomy: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*. New York: Abrams, 2006.

An extremely detailed and lavishly illustrated history of bodily representation from the sixteenth through twenty-first centuries. Includes short biographies of major anatomists that aid in the contextualization of nineteenth-century anatomy.

## Head and Face

The Victorians were obsessed with the pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy because they supposedly offered empirical “evidence” about a person’s inward intelligence, class, and general disposition at a historical moment when such information was blurred by urbanized industrialization. Graham 1961 recounts how Johann Lavater’s late eighteenth-century ideas about physiognomy made their way to England in the nineteenth century. Tytler 1982 analyzes how Lavater influenced literary character description and Hartley 2001 extends Lavater’s legacy throughout the century to Francis Galton. Cooter 1984 and Stack 2008 analyze the importance of George Combe to the championing of phrenology in the period. Claggett 2011 examines George Eliot’s treatment of phrenology over the course of her writing career while Pearl 2010 examines how much facial “literacy” mattered to everyday social interactions. O’Farrell 1997 builds on the period’s fascination with physiognomy by investigating how the blush acted as an important avenue to involuntary bodily legibility.

Claggett, Shalyn. “**George Eliot’s Interrogation of Physiological Future Knowledge.**” *Studies in English Literature* 51:4 (Autumn 2011): 849-864.

Examines the development of Eliot’s phrenological thinking and assesses its impact on her early work through her later fiction.

Cooter, Roger. *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Argues (with considerable theoretical acumen) that, amidst the uncertainties of economic change and political conflict of the 1820s and 1830s, phrenology provided individual members of society with “palpable proof” of their multiple identities. Contains a particularly useful account of George Combe’s championing of phrenology.

Graham, John. “**Lavater’s Physiognomy in England.**” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22.4 (1961): 561-572.

A wide ranging account of how Johann Lavater’s physiognomic ideas spread through English culture.

Hartley, Lucy. *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Traces the significance of physiognomical thinking through a range of scientific and aesthetic theories, ranging from Johann Lavater to Francis Galton. The book is far more concerned with cultural, rather than literary, contexts.

**O'Farrell, Mary Ann.** *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Argues that the blush is an author's means of rendering the body legible by "expressing" both erotic desires and social obligations.

Pearl, Sharrona. *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Written by a historian of science but largely concerned with the role physiological "literacy" played in the everyday life of nineteenth-century Britain. Focuses on physiognomy in three contexts: the street, the theater, and the insane asylum.

Stack, David. *Queen Victoria's Skull: George Combe and the Mid-Victorian Mind.* London: Continuum Books, 2008.

A misleadingly titled book, but nonetheless a comprehensive account of George Combe's life and its importance for nineteenth-century phrenology.

Tytler, Graeme. *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes.* New York: Princeton University Press, 1982.

An analysis of the literary portrait in the novel which argues that the development of the techniques of character description and the emergence of the observational powers of narrators and characters alike are indebted to Lavater.

### Cognitive/ Neural/ Brain Studies

The study of how brain functions affect the study of Victorian literature and culture has emerged as a controversial but exciting new approach to the period. Zunshine 2010 and 2015 provide excellent justifications for the field and new studies which reflect its originality as well as its intersections with other important cultural practices. Malane 2005 is an early study of how several canonical fiction writers distinguished between the brains of men and women. Dames 2007 presents a revelatory argument about the ways in which the physiological processes of reading relate to important Victorian concerns. Keen 2014 demonstrates how Thomas Hardy's interest in the psychology of his time affects how we interpret his work today.

Dames, Nicholas. *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Takes as its basis psychological accounts of the act of reading and traces their widespread influence in Victorian literary culture. Revelatory in relating an understudied strand of Victorian psychology—physiological processes in reading—to a variety of important aesthetic, political, and technological contexts.

Keen, Suzanne. *Thomas Hardy's Brains: Psychology, Neurology, and Hardy's Imagination*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2014.

Makes a persuasive case for reading Hardy's poetry and prose alongside the psychology and neurology of his time. Many have analyzed Hardy's interest in evolutionary science, but this monograph demonstrates Hardy as equally invested in "up-to-date knowledge of the psychology of his day."

Malane, Rachel. *Sex in Mind: The Gendered Brain in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Mental Sciences*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.

Analyzes how Charlotte Bronte, Wilkie Collins, and Thomas Hardy responded to contemporary medical and scientific theories about essential differences between the brains of men and women.

Zunshine, Lisa. Ed. *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

A collection of fourteen essays from a variety of historical and theoretical backgrounds which not only presents new literary interpretations resulting from applying insights from cognitive science to cultural representations, but which also seeks to demonstrate how cognitive approaches share common ground with existing literary-theoretical paradigms.

Zunshine, Lisa, Ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

An expansive collection of thirty essays which seeks to further define the growing field of cognitive criticism as at once resistant to unified literary theories and distinctly opposed to the essentialized scientism of a narrowly defined "literary Darwinism."

## Optical

The traditional association of realism with sightedness, combined with the turn to materiality in the study of Victorian culture, has made the optical a rich sub-field of body studies. Crary 1990 is one of the earliest and most influential works to study "the observing subject" in physiological terms. Christ and Jordan 1995 evaluates the central role of the visual imagination in creating modern subjectivity. Flint 2000 builds on this scholarship by treating the unseen as well as the seen in its evaluation of the workings and limitations of the eye. Krasner 1992 offers a unique study of how physical and cultural perception changes for post-Darwinian writers, while Willis 2011 considers the role of micro- and telescopic vision impacted late Victorian authors. Otter 2008 carves out an original argument about the ways in which artificial illumination created a more autonomous liberal subject by the beginning of the twentieth century.

Christ, Carol T. and John O. Jordan. Eds. *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

An important collection of essays on the Victorian visual imagination that identifies the turn to subjectivity leading to modernity as one of the most important developments in the nineteenth century. Individual essays address topics such as optical gadgetry, illustration, photography, street and urban iconology, among others.

Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1990.

A theoretically informed monograph exploring the system of discursive, social, and technological relations that constituted the observing subject in the nineteenth century—a subject deeply rooted in the physiology of the body. Includes a physiological understanding of vision in Goethe's color theory, Schopenhauer's philosophy, Johannes Muller's physiology, and Ruskin's aesthetics.

Flint, Kate. *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

An important interdisciplinary study that deepens and complicates nineteenth-century conceptions of sight, vision, the eye, perception, and point of view. Focusing on both the seen and the unseen, it treats the workings and limitations of the eye, the act of looking and its multiple manifestations, issues of spectatorship and of individual perspective, the intersections of vision and language as well as of metaphor and ideology.

Krasner, James. *The Entangled Eye: Visual Perception and the Representation of Nature in Post-Darwinian Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

An interesting work focusing on the broad category of perception and on the ways in which post-Darwinian writers represent the visible world. The book argues that Darwin's work diminishes the omniscient eye in exchange for one characterized by visual limitations and misunderstandings.

Otter, Chris. *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Traces the origins and development of artificial illumination through a meticulous examination of such banal objects as reading glasses, gas mains, sewers, electric switches, and their effects on human bodies and the culture they inhabit in British cities. While considering the problematic effects of illumination on ocular physiology and the medical resistance to the light that deluged cities, Otter shows that the development of eye exams, eye-care facilities, and spectacles—as well as the development of visual technologies ranging from pocket maps to street signs—gave the ordinary citizen far greater autonomy.

Willis, Martin. *Vision, Science and Literature, 1870-1920: Ocular Horizons*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011.

A study of how microscopic and telescopic vision, along with the medical science of ophthalmology and the fascination with optical illusions, impacted late Victorian fiction.

### The Photographic Body

Since Victorians were the first people to be photographed, it should come as no surprise that the photography was connected to “realistic” representations of nineteenth-century bodies. Green-Lewis 1996 represents one of the earliest and best monographs devoted to exploring this connection. Lalvani 1996 focuses on how photography was complicit in the construction of Victorian penal, labor, and medical practices. Novak 2008 offers an important alternative to the “exactitude” and preciseness of the photographed subject.

Green-Lewis, Jennifer. *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

An important account of the influence of photography in defining the Victorians’ “experiential world.” Includes a chapter on the convergence between psychiatry, photography, and physiognomy whereby the photograph became an authoritative means of visualizing and objectifying the human body.

Lalvani, Suren. *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

A Foucauldian argument of how photography became an institutional organ to gain knowledge and exercise power in penal, labor, and medical institutions. It situates photography at the end of a long line of Western visual practices, which are referred to as “the ocular epistemology” of human vision. Chapter titles include “Photography and the Bourgeois Body,” “Photography and the Deviant Body,” and “Photography and the Body of the Worker.”

Novak, Daniel A. *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

A compelling and important corrective study that seeks to redefine the notion of the photographic exactness, arguing instead for a counter approach grounded in how inexactness—based on nineteenth-century composite photographic practices—resembles a paradoxically more precise model for authors of realist fiction.

## Hands

The preponderance of scholarship devoted to the head and face has left hands—the only other routinely visible site on the Victorian body—relatively untreated until very recently. To be sure, many earlier critics have concerned themselves with the metaphoric or metonymic implications of hands, but it was not until the twenty-first century that materialist scholarship began to address the hand as an important body part in its own right. Rowe 1999 explores the Gothic trope of the severed hand from Shakespeare to Mark Twain. Briefel 2008 extends this focus on the lifeless hand in her contrast of Egyptian mummification and industrial production methods. Freedgood 2003 considers how lace-making hands (and the category of the “hand made”) become ideologically overdetermined when discussed in relation to anti-commodity discourses. Miller 2010 offers a rare deconstructive and highly theoretical analysis of how hands figure into the work of Thomas Hardy. Capuano 2010 and 2013 explore the ways in which focusing on hands in their historical and cultural contexts offers new interpretational horizons for work by Charles Dickens and Emily Bronte. Fraser and Burdett 2014 marks the consolidation of new interest in the emerging field of hand studies as it relates to haptics and tactility. Capuano 2015 is the first full-length treatment of how and why hands captivated the imagination of Victorians and affected virtually every node of nineteenth-century fiction.

**Briefel, Aviva. “Hands of Beauty, Hands of Horror: Fear and Egyptian Art at the Fin de Siecle.”** *Victorian Studies* 50:2 (2008): 263-271.

Focusing on Victorian narratives about Egypt, this essay argues that the horror of the mummy’s hand emanates from its ambiguous position as an object that is itself a means of “lost” manual production.

Capuano, Peter J. *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

The first book-length treatment of “embodied handedness” in Victorian literature and culture. It argues that, because of the advent of mechanized manufacture and the spread of new evolutionary theories linking hand-bearing animals to humans, physical handedness of all kinds became a newly dominant trope in nineteenth-century fiction.

Capuano, Peter J. **“Handling the Perceptual Politics of Identity in** *Great Expectations*. *Dickens Quarterly* 27:3 (2010): 185-208.

An essay that provides a new argument to account for how and why Dickens focuses so much on hands in this famous work. It asserts that Dickens, and Victorian culture at large, was caught up in the post-Origin of Species anxiety of connections between the hands of anthropoid apes and disavowed discourse on race, class, and gender.

**Capuano, Peter J.** “Networked Manufacture in Charlotte Bronte’s *Shirley*.” *Victorian Studies* 55:2 (Winter 2013): 231-242.

Focusing on an inverted relationship between the underused hands of Luddite weavers and the overused hands of middle-class females, this essay argues that *Shirley* is a novel of literal—not figurative—industrialization.

Fraser, Hilary and Carolyn Burdett. Eds. “**The Victorian Tactile Imagination.**” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 19:2 (2014).

A collection of essays by several senior critics which reflect the burgeoning critical interest in the material embodiment of hands in Victorian culture. Contributors chart how reconceptualization of the touch sense in scientific and psychophysiological discourses made it a particularly important mode through which to challenge the distinction between mind and body, agency and will, and the nature of the real.

**Freedgood, Elaine.** “**Fine Fingers’: Victorian Handmade Lace and Utopian Consumption.**” *Victorian Studies* 45:4 (Summer 2003): 625-47.

Exploring the dense symbolic potential of hands, this essay focuses on the Victorian lace-making trade to argue that the concept of the “hand made” is an ideologically over determined category inherited piecemeal from a complex combination of nineteenth-century anti-commodity discourses.

**Miller, J. Hillis.** “**Hardy’s Hands.**” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*. Ed. Rosemarie Morgan. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010. 505-516.

A brilliant deconstructionist interpretation of hands in Thomas Hardy’s fiction and poetry by one of the heaviest hitting critics of the Victorian period.

Rowe, Katherine. *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

A marvelous treatment of the myriad ways in which the trope of the severed hand illuminates important themes in literature and culture from William Shakespeare to Mark Twain. In a particularly strong chapter on Gothic and Victorian fiction, Rowe exposes how stories of lively, inimical, severed hands address the uncanny dependencies and alienations of domestic service and industrial labor.

## Other Body Parts

Otis 1999 and 2001 set the bar for interdisciplinary Victorian studies by considering how the work of nineteenth-century scientists impacted literary concerns ranging from metaphor usage to communication networks. Carlisle 2004 ushered in a new scholarly interest in Victorian senses by focusing on how the olfactory informed

fictional tropes in the 1860s. Cohen 2009 builds on this work by exploring how sensory experience of all kinds affected Victorian notions of embodiment. Blaire 2006 takes the human heart as its focus, drawing astonishing connections between medical doctors and metrical theorists. Rudy 2009 builds on this study of poetic meter by skillfully arguing that developments in Victorian electrical sciences can not be separated from bodily poetics.

Blair, Kirstie. *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Presents the heart as both a specific image in Victorian poetry and a multivalent term bound up in a wide array of cultural contexts. Some of these include the workings of the heart, Victorian theories of heart disease, the connections drawn between both medical doctors and metrical theorists in terms of pulse and poetic rhythm.

Carlisle, Janice. *Common Scents: Comparative Encounters in High-Victorian Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

A thoroughgoing investigation of olfaction in the nineteenth century that gives particular attention to how the sense of smell informs class relations in the fiction of the 1860s.

Cohen, William A. *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

A monograph that historicizes Victorian sensory experience through analysis of works by Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. These readings are balanced by a firm commitment to engaging with twentieth- and twenty-first-century theories of embodiment.

Otis, Laura. *Membranes: Metaphors of Invasion in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Science, and Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

A fascinating study that examines how the image of the biological cell became a dominant metaphor in nineteenth-century science and literature. It is a genuinely interdisciplinary monograph connecting the work of neurologists and neurobiologists to literary developments.

Otis, Laura. *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

A monograph connecting physicists, neurobiologists, engineers, and novelists in a pivotal cultural network that ultimately reveals how the metaphor of communication shaped important nineteenth-century conceptions of bodies and machines.

Rudy, Jason. *Electric Meters: Victorian Physiological Poetics*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009.

This original book connects formal poetic innovations to developments in the electrical and physiological sciences. It argues that the electrical sciences and bodily poetics cannot be separated, and that they came together with special force in the years between the 1830s, which witnessed the invention of the electric telegraph, and the 1870s, when James Clerk Maxwell's electric field theory transformed the study of electrodynamics.

### Constructions of the Gendered Body

Many social commentators in the nineteenth century cited bodily differences between men and women as evidence for the powerful "separate sphere" ideology that virtually defined middle-class life in the Victorian period: the conviction that women's bodies and minds were "naturally" more domestic and feeling, while men's were "naturally" more rational and superior. Patmore 1854-56 is a best-selling poem that is famous for cementing woman's exalted place in the home. Walker 1840, draws on contemporary medical and physiological discourses, to explain woman's "natural" position of feebleness in comparison to man. Ellis 1839 is an influential early work by a female confirming woman's role of domestic subservience to man. Lewis 1839 accepts woman's "inferior" physical stature but argues for a superior female moral nature over man. Reid 1843 and Cobbe 1863 offer brisk commentaries arguing that a woman's physiological stature is unrelated to the fulfillment of a positive domestic life. Taylor 1868 is an eminently logical statement which seeks to obviate the necessity for laws against female participation in social and political life outside the home. Mill 1869 builds on Taylor 1868 in arguing that increased educational opportunities for woman will help prove her abilities in the public sphere. It also famously compares the dwarfed status of women in Britain to chattel slavery.

#### (Primary Sources)

Cobbe, Frances Power. *Essays on the Pursuits of Women*. London: Faithfull, 1863. Cobbe explores sexual and matrimonial inequality and the changing status of and opportunities for single women, and advocates greater and more extensive female education. Cobbe also discusses the fraudulence of physiological reasoning behind the inequality and limitations experienced by single and married women.

Ellis, Sarah Stickney. *The Women of England*. London: Fisher, 1839.

The first in a trilogy of works which delineate women's "natural" role of domestic subservience based in large part on the female's supposedly inferior mental and bodily strength. It infamously describes women as "relative creatures" in comparison to men.

Lewis, Sarah. *Woman's Mission*. London: John W. Parker, 1839.

A text that acknowledges women's "inferior" physical stature but one that emphasizes women's superior moral nature in comparison to men.

Mill, John Stuart. *The Subjection of Women*. London: Longman, 1869.

Based largely on his wife's (Harriet Taylor) views on the stark inequalities between men and women in the Victorian period, Mill systematically exposes how the typical subordination of "the weaker sex to the stronger" rests solely on theory rather than fact. He also compares the restrictions on female life to the abhorrent system of chattel slavery.

Patmore, Coventry. *The Angel In the House*. London: Cassel, 1901. Originally published from 1854-1856.

A best-selling poem in both Britain and the United States that offers a sentimental depiction of the "ideal" female as a domestic wife content with her subservient status. The poem's title has become shorthand for describing Victorian attitudes toward a woman's "natural" place in the home.

Reid, Marion Kirkland. *A Plea for Woman*. London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1843.

Sometimes described as the most thorough and effective statement by a woman since Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* (1792), this text strategically argues that there is nothing about a woman's physiological condition that should limit her to domestic life.

Taylor, Harriet. "The Enfranchisement of Women." London: Trubner, 1868. Originally published in the *Westminster Review* in July 1851.

A powerful, eloquent, and emphatically logical statement rejecting the notion of woman's "natural" domesticity and subservience to man. It directly challenges the notion of woman's "inability" to participate in public life by shrewdly pointing out that rules against such participation were superfluous: if a woman truly could not succeed in life outside the home, she would fail at her extra-domestic endeavors, thereby obviating the need for restrictive laws.

Walker, Alexander. *Woman Physiologically Considered*. London: Baily, 1840. Originally published in 1839.

An argument that a woman's physical attributes ensure "natural sensibility, feebleness and timidity."

## The Feminine Body

Feminist critics in the 1970s began to systematically dismantle the structures and practices of a patriarchy that inhibited readers from recognizing the resistance that

Victorian women struggled against throughout the nineteenth century. Basch 1974 uncovers the “myth” of Victorian womanhood that made her only a figure “relative” to man in the first half of the nineteenth century. Auerbach 1982 builds on this mythical status to show the subversive power of the female residing at the heart of Victorian patriarchy. Vicinus 1973 and 1977 address the complex array of psychological, biological, and literary forces that underpin stereotypical Victorian femininity and point out how women forged gradual but meaningful change in each of these areas. Michie 1987 investigates various formal and linguistic techniques to show how women’s bodies resist cultural pressures to define, describe, and even extinguish its presence in Victorian texts. Poovey 1998 is a pioneering work of historical-materialist scholarship that demonstrates how and why it matters that nineteenth-century representations of gender were asymmetrically developed and contested. Matus 1995 considers how Victorian notions of maternity informed cultural depictions of female sexuality.

Auerbach, Nina. *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

A brilliant revision of understandings of the period’s cultural imagination that reveals a subversive myth of divine and demonic female power at the heart of Victorian patriarchy.

Basch, Francois. *Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel*. New York: Schocken, 1974.

A seminal work of criticism responding to the separation of gendered spheres in the first half of the Victorian period. It outlines the narrow and obsessively held mythology of womanhood: the sanctified wife-mother, the caricatured single woman, and the condemned impure woman. A rigorous historical analysis of the conditions which shaped Victorian women and their fictional counterparts.

Matus, Jill. *Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

This monograph historicizes the work of Victorian novelists in relation to biomedical and social scientific discussions of sexuality and maternity, considering in particular how women’s writing shaped cultural representations of sexuality.

Michie, Helena. *The Flesh Made Word: **Female Figures and Women’s Bodies***. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

An important contribution to feminist criticism that examines the highly coded representations of female bodies in the Victorian era. By claiming that these codes function to include the female body they would persistently exclude, Michie argues that women’s flesh survives in spite of a the culture’s desire to extinguish it through various formal and linguistic techniques.

Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

An extremely influential work of historicist criticism that explores how constructed notions of gender shape a culture's ideologies. Drawing on parliamentary debates, medical treatises, novels, and etiquette manuals, Poovey revisits several important nineteenth-century debates to show how representations of gender were (unevenly) developed, deployed, and contested.

Vicinus, Martha. Ed. *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.

Ten illuminating essays by distinguished critics that document the psychological, biological, sociological, and literary underpinnings of stereotypical femininity in Victorian contexts. Contains an extensive annotated bibliography by S. Barbara Kanner.

Vicinus, Martha. Ed. *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.

A follow-up to *Suffer and Be Still*, the essays in this volume chronicle the expansion of Victorian women's interests and activities as they underwent gradual but meaningful change. Includes essays by Sally Mitchell, Judith Walkowitz, Carol Christ, as well as another annotated bibliography by S. Barbara Kanner.

## The Masculine Body

The proliferation of feminist critical perspectives in the 1970s and 1980s had an additional effect of complicating understandings of masculinity beyond a monolithic and unified category of maleness. One early and conservative formulation of multiple masculinities as they pertain to canonical male sage writers of the nineteenth century is Haley 1978. Hall 1994, Adams 1995, and Sussman 1995 offer far more complex and nuanced interpretations of traditionally charted fields of Victorian manhood—particularly in their treatment of important strains of middle-class male anxiety. Barringer 2005 explores the extent to which masculinity informed the relationship between labor and Victorian art. Smith 2004 applies findings from Hall 1994, Adams 1995, and Sussman 1995 to dominant representations of masculine anxiety at the very end of the nineteenth century. Bourrier 2015 considers how the disabled male body impacts formal features of the Victorian novel.

Adams, James Eli. *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995

Drawing on work in feminism, queer theory, and cultural history, this monograph challenges scholars to rethink monolithic notions of Victorian manhood. A

distinguishing feature of this book is its refusal to approach masculinity primarily in terms of “patriarchy” or “phallogocentrism” or within the binary of homosexualities and heterosexualities.

Barringer, Tim. *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

This lavishly illustrated book offers a compelling study of the image as a means of exploring the relationship between labour and art in Victorian Britain. It contains nearly 150 color and black and white images. Confronts questions of whether labor is the province of men, the degree to which it is a moral obligation, and how depictions of agricultural work affect industrialized identities of both genders.

Bourrier, Karen. *The Measure of Manliness: Disability and Masculinity in the Mid-Victorian Novel*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

An important book that reconsiders constructions of Victorian masculinity from the perspective of the disabled male body. It is one of the first studies to reveal that representations of disability, far from being marginalized or pathologized, were central to the formal features of the mid-century novel.

Haley, Bruce. *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Considering developments in personal and public health, this monograph analyzes popular conceptions of the healthy male during the Victorian period: Thomas Carlyle’s “healthy hero,” Herbert Spencer’s “biologically perfect man,” John Henry Newman’s “gentleman-Christian,” Charles Kingsley’s “muscular Christian.” It also traces the concept of the healthy body in boy’s fiction, self-help literature, and several canonical Victorian novelists.

Hall, Donald E. Ed. *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

This collection of essays probes how masculinity, the male social role, and the male body itself, can be regarded as a cultural construct. They reveal the complexity and variety in the “muscular” movement, discuss unresolved contradictions, and describe how Victorians of varied religious, political, and sexual persuasions formulated their multiple masculinities. Five of the ten essays are devoted to Charles Kingsley.

Smith, Andrew. *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siecle*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Considers how a Gothic language of monstrosity influenced a range of medical and cultural contexts, revising notions of dominant middle-class masculine anxiety. It offers analysis of a range of examples relating to masculinity drawn from literary, medical, legal and sociological contexts, including Joseph Merrick (“The

Elephant Man'), the Whitechapel murders of 1888, Sherlock Holmes's London, the writings and trials of Oscar Wilde, theories of degeneration and medical textbooks on syphilis.

Sussman, Herbert. *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Explores ideas of manhood and masculinity as they emerged in the early Victorian period, and traces these through diverse formations in the literature and art of the time. Concentrating on representative major figures—Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Walter Pater—it focuses on areas of conflict and contradiction within their formulation of the masculine. It identifies a Victorian “masculine plot” as a significant counterbalance to the traditional “marriage plot.”

### Unhealthy Bodies

Gilbert and Gubar 1979 is the undisputed urtext for considerations of physical and psychic sickness in the nineteenth century, particularly as these conditions apply unevenly to women. Showalter 1987 builds on Gilbert and Gubar to provide a culturally feminist understanding of the history of insanity from the beginning of the Victorian period through the late twentieth century. Gilbert 1997 analyzes the centrality of the corrupted female body to sensation fiction written in the mid to late Victorian period. Silver 2002 is a culmination of feminist critique focusing on the socially, politically, and physically starved woman in Victorian literature. Bailin 1994, Vrettos 1995, and Bending 2000 analyze how various forms of pain and sickness inform nineteenth-century narratives. Gilbert 2008 explores cholera's role in the Victorian imagination of individual and social bodies.

Bailin, Miriam. *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction: The Art of Being Ill*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

This book's primary concern is with the role of the sickroom scene as it unfolds in the Victorian novel. It argues that this scene offers a form of consoling community where the stresses of the external world diminish.

Bending, Lucy. *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century English Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

An exploration of the ways bodily pain was understood during the second half of the nineteenth century. Four main areas are addressed: the conflict between Christianity and science over the meaning of pain and suffering; the exploitation of animals (and the anti-vivisection movement); the class- and race-based hierarchical view of the body's sensitivity to pain; and the part played by flogging in Victorian institutions.

Gilbert, Pamela K. *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

An extremely influential treatment of "sensation" novels that reveals the ways in which the reading of these popular Victorian texts was compared to damaging bodily activities such as eating, drug-taking, and sexual intercourse. The corrupted female body emerges as a specific site of cultural anxiety in readings of work by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Rhoda Broughton, and Ouida.

Gilbert, Pamela K. *Cholera and Nation: Doctoring the Victorian Social Body*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

A comprehensive argument of how the cholera epidemic affected Victorian ideas of the body and its nation.

Gilbert, Sandra M and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

One of the very few canonical texts of literary and feminist criticism, this book argues that women writing in the nineteenth century had come to terms with fictional images of women that constituted crushing psychic impediments to her own creativity. It chronicles the strategies by which women writers rejected, succumbed to, or ambivalently compromised with the masculine literary tradition.

Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*. New York: Penguin, 1987.

This monograph surveys the history of insanity from the 1830s on, revealing the social, medical, and cultural forces that constructed the illness as an essentially female malady. In doing so, it offers a more complete, and revised, feminist understanding of the history of insanity.

Silver, Anna Krugovoy. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

A historicist monograph that explores how gender, food refusal, and the constrained body accrued complex meanings for Victorian readers.

Vrettos, Athena. *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Explores the interconnections between medical and literary narratives of sickness and health to determine how these "somatic fictions" negotiate important Victorian anxieties of cultural identity. It analyzes medical, psychiatric, and evolutionary texts alongside fictional work by George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Daphne du Maurier, H. Rider Haggard, and Bram Stoker.

## Primary Source Supporters of Industrialized Bodies

England's relatively rapid industrialization raised important questions about the the bodies of its workers. Babbage 1963, Baines 1835, Ure 1835, Taylor, 1842, and Martineau 1852 all emphasize the factory and its workers as an organic body and the factory system as an expression of particular British genius. In doing so, these authors present mechanized manufacture, not as a dangerous monster that mutilates its workers, but as an integral part of the national social body.

Babbage, Charles. *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures*. New York: Kelley, 1963. Originally published in 1832.

A comprehensive treatise espousing the efficiency of industrial as opposed to manual production. Refers to industrial machines as "beautiful contrivances" of efficiency that outperform the human body.

Baines, Edward. *The History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain*. London: Fisher, Fisher, and Jackson, 1835.

A Whiggish history of the cotton industry which calls the industrial power loom "a grand triumph of science" over the handwork of the human body.

Martineau, Harriet. "**What There Is in a Button.**" *Household Words* 138 (November 13, 1852): 106-112.

A lengthy article praising the efficiency and beauty of a "button manufactory" in Birmingham. It is a highly laudatory account of industrial architecture, machinery, and function. Depicts men, women, and children working harmoniously with the "exquisite machinery" of the factory.

Taylor, William Cooke. *Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire*. London: Duncan and Malcolm, 1842. Originally published in 1841.

A piece of free-trade and machine propaganda in the guise of a travel narrative. Represents the factory as an "organic body" and the factory system as an expression of English "genious."

Ure, Andrew. *The Philosophy of Manufactures*. London: Bohn, 1835.

A technical treatise exalting the production of goods by machines. Praises the "mechanical fingers and arms" of machinery and their "indefatigable physical power" in comparison to human production.

## Primary Source Critics of Industrialized Bodies

Carlyle 1858 is among the earliest and most well-known critics of mechanized manufacture, though his central concern is for the mechanization of English thought that may subtend factory production. Gaskell 1833, Oastler 1835, and Wing 1837 focus on the myriad negative physical effects of factory production on the workers' body. Marx 1990 is a powerful denunciation of an entire system that replaces workers bodies with "mechanical monsters" for the sole purpose of capitalist monetary gain. Place 2003 and Tonna 1841 both assert that industrial manufacture runs counter to Christian moral values, though the former expresses this view in a letter while the latter does so in one of the few works of fiction that depict the inside of an early factory. Ruskin 2004 praises the imperfection, and therefore the "true craftsmanship," of work performed by the human body as opposed to the dehumanized work of the machine.

Carlyle, Thomas. "**Signs of the Times.**" In *The Collected Works of Thomas Carlyle*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1858. Originally published in 1829.

An essay that famously laments how the industrialization had caused Victorians to become "mechanical in head and heart, as well as hand." Carlyle calls for a greater balance between the mechanic and the dynamic in human thought and as action.

Gaskell, Peter. *The Manufacturing Population of England*. London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833.

A liberal physician's account of how mechanization adversely affects the worker's body. It is critical of the ways in which the worker's body becomes overtaken—and hence threatened—by the "cranks and cog-wheels" that rapidly "lessen [the worker's] importance."

Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume 1*. New York: Penguin, 1990. Originally published in 1867.

A magisterial work chronicling capitalism's developmental principles, it contains chapters dedicated to the specific transformation from of factory work moves from the worker's body to that of the machine. Powerfully describes how the single loom weaver is replaced by the capitalist industrial system where "a mechanical monster who fill whole factories...finally bursts forth in the fast and feverish whirl of its countless working organs."

Oastler, Richard. "Yorkshire Slavery". London: Hobson, 1835.

A letter from a factory reformer to the editors of the *Leeds Mercury* (newspaper) asserting that the emaciated, overworked, and sometimes mangled bodies of men, women, and children in Britain's factories should be compared to colonial slavery.

**Place, Francis. "Handloom Weavers and Factory Workers: A Letter to James Turner, Cotton Spinner." In *Factory Production in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Ed. Elaine Freedgood. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Originally published in 1835.**

Appealing to the principles of Christianity, this letter asks how conscientious Britons could allow children to waste away while toiling in the "foul and blighting atmosphere" in "modern temples of Mammon."

Ruskin, John. *The Stones of Venice*. In *John Ruskin: Selected Writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Originally published 1851-1853.

A work of criticism praising the imperfection of Gothic architecture because it reveals human, rather than mechanical labor. It argues that the precision of machine work, because it makes human "fingers measure degrees like cogwheels" and their arms "strike curves like compasses," dehumanizes both worker and work produced.

Tonna, Charlotte Elizabeth. *Helen Fleetwood*. New York: Taylor, 1841. Originally published in 1839.

Usually acknowledged as the earliest and one of the few industrial novels to illustrate the inside of an English factory. To show the bleak working conditions that a family employed in a Manchester factory confronts, Tonna traces the substance of fictional events to official "blue-book" documents like the Sadler Committee Report, pamphlets of reformists, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, and even contemporary police reports.

Wing, Charles. *Evils of the Factory System*. London: Saunders and Otley, 1837.

A comprehensive volume which uses the testimony of medical doctors to argue for the deleterious effects of unregulated factory work on the bodies of children working in factories.

## Secondary Criticism of Industrialization and the Body

This lively and quite varied field of criticism parallels the debates about the merits and failures of industry carried out by contemporary social commentators. Bartrip and Burman 1983, Sanders 2000, and Bronstein 2008 trace the impact of physical injury to working bodies caused by the unregulated machinery. Fielding and Smith 1970 uses a disagreement between Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens regarding industrial legislation to expose the arguments both for and against intervention in Britain's free market economy. Gallagher 1985 and 2006 are pioneering studies that discuss how narrative fiction changed when it merged with the discourses of industrialism and political economy. Sussman 1968, Bizup 2003, and Ketabgian 2011

provide important counter arguments to the commonly held assumption that industrialism was perceived tout court as inorganically brutal, destructive, and harmful to British life. Zlotnick 1998 continues in this vein but argues that women writers were especially open to the expansion of industrial productions because, in it, they saw a more liberated future.

Bartrip, P. W. J. and S. B. Burman. *The Wounded Soldiers of Industry: Industrial Compensation Policy, 1833-1897*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1983.

Examining three industrial sectors—textiles, mines, and railways, this text utilizes a deep knowledge of relevant statistics and documentary sources regarding maimed workers' bodies to trace the slow but growing concern with factory casualties in the Victorian.

Bizup, Joseph. *Manufacturing Culture: Vindications of Early Victorian Industry*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.

An important corrective to the commonly reported belief that the factory system brutalized workers, destroyed domestic life, and ruined British taste. Argues instead that pro-industrial rhetoric was itself an important component of Victorian cultural ideology.

Bronstein, Jamie L. *Caught in the Machinery: Workplace Accidents and Injured Workers in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Explores the multiple facets of workers' experience of factory injuries in nineteenth-century England. Topics include workers' access to compensation through both legal and non-legal means, the cultural meaning of accidents, the tense relationship between work injury and the ideal of free market labor, and the politics of legislated protection and employer liability.

**Fielding, K. J. and Anne Smith.** "Hard Times and the Factory Controversy: Dickens vs. Harriet Martineau." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 24:4 (1970): 404-427.

Traces the dissolution of the working relationship between Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens during the 1850s as it relates to their markedly contrasting views on matters of industrial legislation.

Gallagher, Catherine. *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

A tremendously influential work of New Historicist scholarship. It claims that narrative fiction itself underwent discrete changes when it became part of the discourse of industrialism, and that what critics have seen as flaws in "social problem" fiction grew out of important crises in contemporary ideology. The three controversies that unsettle fundamental assumptions of the novel are the nature and possibility of freedom; the sources of social cohesion; and the nature of representation.

Gallagher, Catherine. *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. Exposes a series of themes and organizational dynamics that surprisingly link the writing of prominent political economists to literary fiction of the Victorian period—especially writing by Charles Dickens and George Eliot. All of the theorists and artists analyzed share a commitment to imagining human life in biological and bodily metaphors which fall, roughly, into two organizing principles: “bioeconomics” and “somaeconomics.”

Ketabgian, Tamara. *The Lives of Machines: The Industrial Imaginary in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011.

An important counterweight to views of nineteenth-century industrialization that view machinery in negative terms. This “recuperative history of technoculture” shows machinery could be credited with possessing vital forces, hence, used as a metaphor for reconceptualizing human bodies as “organic machines.”

**Sanders, Mike. “Manufacturing Accident: Industrialism and the Worker’s Body in Early Victorian Fiction.”** *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28:2 (2000): 313-329.

An illuminating article that considers the significance of the injured working-class body in debates about the nature and meaning of industrial capitalism in the early Victorian period. It examines how the comforts of middle-class existence depended on processes that maimed working-class bodies, and theorizes how the “accident” (both as a concept and a fictional trope) worked in reconciling this ideological crisis.

Sussman, Herbert L. *Victorians and the Machine: The Literary Response to Technology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

An important early monograph that considers the various, often ambivalent attitudes toward the machine by seven Victorian authors: Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, John Ruskin, William Morris, Samuel Butler, H.G. Wells, and Richard Kipling. Analyzing work by these authors, it argues that the Victorian literary response to machinery lies not so much in a dislike of technology as in a more generalized opposition to mechanist modes of thought.

Zlotnick, Susan. *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

A monograph exploring the relationship between industrialism and gender in nineteenth-century Britain. It argues that women writers, as opposed to many their male counterparts, welcomed the expansion of industrial production because they linked it with a movement toward a future that would be more preferable than the oppressions in the past.

## Sensation Fiction and the Body

In the late 1850s through the 1860s, a sub genre of fiction emerged that meant to have its mysteries, rapid pacing, and scandalous premises registered in the bodies of its readers. Only very late in the twentieth century did this sub genre of nineteenth-century fiction gain prominence in canonical surveys of the Victorian era. Taylor 1988 and Pykett 1992 were among the earliest and most comprehensive studies to analyze how work in this genre enacted gendered anxieties rooted in the body. Mangham 2007, Daly 2009, and Radford 2009 complicate the study of sensation fiction by exploring the genre's connections to industrial rhythms, urbanization, and sexuality. Talairach-Vielmas 2007 establishes how a link between Victorian fairy tales and sensation novels affects representations of the female body. Gilbert, Haynie, and Tromp 2000 placed the work of Mary Elizabeth Braddon at the center of the center of the genre's orbit.

Daly, Nicholas. *Sensation and Modernity in the 1860s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Considers not only how sensation literature operates physiologically on the individual reader, but also how the wider contexts of debates about the nature of sensory experience, becomes transformed by industrial technologies, urbanization, and exhibition-oriented cultures.

Gilbert, Pamela K. and Aeron Haynie and Marlene Tromp. *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.

The first collection of essays dedicated entire to the oeuvre of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's prolific literary output. The essays consider the ways in which sensation is constructed as a genre out of anxieties about the grotesque and permeable body of 1860s culture, a body literalized in the body of the middle-class woman reader.

Mangham, Andrew. *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine, and Victorian Popular Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Adds to criticism of sensational literature by investigating the links between sexual "disturbances"—such as adolescence, suppressed menstruation, and menopause—and the figure of the physically violent woman in mid-Victorian literature.

Pykett, Lyn. *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

A historicist account of how sensation fiction composed by women enacts gendered anxieties rooted in the body. Excellent use of more than 65 contemporary commentators on sensation and the New Woman movements.

Radford, Andrew. *Victorian Sensation Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Argues that in the sensation novel, unlike realism, the drive was to generate a lurid spectacle that would physically stimulate its readers while simultaneously eroding the barrier between their bodies and those of their central protagonists.

Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.

Considers how the relationship between the Victorian fairy-tale and sensation novels, particularly in terms of nineteenth-century consumer culture, reworks constructions of the female body.

Taylor, Jenny Bourne. *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

A pioneering analysis of “sensational” fiction that contains important sections on how the reader’s reactions became implicated in a text’s psychological and physiological undercurrents.

### Racialized Bodies

Because of the empiricist nature of Victorian society and its cultural, medical, and scientific institutions, many living in the nineteenth century saw race as an unequivocal component inscribed on non-British bodies. Brantlinger 2011 explores how racist beliefs formed the foundation of Britain’s imperial expansion. Meyer 1996 analyzes how views about slavery, colonization in India, and gypsies made their way into the fiction of canonical female authors. Anderson 1997 considers George Eliot’s complicated attitude toward the construction of Jewish identity as both biological and constructed, Eagleton 1995 outlines the ways in which Irishness became a racial category in Britain, and Nord 2006 uncovers the British obsession with the liminal racial characteristics of the Romany. Capuano 2015 and Briefel 2015 reveal how all of these racial identities become consolidated in the hands of non-white characters in Victorian texts. Tucker 2012 considers how race’s role as an arbitrary and biologically determined identity affects, and indeed creates, heaving conceptions of human inequality.

Anderson, Amanda. “**George Eliot and the Jewish Question.**” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 10: 1 (1997): 39-61.

An influential account of Eliot’s complex attempt to construct an ideal modern relation between Jewish (biological) identity and cultural heritage.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Drawing on historical and literary analysis of the “savage cannibal” trope, this book explores the racist intellectual foundation of imperial expansion in the Victorian period.

Briefel, Aviva. *The Racial Hand in the Victorian Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Analyzes how the hands of colonized subjects—South Asian craftsmen, Egyptian mummies, harem women, and Congolese children—were central to Victorian conceptions of identity in the fin de siècle and early twentieth century.

Capuano, Peter J. *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

Contains chapters on how hands in the fiction and non-fiction of Charles Dickens and George Eliot index prevalent but overlooked racial concerns.

Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. New York: Verso, 1995.

A provocative and ambitious attempt to map the racial aspect of Irishness from the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries.

Meyer, Susan. *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

A rich historical monograph that analyzes imperialist discourse in the fiction of Charlotte and Emily Bronte and George Eliot. Includes sections on the history of slavery in the West Indies, Britain's relation to India, China, and Palestine, and nineteenth-century attitudes toward gypsies.

Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

By showing how gypsies were simultaneously idealized, romanticized, and reviled in literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, this book seeks to uncover the British obsession with Romany people.

Tucker, Irene. *The Moment of Racial Sight: A History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

A challenging theoretically and philosophically informed study of how race is both arbitrary and biologically determined in creating conceptions of human inequality.

## Disabled Bodies

As the materiality of the body became a topic of significant scholarly concern, interest in the disabled body emerged in conjunction with the wider field of disability studies. Mitchell and Snyder 1997 helped introduce the study of the disabled body to many in the humanities. Holmes 2004 offered a definitive analysis of the place of disabled bodies in Victorian culture while Frawley 2004 presented a cultural history of invalidism in the nineteenth century. Eigen 2003 focused specifically on the impact intellectual incompetency had on Victorian law and medicine and Bourrier 2015 considered how central disabled men have been to conventional Victorian narrative precepts. Rodas 2006 provides a necessary assessment of the emerging field of Victorian disability studies about fifteen years after its first appearance. Esmail 2013 and Zemka 2015 address the specifics of deafness and hand loss respectively in terms of their impact on normative Victorian belief systems.

Bourrier, Karen. *The Measure of Manliness: Disability and Masculinity in the Mid-Victorian Novel*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

Argues that nineteenth-century conceptions of masculinity led to the development of narratives either focused on or narrated by weak or disabled men.

Eigen, Joel Peter. *Unconscious Crime: Mental Absence and Criminal Responsibility in Victorian London*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

A study of how intellectual incompetency affected England's legal and medical cultures in the Victorian period.

Esmail, Jennifer. *Reading Victorian Deafness: Signs and Sounds in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013.

Among the first studies to address the crucial role that deaf people, and their unique language of signs, played in Victorian culture.

Frawley, Maria H. *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Draws on an impressive collection of primary sources to present a cultural history of "invalidism" in the nineteenth century.

Holmes, Martha Stoddard. *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

A path-breaking study of how cultural assumptions, values, and anxieties became encoded in Victorian representations of disability.

Mitchell, David T. and Sharon L. Snyder. Eds. *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

A collection of essays that introduces the study of the disabled body to the humanities. One essay analyzes the depiction of the female invalid in Victorian narratives.

**Rodas, Julia Miele. "Mainstreaming Disability Studies?"** *Victorian Literature and Culture* 34:1 (2006): 371-384.

A helpful overview of the emerging state of Victorian disability studies that contains a significant bibliography.

**Zemka, Sue. "1822, 1845, 1869, 1893, and 1917: Artificial Hands."** *BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth-Century History*. Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net, 2015. <<http://www.branchcollective.org/>>

A historically rich essay that examines nineteenth-century designs for artificial hands. It concentrates on the fascinating stories these designs relay about the relationships between the maker and wearer of artificial manual appendages.

### Adolescent and Aged Bodies

Critics of many persuasions have found the study of the old and the young body to be a rich area of Victorian literature and culture. Some work, like that of Jordan 1987 and Johnson 2001, assesses how children's welfare failed to meet standard notions of Victorian progress and directly led to political legislation. Other studies by Mangum 1999 and Nelson 2012 analyze how and why adults in Victorian fiction are so often infantilized. Robson 2001 changed the scholarly understanding of Victorian childhood by exploring the nineteenth-century cultural obsession with the juvenile female body and asserting that many canonical male writers paradoxically envisioned their childhoods in feminine terms. Chase 2009 has become the gold standard for the study of the many ways old age became solidified in the Victorian imagination.

Chase, Karen. *The Victorians and Old Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

A magnificent account of old age in the Victorian era that traces how the elderly became a category of valuable political, social, and scientific discourse.

Johnson, Patricia E. *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001.

Though not focused entirely on adolescents, it contains important sections that analyze how accounts and images of scantily clad child-workers affected factory legislation in the Victorian period.

Jordan, Thomas E. *Victorian Childhood: Themes and Variations*. Albany: State University Press of New York, 1987.

A comprehensive book investigating the reasons why children, unlike mature adults, failed to share proportionally in the increased standard of living throughout the nineteenth century.

**Mangum, Teresa.** "Little Women: The Aging Female Character in Nineteenth-Century British Children's Literature." In *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*. Ed. Kathleen Woodward. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

A historicized account of how representations of aged women in children's literature and conduct manuals established the destructive view of older age as a "second childhood."

Nelson, Claudia. *Childish Adults: Age Inversion in Victorian Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

Interesting exploration of how figures of "arrested" adults in Victorian literature behave as children alongside their own aged but childish parents.

Robson, Catherine. *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

An extremely original work of scholarship that uncovers a Victorian cultural obsession with the juvenile female body. Explores the writings of well-known nineteenth-century male writers who defined childhood as feminine, mourned the loss of their own Edenic girlhood, and sought to recover it through creative production and social relations with young girls.