

## Facial prostheses and the promise of passing

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When going out in public, people with facial disfigurement face various responses to their unusual appearance (Landsown 1997). Such 'double takes', staring gazes, questions and remarks by strangers have the effect of marking facially disfigured people as conspicuous, and indeed as 'different'. This may result in an unwanted loss of anonymity (Garland-Thomson, 2011). Anticipating these responses, many people set out to conceal their facial difference and thereby 'pass' as normal. In my talk, I will examine the place of facial prostheses within such everyday 'passing' practices. A facial prosthesis is a silicone artefact worn by people who have lost one or more facial limbs, and that covers and conceals their disfigurement. By (seemingly) offering a technological solution to the problem of unwanted obtrusiveness due to facial difference, the prosthesis in fact harbours what I would call a 'promise of passing'. But how does this promise unfold in everyday life? In order to answer this question, I will analyse the stories of people who wear facial prostheses. As these stories reveal, the act of donning a facial prosthesis engenders continuous efforts to achieve a good fit, as wearers mind, tinker with and plan around their prosthetic faces. And in spite of these efforts, successful 'passing' is not guaranteed. The prosthesis, it turns out, is by no means a quick fix: using it to 'pass' requires much care and brings along many cares. Wearing a facial prosthesis thus produces a particular, normative relationship to one's sensed and observable face, which both appear phenomenologically in the wearing.