



The article “Marketing the Prosthesis: Supercrip and Superhuman Narratives in Contemporary Cultural Representations” investigates the cross-pollination of popular cultural representations of superheroes and how these inform design and marketing of bionic prostheses. The author in particular concentrates on the subgenre of the superpowered supercrip and applies this to real-life innovations in bionics. The article is composed of four main parts: the deconstruction of the human/technology divide in posthumanism and its intersections with disability studies, the superpowered supercrip sub-genre and its reception in disability studies, the intersections between the supercrip narrative and real-life bionic innovations and self-representations by disabled people and notably iWalk founder Hugh Herr as an embodiment of the empowering potential of the prosthesis, and a conclusion with several open questions.

In my personal opinion, there is certainly great potential in this article and the author touches on many interesting trends in biogenic engineering and the question as to whether or not these are inclusive of disabled people or, on the contrary, seek to neutralise disability in a celebration of bodily perfection. Many of the examples chosen from film and real-life are relevant and certainly worthy of scholarly analysis. In order to be ready for publication, I would suggest some substantial editing and proofreading work as well as the insertion of a much stronger authorial voice.

The theoretical part is skilfully structured and offers a comprehensive overview of pertinent questions. In the context of the article’s argument and for the sake of concision, various critical positions could be grouped together. There are also a couple of repetitions (the prothesis as something that is intrinsically part of the human condition). In my view, the presentation of the supercrip genre demonstrates a strong awareness of literary criticism. I would suggest some structural editing here and insert the quotation by Kathryn Allan at an earlier stage together with various other critical voices against the genre. As in the previous part, there is a tendency to go into too much detail and to present information which is not relevant to the present argument.

In general, the absence of signposts makes it difficult to see where the author’s own voice comes in, both in relation to existing criticism and her own textual analyses. On a stylistic level, such indecisiveness becomes evident in the recurrent use of unnecessarily convoluted sentence structures and lexical vagueness, to the point of being obscure. This shortcoming is evident in particular when the author announces the next steps of her argument and when she draws conclusions. To provide only a couple of examples. On p.5: “The aim of the following research is to embellish upon Sobchack’s emphasis on the materiality of a human-technology interface in both real and imaginary bodies; providing a discussion that interrogates the reality of prosthetics and prosthetic technology in modern society, as well as future possibilities fueled by both social change and the human imagination.” Or on p.7 “The following discussion examines the intersection of superpowered supercrip narratives in film and social reality that concentrate on prosthetic enhancement and its possibilities.” From both sentences the reader understands that the author will offer a comparative reading of fictional representations of superheroes and real-life bionic innovations but it is not clear what the actual thesis and/or guiding questions are and hence how this article is an original contribution to the field. As a consequence, the main part of this article, which promises an analysis of selected supercrip narratives and their impact on technological innovation and social perceptions of disabilities, is a sketchy juxtaposition of examples from fiction and reality. The parallel reading remains inconclusive and linguistically fuzzy “This injection of science fiction inspired technology into the source material not only serves as a demonstration of technological capacity, but also blurs the line between literary imagination and scientific reality as science inspired by fiction intrinsically weaves into the fabric of contemporary reality.” (p.8) To avoid such vagueness, it might be worth

considering using fewer examples and to analyse these in more depth. Another option would be to shorten the theoretical parts and to provide a deeper textual analysis.

Transitions also need to be signposted more clearly and marked by clearer introductory sentences and paragraphing. For example, the definition of the supercrip genre is central to the argument, but for lack of an introductory sentence it somewhat disappears in the narrative flow.

Finally, the author asks several essential questions in the end, but leaves these open-ended. In my eyes, it might be worth considering asking these questions at an earlier stage and analysing the cinematic and real-life examples in light of these.