



## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Classified Bodies: Disability, Identity, and the Technological Classroom

Abstract approved:

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This thesis pursues a flexible understanding and definition of dis/ability as a broadly and liberally applied mark of stigma. It asks questions that develop a deeper understanding of how disability influences *mētis*, a knowledge or cunning use of the body. Through this framework of *mētis*, this thesis explores technologies as they promote or hinder access into moments where knowledge (fleeting or *kairotic* by nature) is developed in the academic learning process. How do bodies shape who we are, where we learn, and how we use technology in these spaces?

I begin with an exploration of how we use historical depictions of the disabled mind-body to tell ourselves stories about how bodies can and cannot function within a community, and how these stories perpetuate into treatments of bodily difference today. Supported by the analysis and scholarship of these portrayals of the disabled body, I then explore how technology is continuing to change bodies and their access to moments of learning in the classroom. Looking especially to a case study of one such technology that supports accessibility for people with hearing difficulties, TypeWell, I argue that the union of human and machine through accommodative technologies is a new area for exploring how disability and technology are changing writing and writing instruction today.

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Classified Bodies: Disability, Identity, and the Technological  
Classroom

by  
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Chad E. Iwertz, Author

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# Classified Bodies: Disability, Identity, and the Technological Classroom

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

I could make choices, and that is freedom.  
-- Ed Roberts

“Every body is different.” This is the welcome slogan for Bespoke Innovations, a small San Francisco-based company that does business 3D printing prosthetic fairings, or coverings, for amputees. Using 3D printing technology, Bespoke Innovations scans an amputee’s existing limb, which then becomes digitized in order to create a model that will match the exact specifications of the limb that was previously scanned (see fig. 1). Alterations to this model can be made by the amputee and Bespoke Innovations, offering as many different printable options for the fairing as the number of individual tastes and aesthetics of each person who purchases one (see fig. 2). The fairings, which fit over traditional prosthetic limbs, are designed to restore symmetry to the body by combining cutting-edge printing technology with completely customizable artistry. However, instead of hiding its encased prosthetic limb, Bespoke™ fairings showcase each body’s diversity. Finished with metal, leather, or even wood, the resulting Fairing flashes modern, celebratory, individual, empowering (Bespoke

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis has been composed, as one might expect, with accessibility in mind. The sans-serif typeface in which it is written, Verdana, is considered one of the most accessible to people with disabilities relating to sight, and it is a preferred option for such peoples both when printed and read online (AbilityNet).



Fig. 1. "A Fairing for Prosthetic Leg," which showcases a computerized image of a fairing attached to a prosthetic limb (Levette).

Products). Moves in Bespoke's rhetorical sensitivity to embodied difference echo those of the Disability Rights Movement and the field of rhetoric and composition: diversity is beautiful, empower your difference, liberate yourself from prescriptive models of embodied disability. Examining these movements as rhetorics of empowerment, I see these as important not only for their clear challenge to medical/diagnosis models of disability but also in informing the ways in which the body can likewise be empowered, liberated, and validated in its diversity. Bespoke™ fairings are paradoxical because they at once draw attention to embodied disability but at the same time celebrate that disability. Countering models of disability that diagnose the amputated body as a freakish, offensive deviant from its imagined "normal" counterpart,

Bespoke™ fairings argue that disability can be strength despite its social demarcation as stigma.



Fig. 2. Samples of Bespoke™ fairings. Attention is drawn to the artisanship of the object, while also highlighting diversity of the disabled body (Bespoke Innovations).

Bespoke Innovations is just one of a number of institutions complicating disability, showcasing how ability flexibly integrates into myriad spaces and can mean different things in different contexts. Such a complication of disability, though revolutionary in the contemporary moment, is not unique to our time. As this thesis will explore, historical depictions of the disabled mind-body tell stories that do not always agree about how bodies can and cannot act within a community. Nonetheless, once stigmatized with the mark of disability, the body becomes subject to assumptions that render it unfit to contribute toward meaningful work within a community. Examples like that of Bespoke Innovations disrupt this assumption of the disabled body. Furthermore, the company offers people

with disabilities a certain amount of agency in crafting these fairings to fit their own particular style. This agency empowers a knowledge of the body—a cunningness that showcases diverse bodies in ways that do not conform to prescriptive models of disability. This cunningness of the body, known to the ancient Greeks as *mētis*, can be seen through Bespoke™ fairings as the intersections of bodies and the technologies that they utilize. By becoming literate in these technologies, disabled bodies invent new forms of composition that impact not only the products they create but also the unique *mētis* that could only come from the work of their diverse bodies.

In this thesis, I pursue the influence of technologies on empowered acts of writing, especially as demonstrated through performance in the classrooms that are supplemented with accommodative technologies. Scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition to unpack these technologies has well equipped us to critically examine technologies and their effect on writing. But, such scholarship is just beginning to consider the impact of empowered identities and the physical body on challenging notions of the normalized body. As such, it will not be enough to investigate how disabilities and technologies change the ways we compose with our bodies—the ways in which we write and the physical actions we attribute to effective composition. These questions must also develop into asking how these same technologies complicate, empower, or limit the body and, by extension, embodied writing.

My interest in pursuing research in disability and the writing classroom stems from a number of events. Primarily, I was taken with the technology that is currently in use at Oregon State University to support the in-class learning of students with disabilities. During a term teaching a section of WR 121: English Composition, I was asked/required to teach with this technology to allow a student with hearing difficulties better access my classroom environment. This isolated experience began a questioning of how I (and, by extension, academic culture) define disability and its function/utility within the learning environment. I soon began to imagine the influence technology has had on the disabled body—positive, negative, and neutral—and wondered how emerging technologies illuminate the shifting definitions and locations of disability over time.

There are many voices—political, educational, emotional, those of the repressed, those of the powerful—all contributing to a very highly charged conversation on how to approach disability. But, instead of focusing solely on this discourse, this thesis will push beyond the surface of disabilities in the writing classroom and begin to pursue an analysis of social and medical constructions of disability as well. It is worthwhile to ask how our classrooms should respond to disability, and this thesis will address these issues both from my own experience and through the work of leading scholars at the intersections of disability studies and composition studies. But this thesis also explores how incorporated models of disability can be difficult and inflexible,

ultimately subjecting the body to the same diagnosed incapability that such models hope to destroy.

Inevitably, a lot is tied into encouraging a debate on what it essentially means to use and take on the label of disability. There are many stakeholders—with passionate voices—building upon the foundational work of seeing disability as more than a medical diagnosis. Furthermore, there are established, respected scholars who have conflicting approaches to viewing disability. Some view it through a medical, “diagnosable,” disability-as-deformity model. Others see through a socially-constructed, superimposed, disability-as-enacted-power model. As such, very few (if any) scholars embrace more than one of these voices, let alone many (or all) of them as the very activity of attending to the difficulty of pedagogical responses to disability in itself. If we cannot really agree on what disability is, then how can we possibly talk about how to respond to it? And yet, students will continue to fill our writing classes either identifying or not with an embodied disability. For this reason, this thesis pursues a redefining of disability not as a classified identity enacted upon others in a feat of power, nor as a diagnosable sickness that can be treated or cured, but as a critical phenomenon that exists everywhere.

This thesis, then, explores—and perhaps even reconciles—some paradoxical manifestations of disability in the writing classroom. Specifically, it asks which good pedagogical applications we can take from disability studies and rhetoric and composition to encourage a flexible understanding

of disability in our teaching of writing. What does technological accommodation bring into this already heated conversation on disability? And, how might we resolve some of these contradictions within the writing classroom?

To achieve this process, the thesis is constructed to expand and complicate the origins and broader definitions of disability. Chapter 1 will examine the history of disability, both as contemporary social construct and as ancient physical impairment. From the telling of stories of embodied disability from ancient Greece and medieval France, I will show how disability as social phenomenon exists flexibly in space and time despite being thought as first championed by the Disability Rights Movement in the past half-century. Entering into this contemporary moment, this chapter furthermore reveals that behind the highly political momentum of the movement resides a growing voice for people with disabilities to have greater agency over their bodies and the futures that are possible for those bodies as well. In a word, a voice for greater access and agency in discovering *mētis*.

Chapter 2 begins to insert this broad, flexible understanding of disability into the university and, even more specifically, the composition classroom. Understanding the influence of *mētis* and *kairos* in classrooms and other spaces of learning, this chapter argues that a more flexible definition of disability is needed in the composition classroom. This chapter also begins to discuss how technology has in many ways been the impetus for a return to understanding how bodies are classified within our highly

social classrooms. Chapter 3, then, directly applies this focus to an analysis of one such technology through a case study. By sharing an example experience of teaching with accommodative technologies, I frame this chapter as a critical look into teaching with such technologies and the implications they have on bodies, identities, and classroom ability.

The second half of this thesis moves back toward an application of Chapter 3 and the analysis of assistive technology to broader analysis of disability studies at large. Chapter 4 pursues a reconsideration of Universal Design, an architectural precept that imagines accessibility for all possible bodies within a space, as it becomes applied to the creation of syllabuses and lesson plans. Furthermore, this chapter pursues a flexible approach to disability in the classroom. By suggesting Universal Design is a borrowed concept in education, I also consider the culturally-understood arguments, or enthymemes, latent within Universal Design that still subject bodies to classification in constructed depictions of the classroom. To conclude, I suggest further possibilities for complicating definitions of disability through technology as ability in transhuman studies. This chapter explores the relation of technology and the body—the mechanical and biological—as it affects empowered bodily ability. The union of rhetoric and the body is complicated by assumptions in what is meant when we use the term body, where a body ends and technology begins. This thesis will end by applying a movement toward a flexible definition of disability to a similarly flexible definition of the body.

In sum, this thesis is an examination of how we use historical depictions of the disabled mind-body to tell ourselves stories about how bodies can and cannot function within a community, and especially a scholarly community. I argue that these stories perpetuate into treatments of bodily difference today. But most importantly, these chapters examine the shape of the classified body and work to reveal what is at stake in its classification.

## Chapter 1

### Finding Disability: Historical Depictions of Dis/Ability

Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it,  
but conspicuously absent in the histories we write.

-- Douglass Baynton

Disability is a messy term because it is difficult to define without also defining its rhetorical context. Examining current disability scholarship, we can find work is being done to highlight an important socially-driven shift away from medical models of disability in order to draw attention to the ways in which disability is created socially through the assumptions and biases toward a normalized body. In other words, research is encouraging a shift away from seeing a body as a diagnosable object, a deviant from normalized or able-bodied originals, to seeing the community that surrounds that body as vital in making exclusionary decisions about how to correctly perform within that community. This argument occurs as the product of our current moment, a moment that occurs very specifically in response to the issues of our time. This shift, however, while attending to the exclusionary practices against diversified bodies within *our* society, also invites consideration of disability as flexible—and sometimes paradoxical—as bodily difference manifests itself in different rhetorical spaces in time.

As such, we can further complicate disability: the present shift in discourse is not the only time disability has been constructed to have variable meanings. Conducting a search of the *Oxford English Dictionary* reveals that *disability*, in nearly every grammatical form, is not known to be in circulation

in text until the mid-to-late sixteenth century. *Insane* first appears around the same time—in the sixteenth century. *Cripple*, *blind*, and *dumb* however, are in circulation as early as the late tenth century, and *disfigurement* appears a few hundred years later in the late fourteenth century. *Deaf*, the earliest yet, first appears in the early ninth century. The earliest known form of *disability* does not appear until 1445 as the transitive verb *disable*, over one hundred years before all other forms of the word, and is implicitly tied to legality. The *OED* defines *disable* as “to incapacitate *legally*; to pronounce *legally* incapable; to hinder or restrain (a person or class of persons) from performing acts or enjoying *rights* which would otherwise be open to them; to disqualify” (“Disable, v.” emphasis mine).

From this, we can reasonably conclude two things. First, disability is a relatively new concept in cultures that compose in English, less than five hundred years old. But even though disability is new, *embodied disability* is not. What we mean when we talk about disability, or at least what I mean when I talk about disability, is the prescribed (often officially or legally) classification of bodies in relation to their difference or deviation from a standardized, normalized (and thus, idealized) body. It has been the work of our time to uncover this bias toward the normalized body, which Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has termed the *normate*. Garland-Thomson has written that the *normate* “usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings. [It] is the constructed identity of those who, by way of bodily configurations and cultural capital

they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield that power it grants them" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 8).

Contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship has helped to uncover the *normate* as powerful because of its exposure of "deviant others" that cannot wield or pass (or refuse to pass) as identities that are whole, white, manly, rich, or straight (*Extraordinary Bodies* 8). However, *embodied disability*—as a physiological impairment or mark of bodily weakness or fragility—exists long before disability. As such, it is impossible to view disability through one lens of interpretation. Over twelve hundred years, embodied disability has come to inform and shape current ideas on disability. Unfortunately, it is impossible to survey it all, but looking to certain moments in the history of disability reveal that it nearly always means something unique and is always rhetorically grounded to bodies and ability within different cultures across time and place.

Second, we can reason that the *OED* designation of the emergence of the term *disable* showcases a key moment in the history of embodied disability. It marks the relationship embodied disability comes to have with law. This shift continues to inspire a deep-rooted connection between bodies and their rights today, as it also deeply informs our historical moment and our historical Disability Rights Movement of the past fifty years. Looking to this current moment and its influence over current response to disability, and further understanding the important shift that is still being felt from disability as bodily embodiment to disability as social stigma, the Disability Rights

Movement begins to take shape as a moment within the deep-rooted context of disability history that reveals the malleability of disability as a concept over time. Such moments, though separated through space and time, converge toward an understanding of disability as far more complex as it may at first seem.

In this chapter, I will survey three such moments through the people, ideas, and values that come to us through stories that deal overtly with disability. Each will serve to disrupt, or at least to reconsider, situated historical depictions of disability. The first will be the myth of the Greek god of fire, Hephaestus, and show how his embodied disability was not a point of shame for his acolytes but rather a gateway toward bodily intelligence, or *mētis*, that made him able to perform in ways impossible through another body. Next, I will examine how disability as a concept is utilized in fourteenth-century song and French medieval *dit* texts. Through this, I will explore how the concept of *narrative prosthesis* expands on how such work has complicated singular definitions of disability and its function within a society. Finally, this chapter will use these historical models in an application to our current moment in disability history, namely that of the Disability Rights Movement. Having recounted major features, triumphs, and tenants of the movement over the past fifty years, this chapter will then end with a provocative look at Disability Rights as it has further complicated the act of classification upon bodies in both public and private spaces.

### **Depictions of Embodied Disability: Ancient Greece & Medieval Europe**

Jay Dolmage has taken up the challenge of looking back into disability in his work, which focuses on various depiction of embodied disability throughout time. Notably, Dolmage has written on Hephaestus, the ancient Greek god of fire, who embodied disability within the pantheon (see fig. 3). Dolmage reveals that even though Hephaestus was disabled, depicted in Greek art confined to archetypal wheelchairs and with servants fashioned of his own making working around him, he was certainly still *able*-bodied both in physical and social contexts:

[Hephaestus's] ability allows him to harness fire and to invent metallurgy. His "disability" was (and can again be) seen as that which allowed him to "dominate shifting, fluid powers such as fire and wind" in his work in the forge. [...] Like a crab, Hephaestus's symbolic movement is not straightforward. Also, like any person who might build himself an extraordinary winged vehicle, [...] he is crafty. ("Breathe Upon Us"121)

This craftiness, for Dolmage, is captured in Hephaestus's *mētis*, or bodily cunning and awareness. *Mētis* is Hephaestus's ability to create in a world that celebrates and worships what only he is able to create with his body. Moving like a crab, side-to-side, Hephaestus may not be the perfected image of the *normalized* body moving forward in linear progression, but through his own cunning and "bodily intelligence," he can perform extraordinary feats—not despite his disability, but because of it ("Breathe Upon Us"122).

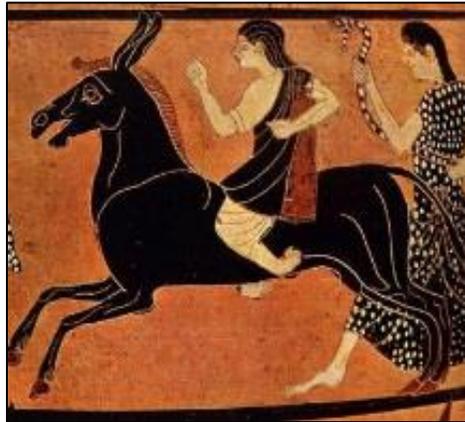


Fig. 3. "Hephaestus Returns to Olympus," which shows the god with disfigured, curled feet (Brooks).

Hephaestus's example reveals another model in shifting discourses that surround disability, one of the empowerment—even veneration—of diversified bodies that work through *mētis*. Such a concept is at odds with a contemporary idea of embodied disability. By establishing disability as the binary opposite of ability, we come to understand that bodily difference (be it physical or intellectual) is a negating or erasure of ability. For the followers of Hephaestus, however, these same biological impairments were not negations of ability but rather opportunities to develop bodily awareness and cunning that, when put into action, could create and fashion contributions to a society that were not only valued, but worshipped as devoutly as the generation of bodily knowledge itself.

Work to reconcile Hephaestus's celebration as a god and the contemporary turn to view the disabled body as, essentially, without ability can turn to *mētis* for help articulating how people with disabilities may still create—perhaps even in revolutionary ways that disrupt contemporary

understandings of what is within the limits of human capability and what is assumed when using a term as problematic and ironic as disability. Historical depictions like that of Hephaestus show that disability can not only be viewed in one way (or could ever be viewed in one way) but rather in many ways, even across different cultures, in periods of time far separated from our own. Even though a contemporary public often assumes disability causes a body to lose or deviate from a normalized set of human capabilities, the ancient Greek community may have assumed disability provided a divine opportunity to come to know the individual body as holy through its now solely unique method of creation, expression, and existence.

Scholars working in medieval studies have also stressed the complexities of reading disability in Late Middle English culture. Julie Singer and Joshua Eyler, for example, have shown that work in embodied disability in the Middle Ages complicates an assumed one-to-one correlation of disability to many of the prescribed models that have been suggested by contemporary scholarship. Singer, for example, has expounded on the many models medieval scholars have suggested in reading medieval embodied disabilities, relating that much “methodical discussion has thus far centered on *models* of disability and their applicability to the texts and cultures of medieval Europe” (“Disability” 136). One tactic has been to add models to the two currently in circulation: the medical and the social. These have included “religious” (i.e. disability is a punishment for sin), “cultural” (Mitchell and Snyder’s model that emphasizes social marginalization is the product of

both biology and society), and one that Singer provides, the “transhuman” model. Joshua Eyler has also responded to the proliferation of these “models” that dominate disability studies, adding the “constructionist” model to the already established list (5).

But applying the models used for our contemporary moment in disability history is problematic and can easily feel like appropriation of contemporary ideologies. Such risk of appropriation has led some scholars, like Irina Metzler, to defaming the practice, insisting that “there were no ‘disabled’ people in the Middle Ages, only impaired people” (Metzler 9). Scholars such as Singer, while not necessarily disagreeing with Metzler, attempt to complicate disability, exploring the potential for readings of bodies in medieval text to complicate the secure binary opposition of medical and social disability that permeates current disability discourse. And for Singer, such an act is imperative in supporting contemporary disability studies work, claiming that “medievalists are perhaps the scholars *best* situated to escape the reductive binaries dominating contemporary disabilities studies” today (“Disability” 137).

One specific way that Singer is able to escape this binary is by examining the use of embodied disability in the late medieval French *dit*, especially though its movement toward a “transhuman” dealing with disability in the late fourteenth century. Originally a narrative poem meant to be spoken, which contrasted from the Breton *lais* intended to be set to music, the *dit* often operate as pseudo-autobiographical in nature. According

to Singer, these texts use disability as a means to layer identity onto their first-person, pseudo-autobiographical narrators ("Toward a Transhuman" 175). As paradoxical as her charge may seem, Singer pursues the argument that "in many medieval texts disability can be read as an enhancement, as an addition rather than a diminishing of capabilities" (176). These texts reveal what Mitchell and Snyder have called "perpetual discursive dependency upon disability" or *narrative prosthesis* (Davis 205). This prosthesis extends the subject of disability into fictionalized space, making it an obstacle from which narrative can explore (re)solution. For the French *dis*, this is explored in fictionalized autobiography, wherein characters attempt to supplement bodily difference with feats of narrative excellence.

For example, in Guillaume de Machaut's *Voir Dit*, Singer links a culturally assumed incapacity for the blind to experience love to literary roundness in Machaut's poetic forms. In medieval tradition "love, constructed as a physiological process that begins in the eyes, is in principle unavailable to the blind man" ("Compensation" 48). Therefore, to remedy this issue, Machaut utilizes round poetic forms to "compensate for his dysfunctional eye and restore his hope for true love" ("Compensation" 49). Through this, Singer creates a complex analysis of the *Voir Dit*, one that incorporates the style and symmetry of the *dit* itself to allow the character's assumed body to operate within his medieval context. As such, Singer expands the notion of narrative prosthesis, which functions here as the use of text to mitigate disability, and also compounds the typified models that

dominate disability discourse. Singer's model is not social nor medical; nor is it religious. Instead, Singer reveals how Machaut's work complicates these models and offers new ways of understanding disability that embraces the body, language, and social formation of text. Her work refuses to view disability through one model and simultaneously honors the potential appropriation of these texts through contemporary lenses of interpretation.

Singer paints a very different picture of embodied disability from that of Dolmage and ancient Greece. However, both complicate a contemporary preference for models of understanding disability, especially the social model that views disability as a cultural phenomenon that surrounds and limits a body. For Dolmage and Singer, disability is more complex than the action of locating and labeling difference within either a body or a society. Instead, their examples provoke a more nuanced understanding of disability as a flexible term that can apply within and around bodies and the communities they form.

Such a survey of embodied disability in these two specific locations allow for disability as a concept to manifest flexibly into history, and encourages the same of recent history. Despite the current trend to view disability in one way over another, these locations have disrupted binary correlation between models of disability. Instead, these locations prompt us to read our current disability moment as a product not only of the societal classification of bodies but also of the history it seeks to uproot and modify. Retelling the history of disability, then, is just as much about complicating its

meaning as it is about complicating its location in society and the body. As such, this chapter will now explore the location of disability in the body of history and movements of the past half century. Though at first glance we might assume disability is only located in society—and specifically in a society’s law—we find disability in other locations in our own time as well. Disability remains as complex now as it has always been.

### **Rise and Reaction of the Contemporary Disability Moment: 1960-Present**

Allies of the Disability Rights Movement have always been concerned with the legal rights and protections afforded to persons who identify with embodied disability. In 1990, George H. W. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, and this moment symbolized (and continues to symbolize) the historic efforts and struggle of Disability Rights activists to see equitable treatment of people with disability in society.

Even with the strong legal triumphs of a historical Disability Rights Movement, Disability Rights continues to be a force uniting people with disabilities and their allies. Primarily, this movement has been seen as political—a force that seeks to change the social laws that control and dominate the body. However, underlying Disability Rights has always been another movement, the Independent Living Movement, which highlights elements that are often passed over in retellings of Disability Rights. By reproducing these discourses, I suggest that an overlooked triumph of Disability Rights Movements—specifically that of the Independent Living

Movement—has been the continued emphasis on flexible definitions of disability that use the term to access communities and technologies to grant individuals with disabilities greater agency in their lives. In other words, though it is clear that Disability Rights is a political movement pursuing the revolution of how institutions interact with bodies, the movement has enacted such political power through a deeper emphasis on bodily agency. This emphasis is one that does not seek an institution's care for managing disability but for the empowerment of the body's ability to in turn empower itself—the celebration of bodily diversity as it can create and influence a diversity that can best be described—can only be described—as *mētis*.

As such, this moment signals a clear response to previous models of disability that sought diagnosis and treatment of bodily difference. A person could be legally deaf, blind, insane, or handicapped. Such labels, however, operate much deeper than only signifying an embodied disability. These stigmas also effectively relegate bodies to the outskirts of society, often acting as irrefutable evidence in the diagnosis of a body as worthless and meaningless to society at large. A disabled body would thus be disabled both in the label affixed by a medical authority and by the society in which he or she lives.

But legal action in response to the Disability Rights Movement also misrepresents the full spectrum of activism that supporters of the movement seek. With the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a line is drawn: a body must accept and admit its ineffectiveness to receive legal aid. Such

an action denies the rich history of disability that responds to bodies and abilities in society. Reactions to the ADA since 1990 have helped reveal this issue. This is seen, for example, in the Department of Labor's own admission that "the term 'disability' is defined by the federal government in various ways, depending on the context" ("Disability Employment Policy").

For the purposes of federal disability nondiscrimination laws (such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), [...] the definition of a person with a disability is typically defined as someone who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more "major life activities," (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. [...] For purposes of Social Security disability benefits, a person with a disability must have a severe disability (or combination of disabilities) that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months or result in death, and which prevents working at a "substantial gainful activity" level. State vocational rehabilitation (VR) offices define a person with a disability to be eligible for VR services if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a "substantial impediment" to employment for the applicant. ("Disability Employment Policy")

The term fluctuates in meaning widely among these agencies. At its most liberal, defined by nondiscrimination laws, disability is a "substantial" embodied limitation. At its most conservative, for access to Social Security benefits, disability is "severe" debilitation lasting a year or resulting "in death." In every definition, however, is the implied argument that disability is always an entitlement to legal protection for bodies that can no longer serve a useful purpose within their communities.

A historical understanding of disability stands in contrast to these definitions. Instead of providing control over when a person is unable to render their body useful to a society, the previous analysis of the history of disability invites a consideration of the agency of that body in celebrating the

unique knowledge that only that body can produce. Instead of classifying bodies based on their use(lessness), these definitions lack attention to the agency bodies can have over themselves, especially in creating meaningful ways to bodily intelligence, or *mētis*.

And yet, regardless of the legal reactions it inspired, it is because of this struggle for validation of their own bodies and their own abilities that ADA was a moment of triumph for Disabilities Rights Activists. While having significant impact and meaning for people with disabilities and their allies in the United States as a whole, the Disabilities Rights Movement can also be seen to have similar importance in the history and work in the communities in which people with disabilities live. Within only the span of decades, the country has recreated its social model in response to disability, breaking down the diagnosis and treatment of human bodies, moving instead toward understanding the individual as a complex product of both biology and society. In a word, the Disability Rights Movement has once again shown the need to flexible and inclusive roads toward defining disability.

Reacting against these prescriptive classifications, movements in disability activism complicate and expand upon disability as a complex topic. As we have previously discovered, it is a flexible term that means different things to different people at different times in history and society. And, it can be endlessly diagnosed or dissected into different labels, types, ailments, or manifestations. At the heart of disability, however, is a call to understanding the limits of ability. These limits are defined in our current disability moment

as either physical, intellectual, or psychiatric—but even though diagnosis models may separate the labels attached to disabilities, each is unified in its correspondence to the differing identifications of the human body and its various embodied limitations.

In a sense, this might be summed up by saying disability is a term that currently encourages an understanding of the different ways the body works and does not work within a society. If a society that stands upright and walks on two legs assumes that all members of that society stands upright and walks on two legs, then there are unspoken agreements that steps up a staircase are the easiest way of moving between multiple floors of a building. What this agreement fails to account for, however, is that not all members of a community stand upright and walk on two legs. This does not negate their admittance into this community; they are certainly still contributing members to society who may need to function within a building and on its multiple floors to conduct business. What it means is that the community has not built itself around an understanding that different bodies will perform in different ways in different contexts. What it means, for allies of the Disability Rights Movement, is that disability is a function of society rather than an individual's bodily difference.



Fig. 4. Dammasch State Hospital, Oregon's primary mental rehabilitation facility from 1961 to 1995 ("Dammasch").

Such an understanding of disability as social construction around and against bodies has been and continues to be the work of the past fifty years. Looking at modern reactions to disability immediately before this reveals that it is not until relatively recently that the social model of disability, and the view of disability as a function of society, was held as a common assumption. In most communities, responses to embodied disability prior to the implementation of the ADA favored what is now referred to as institutionalization, the dislodging and relocation of bodies into medical treatment centers, and other practices that primarily diagnose and treat bodily difference. This bodily upheaval, though often advertised as temporary, often became permanent—a clear indication of embodied disability as maker of social pariah.

For example, the Oregon State Hospital revealed in 2011 an online database of the current 3500+ unclaimed cremated remains of former patients from Oregon State Tuberculosis Hospital, Mid-Columbia Hospital,

Dammasch State Hospital, Oregon State Penitentiary, Oregon State Hospital, and Fairview Training Center and Home between 1914 and the 1970s. Most of these appear to be former patients with diagnosed psychiatric disabilities (Oregon State Hospital Museum). The list in of itself is an anomaly, as information about patients is protected by law for at least seventy-five years. In this case, however, Oregon legislature allowed the release of the information in attempt to help family members claim the remains of family and loved ones who passed while being treated at these hospitals. Such an overwhelming number of unclaimed remains helps to suggest that institutionalization during this period was not seen as temporary rehabilitation, but rather a life-long sentence. Such hospitals were considered revolutionary in attempting to rehabilitate patients with disabilities, but such reactions fail to cover the prevailing attitude that saw institutionalized care as something a person with disability would need their entire life (see fig. 4).

Without the spread of early support for those with disabilities to be heard and afforded a voice in their own care and agency over their own bodies, such medical models of disability could not have changed. Marilyn Saviola, a quadriplegic wheelchair user who lived toward the end of this period of institutionalization, shared her experience in psychiatric institutions in New York after gaining independency by stating, "This is where the people the world wanted to forget about were thrown" (Martin). As stories like Saviola's began to spread by the early formations of a growing Disability Rights Movement, early experimentation with independent living for those

who did not require chronic care began in New York's Goldwater Memorial Hospital in 1958 with Anne Emerman (Fleischer and Zames 33). Emerman was allowed to live on her own with the continued support from the hospital, but was also able to fulfil a lifelong dream and complete her college education. Emerman, a twenty-one-year-old quadriplegic wheelchair user, would not only go on to graduate from college and earn a master's degree in social work from Columbia University, but she would also become a psychiatric social worker herself. Such a story was revolutionary in that it was Emerman who had control of her own life regardless of her stigmatization as disabled. Rather than a doctor or a nurse or other able-bodied equivalent, Emerman discovered the unique talent for social work that her body afforded her, and—as would soon become more and more the norm—she sought to help others who suffered the same social stigmas of disability that she herself faced.

Emerman's and Saviola's successful examples with independent living added to a growing reaction to institutionalization of people with disabilities in the 60s and 70s called the Independent Living Movement. Ed Roberts spearheaded this effort and is often considered the father of the movement. At the age of 14, Robert contracted polio and spent the following twenty months in hospitals or in his prescribed 800-pound iron lung (Longmore, et al. 1). With the help of his labor union organizing mother, Roberts continued—despite intense opposition—to complete school via telephone. As technology eventually allowed for portable ventilation, Roberts was able to

physically attend his senior year of high school and graduate despite the gawks and stares of fellow classmates.

Following graduation, Roberts applied for funds to attend college; however, he was initially denied because the California Department of Rehabilitation deemed he was “too disabled” to ever work (Longmore, et al. 2). Nonetheless, Roberts matriculated in 1962 to the University of California in Berkeley. While there, Roberts became instrumental in changing the university’s response to disability. Initially he was denied campus housing because no dorm could accommodate his need to sleep inside his iron lung, though eventually he was offered space in an empty wing of the Cowell Hospital. Hesitant to live in a hospital, and firmly placing himself in opposition to institutionalization, his stipulation for living in Cowell was that his living quarters were to be re-documented by the university as dormitory space and not medical facility (Longmore, et al. 3). His admission paved the way for other students with disabilities and their place within the university, and this eventually evolved into Berkeley’s establishment of the Cowell Residence Program, which facilitated the accommodation of students at the university who were also people with disabilities.

Together, the group found a sense of identity, and called themselves the “Rolling Quads.” As a group, the Rolling Quads enacted change and dramatically increased accessibility and awareness of disability in the university. The need to serve the wider community led to the creation of Berkeley’s Center for Independent Living, the first independent living service

run by and for people with disabilities in the country. The model of Berkeley's CIL inspired hundreds of centers of independent living around the world and helped solidify disability rights as a movement that would support and promote the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities for the next half century and beyond. As such, the Disability Rights Movement began as a collective, strong voice for people with disabilities that only ten years ago would have been completely silenced or ignored.

Moving from areas of institutionalization to places of educational and political empowerment and employment, people with disabilities began to see victories in their cause in the form of legislative change as early as 1973 with the signing of the Federal Rehabilitation Act. With it, states began to establish governmental offices that oversaw the support and implementation of independent living for people with disabilities, specifically in supporting their employment. In order to serve its goals, VRs offer a variety of services to assist people with disabilities in preparing for, obtaining, and keeping jobs. This goal aligns with its greater purpose to keep people with disabilities independent and in charge of their own lives, and especially out of places of institutionalization. Services differ with each individual's needs, but most often these include diagnostic assessment of an individual's strengths and work skills or counseling and guidance services throughout the rehabilitation process ("Services for Individuals"). VRs also frequently offer access to assistive technology that accommodate differences in hearing, sight, and other disabilities. And, of course, VRs provide training and job placement

services as well. Such services are designed to help foster, if nothing else, bodily knowledge that celebrates the unique *mētis* that can occur in different bodies.

However, despite the good intentions of VRs and the successes they proved were being made by the Disability Rights Movement, the earliest stages of VRs were largely unsuccessful. While these agencies provided services otherwise unavailable to people with disabilities, they also received criticism and struggled for their lack of representation by the disability rights community (see fig. 5). Marvin Wasserman, for example, related issues he and his wife encountered with New York's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR):

In 1952, Sandra, a wheelchair user who had just graduated from high school, was advised [...] to become a basket-weaver. Considering that she had weak hands because of polio, this job was a poor choice, especially for a person with her intelligence. When she asked to go to college instead, she was told that she was uncooperative, and her OVR case was closed. Thirteen years later, when OVR offered to send her to college, she needed two years of tutoring in mathematics, science, and foreign language to make up for the inadequate home instruction she had received [...] After graduating from college, Sandra earned her master's in rehabilitation counseling. (Fleischer and Zames 35-36)

Wasserman's example shows how people with disabilities were not receiving the support they felt they deserved by VRs during this period. Furthermore, Wasserman's story reveals that people with disabilities were often seeking independence from their stigmatization through education, becoming well-educated in the processes toward independency, as well learning how to navigate and even support legislation that governed their increasingly empowered lives that in turn enabled for a *mētis* to develop within people

with disability who could take action in providing services to others who suffered from the assumptions against disability.

Eventually, Congress was persuaded to create Amendments to the Federal Rehabilitation Act in 1992 that mandated a State Rehabilitation Advisory Council within each State Vocational Rehabilitation Office. These Councils ensured that people with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services would take an active role in the services they received.



Fig. 5. A demonstration of the advocacy group American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT) in Las Vegas. Protestors hold signs that read, "No More Pity" and "Freedom Now" (Olin).

Furthermore, the 1992 Amendments required the majority of council members serving in VRs to be persons with disabilities, thus ensuring a powerful advocacy voice for the vocational rehabilitation that individuals would receive at VRs across the country.

Today, Centers for Independent Living (CILs) modeled after and commemorating the efforts of Ed Roberts and Berkeley have formed in every state across the country. Both associations offer services to individuals who

seek independency and strength in coming to know their own abilities and bodies. But, most importantly, they uncover the complexity and flexibility of disability in our time and argue that the future of disability and its definition and reaction will need similarly complex and flexible models.

Through historic and continued legislation and activism, people with disabilities have gained considerable freedoms over the past half century, but we can also see that disability cannot be simply defined as only a social construction or only a biologically-diagnosable deficiency. Drawing upon the shifting discourse and interchange between governing agencies of the disabled body and allies of the Disabilities Rights Movement, we can begin to see that it is important to understand disability as a flexible term even within its current social transitions. It is applied in myriad circumstances to various issues and to individual bodies; it is not just a fixed assessment of a body's performance or contribution, as current legislation might lead us to suppose. Uncovering and reading these limited selections of disability has revealed the need for historians and scholars to continue to encounter disability with openness and attentiveness to its movements toward plurality and contribute toward its work of liberation from prescriptive models of discrimination.

### **Conclusion: Toward a Flexible Definition of Disability**

This chapter has outlined how the examples of disability as it is depicted in history—if even just a very brief selection of history—reveals that contemporary readings of disability as a medical, social, or any other singular

model is problematic. The work of scholars in the fields of disability studies, rhetoric and composition, and medieval studies all suggest that instead of pursuing unitary models of disability, scholars interested in disability should instead search for flexible definitions of disability that move fluidly in describing the roles bodies have played in the connection with ability. This in turn affects assumptions that a community makes about how bodies should perform were that body the idealized, normalized body.

Flexible responses to disability such as those explored in this chapter highlight various institutional paradoxes: support and shortcoming of disability accommodation in technological culture, prevalence yet silence of the disabled body within the university system, and communal yet invisible presence of disability within that university. In later chapters, I draw upon emerging work in disability studies and rhetoric and composition to imagine how such paradoxes are being challenged, reimagined, and accommodated in the university. Looking first to the changing language and models of disability that have become prevalent in the last decades, I explore how changes in discourse are reflecting a prevailing attitude toward embracing the flexible nature of disability and, with it, more inclusive and flexible pedagogies. Furthermore, I contrast these with the complexity of accommodative technologies that are becoming mandated—often without the full training, awareness, or collaboration of instructors—into the classroom. Cutting-edge accommodative technologies are claiming to mediate disability in the classroom; however, through relating my own personal teaching experience

with one such technology, I show how we as writing instructors cannot fully substitute what Brenda Brueggemann has called “flexible and inclusive” pedagogies with accommodative technology (2). Instead, such technologies must present themselves as tools that do not circumvent but rather aid in the collaborative efforts of instructor and student to empower a *mētis*, or bodily knowledge and cunningness, of students’ own bodies and abilities.

## Chapter 2

## Classified Disability: A Time for Bodies and Intelligence in the Classroom

Bodies and minds are not two distinct substances  
or two kinds of attributes of a single substance  
but somewhere in between these two alternatives.

-- Elizabeth Grosz

To this point, I have shown how a selected viewing of disability history can begin to complicate contemporary models of disability. Though this viewing has been brief, it has begun to reveal an undercurrent within disability activism that seeks to grant greater agency to people with disabilities in wielding power over their own lives. Such a growing support for greater responsibility offers a view of disability that is radicalizing institutionalization, as it did in the 60s with asylums for the insane. A push for the accessibility of all public things and spaces has become a complex and governmentally-mandated task, especially as it has become tied to education. In this chapter, I will connect this radicalization to the classroom, which can and often does still serve as a space for the propaganda of institutionalization. I will explore how bodies (and by extension, minds) are asked to perform in these spaces and how assumptions that are formed about bodies and minds come to dictate how these can operate within our classrooms.

In his introduction to the 2011 disability-themed issue of *Open Words: Access and English Studies*, Dolmage asserts that "through educational techniques and regimes, and even through academic research, disability is

used as a broad and flexible, easily applicable marker of stigma—the automatically unwanted” (2). In other words, disability has historically been the label we apply to those with whom we are most unwilling to work. By applying this stigma, we appropriate the body and place it within a constructed arena of ability, thus presuming we know best without respecting the complexities of disability and potential unique knowledge that each student brings in effecting the classroom. Because of its unique place within the structure of the university, writing—and especially first-year writing—stands as a gateway for students with disabilities.

Scholars working at the intersections of disability and composition studies such as Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Paul Harpur, Alan Hodkinson, Lynn Z. Bloom, Margaret Price, Melanie Yergeau, Zosha Stuckey and Lois P. Agnew have all called attention to the backwards nature of certain writing and discourse practices that hide handicap and cover it with incapable assumptions. Bloom, for example, exposes assumptions about disability in her classrooms by teaching disability-themed English courses. One such course, “Able, Disabled, Enabled: Disability in American Literature and Culture,” works to “transform, utterly, the students’ understanding of the world” (Bloom 5). Over the course of the term, students are exposed to the historical discourse of disability and are encouraged to question the assumptions cultures make toward normality and disability (Bloom 6). What may be most inspiring about Bloom’s work, however, is her sharing of what students ultimately make of the course.

“Able, Disabled, Enabled” could have lapsed into solipsism, narcissism, or self-pity, but it didn’t. The students were inspired by the readings, exhilarated by their writings [...] we all learned, with every reading, every writing, every experience with disability in and out of the class was to see the world with new eyes, a world in which disability is made visible and ordinary, an integral part of everyday life. (12)

For Bloom, teaching of disability studies in the classroom is a productive way of revealing not only the assumptions cultures make toward ability but also that inability is prevalent within society—is “ordinary” (12). Bloom’s experience, as has the scholarship of many others working in disability studies, suggests that future research must seek to make visible the truths of debility and raise awareness of the ways in which assumptions about disability exists in many forms in writing, culture, and the classroom.

Traditional contemporary responses to disability have mainly sought the diagnosis and treatment of student difference as disease. These responses align with what has been presented as the medical model of disability in Chapter 1. Such responses render diversity of learning through embodied disability in the classroom synonymous with terms such as “inability,” “dysfunction,” or “incapability.” Margaret Price, a scholar working in psychiatric disabilities scholarship and the structure of the university, has shown that—through ignorance and assumption—disabilities and the treatment of disabilities in the historical academy has cast students and other peoples with disabilities as second-class citizens often excluded from the educational spaces of the learned classroom. Price, in her 2013 CCCC Best Book Award winning work *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*, ties the discourses of disability to various classical *topoi* (such

as rationality, participation, and coherence) that have segregated those with disabilities from the earliest remaining records of Western education, ultimately drawing out how problematic these rhetorical assumptions become within the context of the modern-day classroom. Disability “becomes a problem only when the environment or context treats it as such” (4). Price reveals the classroom’s preconceived notions of navigating a text, and the subsequent assumption of students with mental disabilities as unable to perform this task, as equally absurd and problematic. We should not be tempted by the labels and classifications that students have been given. Instead, Price urges us to “focus instead on ways that [students’] writing and ways of knowing might change and inform our practices” (56). Though, she admits, this is not a new idea, it is “one that apparently cannot be repeated often enough” (56). Because when the goal of our classroom is to have all students find ways to “speak, write, dance, and otherwise communicate,” it is because we have allowed our students to move “against the grain of able-mindedness” (57).

Price not only embraces a classical understanding of rhetoric and education for her diagnosis of the current state of the academy, she also champions a deeper understanding and exposure of current and historical teaching pedagogies of the composition classroom that call attention to an often latent bias toward the “able-minded” (47). These habits systematically expose the discourse used within the classroom to label, subject, and dispose of disability as separate from ourselves; they regulate disability into the

realm of medicine where disability is diagnosable. Writing is left for the *normative* perspective, and to participate within the discourse of the writing classroom, the student must assume some sense of normalcy. This approach asks us to question such assumptions that we make within our classrooms, our writing assignments, and our syllabi. Most importantly, however, are the assumptions that are made in what Price deems as *kairotic* space: the “less formal” areas of learning where “knowledge is produced and power is exchanged,” such as in student conferences or classroom discussions, but also in peer-review workshops, “study groups, interviews for on-campus jobs or departmental parties or gatherings” (60). These spaces are those in which learning becomes the responsibility of the student to make the most of an opportune moment, or *kairos*, to ask for clarification, receive vital feedback, or interact with an instructor or others in ways that would not be possible at other moments in other spaces. Unfortunately for students with disabilities, these spaces also make for more difficult accommodation when we position our responses medically and try to diagnose student ability. Price suggests a dialectic model where student and teacher challenge the anticipated needs and styles for learning. Accommodation should not feel like “charitable offerings,” then, but areas that allow for the “best of our abilities” to flourish (102).

Price presents a framework for thinking about disability that presented through Dolmage’s depiction of Hephaestus, using *mētis* (or bodily knowledge and cunning) to create opportune moments of learning for

students, or at least offering up the chance for students to gain access to these *kairotic* moments. Price's example describes a classroom in which *mētis* is the product of both a student's bodily knowledge of his or her own abilities and an instructor's knowledge of a body of work that must be completed for a course.

Ancient Greece, too, was interested in the joining of *mētis* and *kairos*. Debra Hawhee has written on this topic, reminding scholars how vital the joining together of mental and physical training was to Greek education. This training, the *paideia*, was a truly liberal education that could combine training in wrestling and combat with schooling in music, poetry, and rhetoric. Hawhee's *mētis*, "contrary to logic, acknowledges a kind of immanence—it emerges as part of particular situations, cunning encounters" (46). As such, *mētis* was an integral part of teaching students in any subject to gain a bodily cunning that could serve them later in a myriad of circumstances. For this reason, Hawhee calls *mētis* "a mode of knowledge production" (48). And this production is not only tied heavily to the spaces in which the body must produce, but also the time of bodily production. "A bodily capacity for instantaneous response" is one potential definition of *kairos* that Hawhee provides (75); Isocrates also defines the movement to action in targeted, fleeting moments in bodily terms: as "fitness for the occasion" (69). *Mētis*, then, is more than an understanding of the limits of the body but also an intimate cunningness to perform given the natural limitations of that body. As Dolmage has argued, "*kairos* requires *mētis*, a way to be even more

mobile, polymorphic, and cunning than the world itself" (*Disability Rhetoric* 165).

Dolmage's instance of Hephaestus is a perfect example of how disability reveals the connection between *mētis* and *kairos*. For Hephaestus to perform in his craft, he utilized an intimate knowledge of his bodily abilities. It is also a clear iteration of how *mētis* operates as a function of delivery, a key concept or "canon" in rhetorical theory. Hawhee describes delivery as "the rhetorical 'canon' most obviously concerned with corporeality" (153). For Dolmage, attending to the treatment and performance of bodies gets at the heart of any study in rhetoric: "rhetoric needs disability studies as a reminder to pay critical and careful attention to the body" (*Disability Rhetoric* 3). If we are to incorporate training of rhetoric in any sense in the classroom, then, we must pay "critical and careful" attention to disability studies because it informs a critical attention to how and when writing is created and delivered.

But for many instructors, questions have remained on how to integrate disability into the classroom. For one, the prevalence of government-mandated codes of conduct toward students with disabilities complicates an instructor's role in bringing disability into the classroom legally. How can a teacher mediate the distance between confidential student disabilities and openness to exposing the assumptions that are made in writing and instruction that fuel cultural stereotypes on capability? One potential solution that the field has suggested is reframing the language that is used when we

refer to and speak about disability. To these ends, disability studies has done tremendous work in reshaping the language that scaffolds how we talk about peoples with disabilities. Furthermore, scholars have challenged the very definitions of disability, calling into question the motivations and effectiveness of such potentially debilitating labels. In his article "From Disability to Ability: Changing the Phrasing of the Debate," Paul Harpur argues that "using the term ableism [as opposed to disableism], is one step that can be used to assist in the battle against oppression" (334). Harpur suggests that there is a power in the language we use concerning dis/ability. It creates a culture of response to ability that permeates and infuses the classrooms and courses we teach.

As such, disability is becoming a more and more flexible term when used in the writing classroom. Moving away from the discourse of diagnosis of different bodies, labeling of the body must become what Price has called a conscious choice that reveals more about societal power structures than it does about those who are seen as disabled ("Writing from Normal" 57). Price notes, for example, that it is much more common for individuals who are "male, white, and/or tenured" to be labeled "quirky" or even misunderstood "genius[es]" instead of "disabled" (2). Such labels become more problematic to apply when disability becomes invisible (i.e. disabilities that are intellectual, mental, or psychological) or when access to proper treatment and diagnosis is beyond the economic reach of an individual, family, or society (1-2).

Beyond the critical analysis of the language and social constructs that support disability, scholars have investigated spaces and artifacts of access as well. Representing this criticism, Dolmage has argued that increasing access to students with disabilities has been the work of retrofitting physical spaces of the academy from “steep steps” into backdoor gateways of access (“Mapping Composition” 16). By this, Dolmage maintains that access to those with disabilities has always been an institutional afterthought, and such retrofits continue to mark a clear stigma onto peoples with disabilities within the university.

Some scholars suggest that in order to rectify this issue, accommodative technology can afford more students access in the university classroom, both physically and intellectually. Raskind and Higgins, for example, have conducted extensive surveys of high school students with disability and found that, though implanting computer-assisted technologies and accommodation to students with disabilities is costly and time-consuming, such technology-supported classrooms provide a much-deserved benefit to students with disabilities. Hetzroni and Shrieber, too, found that junior high school students with disabilities composing with word processing technologies statistically made less error than when writing by hand; such findings lead them to the conclusion that such technologies provide a benefit to students (153). This work, though supporting the assertion that use of technology in the classroom helps support access to developmental

curriculum, does run the risk of aligning itself with medical models of disability.

Regardless, similar quantitative work with college-level composition is sparse and difficult to conduct. Some, such as Malachowski, have provided a framework for qualitative research in college composition through the sharing of teaching narratives on students composing with technology. Similarly, the journal *Kairos* has featured a number of articles dedicated to the intersections of technology and disability.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Selfe and Selfe have famously explored borders that are created through electronic interfaces, which could also apply to the disenfranchised disabled body; however, explorations of disability and technology is an extremely new interest in composition studies, only decades old at most, and much more can be done in understanding how the integration of technology for students with disabilities impacts the cultural dynamics of a classroom, creating access to the *kairotic* learning and supporting a diverse bodily understanding of ability through *mētis*.

### **Assistive Technology and the Classification of Bodies**

This chapter has drawn together two vital elements of rhetorical understanding of bodies: *mētis*, a bodily knowledge and cunning, and *kairos*,

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<sup>2</sup> See *Kairos* 7.1, a special themed issue on disability, with featured articles by Dunn and Dunn De Mers, Salvo, Portolano, Brueggemann et al., and Grover and Hendrick. Also, see the more recent "Multimodality in Motion: Disability & Kairotic Spaces" by Yergeau et al. in *Kairos* 18.1

operating at the opportune moment to action. Through this, it has been shown that the two are needed in a healthy composition classroom. But the questions remains as to how a classroom could do so with flexibility toward diverse bodies. Chapter 1 reveals that technology has been a significant factor in offering people with disabilities more independent lives as professionals. This attitude has also surfaced in the university: technology is constantly being filtered into the classroom to help students and scholars with disabilities feel more accommodated to course material and spaces.

These technologies are something significantly more than just a prosthetic supplement to the disabled body. Accommodative technologies allow for flexible attention to opportune moments of learning and flexible understanding of how the body can generate a *mētis* of both the human and mechanical. These technologies are poised to offer equitable access to students who otherwise might be unable to gain access to the fleeting kairotic moments in which learning is transferred—that perfect question that clarifies meaning, that conference in which another student’s opportunity for improvement brings together a community of students, that moment in which we are able to finally perfectly articulate a complex concept. Without access to these moments, students with disabilities are left to pick up the pieces of our own inability to grant universal access to learning.

Brueggemann and Lewiecki-Wilson have suggested that one of the most important steps in supporting students with disabilities in our classrooms is by connecting their abilities to the technological resources

available through a university's Office of Disability Resources or equivalent ("Rethinking Practices" 7). Unfortunately, instructors can often—like their students—be unaware of the resources that are available to peoples with disabilities at university. Furthermore, technology continues to change at such a rapid pace that keeping up with cutting-edge innovations (let alone those that have been approved and purchased for use at each specific university) is nearly impossible to manage alongside the many other tasks a teacher of writing must complete.

Other scholars, too, have further complicated this issue by revealing the problematic way we have come to utilize these technologies. Even if an instructor was able to help her students gain university-level access to technology outside the classroom, we risk privileging certain disabilities in our classrooms while excluding others that cannot or have not yet been accommodated with technology—or even stigmatizing technology in the classroom as something relegated to support for students who cannot perform to standard. Alan Hodkinson has suggested issues in the assumptions we draw from only viewing disability as a classroom impediment. In "All Present and Correct?": Exclusionary Inclusion within the English Education System," Hodkinson argues that disability extends beyond just physical handicap to physical presence as well. Drawing on Derrida's "thesis on writing and speech to presence and absence," Hodkinson makes the startling assertion that demanding presence of students within our classrooms becomes an issue when we realize that not all students are able

to speak (even with computer-assisted technologies) in order to participate in that presence (675). Even more so, we further marginalize students who are not able to be physically present in order to prove and act upon that presence as well (686).

What this work has revealed to us as teachers of writing is that current ways in which we use and are required to use technology cannot be seen as the only way toward uncovering technology's role in creating inclusive, flexible classrooms. Viewing technology as merely a tool in improving access to normative classroom experiences fails to take into account moments of *kairotic* learning that occur when bodily knowledge and cunning comes from union of the body and technological extension of the body. Excluding considerations of technology as linked to bodily ability and identity outright fails to recognize the nuanced, student-driven *mētis* that creates meaningful writing in and out of the classroom. Such assumptions are not only potentially dangerous to our students but our teaching practices and environments as well.

In this chapter, I have outlined the ways in which *mētis* and *kairos* are connected—two ancient concepts that describe how (cunningly) and when (instantly in the moment) bodies are called to perform. Furthermore, I have argued that these concepts are vital to teaching writing in the classroom today, especially as classrooms become more complicated with the implementation of technologies to supplement the capabilities of students with disabilities. Moving into the next chapter, I explore a case study in

which these points collide in the classroom, providing an opportunity to then reflect and analyze how teaching further impacts students' awareness of their own bodies and how they may use them cunningly to succeed in ways that only their bodies uniquely can.

### Chapter 3

#### Class/ified/ Disability: A Case Study of Technology, Prosthetic, and Accommodation

There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom.  
-- Friedrich Nietzsche

Writing instructors balance a lot of responsibilities. Nowhere might this be more heavily felt than in the first-year composition classroom. First-year composition is a balancing act of student emotions and university priorities. Balancing these becomes more difficult as the bodies that occupy the classroom become unfamiliar to an instructor, who may or may not have training in how to deal with differently-abled bodies within a classroom. It becomes too easy, then, to treat bodily difference as secondary—in the case of disability, as a “problem” that can be solved through accommodation that is provided by an Office of Equity and Inclusion or Disability Access Services. In doing such, instructors risk neglecting disability as much stronger social roadblock that, when analyzed, plays a role in how we envision human mental and physical capabilities: values such as logic, presence, or common sense change dramatically when we instead privilege inclusion, engagement, and dissonance.

As an instructor of composition at Oregon State University, I have had opportunities to reflect on how technology and ability intersect for students with disability and how these same intersections affect the teaching of writing and learning dynamics within a classroom community. During my first year teaching, I worked with a student who identified with hearing loss, and

as a result struggled to participate in classes without accommodation. Alice was very astute but had been having trouble completing many of her courses with much success.<sup>3</sup> Before the term started, I received many mandates for various accommodations for Alice by my institution's Department of Disability Access Services. My first reaction to this growing list of requirements for Alice was not annoyance at these requirements for accommodation but concern that my teaching style and pedagogies would be altered negatively by over-attention to facing the class when speaking, printing out copies of presentations, or giving my assigned hard of hearing coordinators time to caption all media I would use within the classroom. In a sense, my first reaction to disability was not how to best serve Alice's specific needs within the course. As is the enigma of disability in the writing classroom, instead of seeing disability as an opportunity to make my course more accessible and reimagine how different bodies might contribute to the course's curriculum, I became concerned with how I might best mitigate a *normal* student's experience within the course with what I saw as Alice's divergent experience. Certainly, such a response is problematic, but it came from a deep place of concern not only for Alice and my ability to adequately accommodate her into the classroom but also the twenty-four other students who would be in attendance and deserving of equally-engaging and rigorous class meetings.

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<sup>3</sup> To protect student confidentiality, Alice is a pseudonym for this student.

After speaking with Alice, I learned that this was her third time taking English composition, having failed both previous attempts at the course. It was, however, her first attempt supported with a program newly purchased by Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services: TypeWell technology (see fig. 6). This technology, developed by Catalina Solutions, takes a two-pronged approach to expanding access to students who are hard of hearing or deaf within the

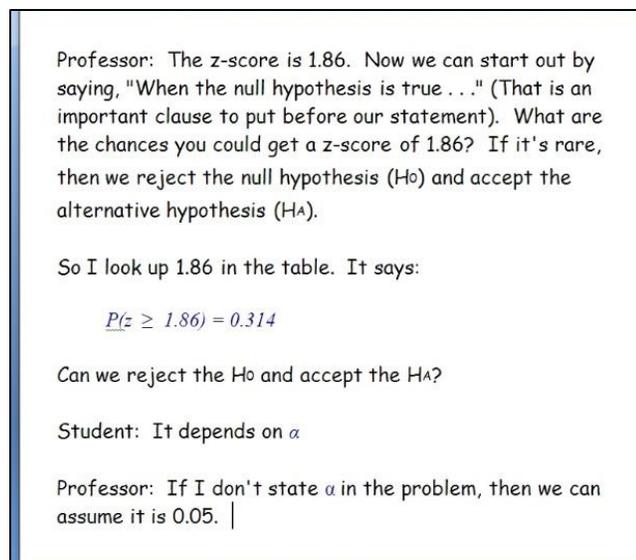


Fig. 6. An example of TypeWell transcription as received by a student in a math course (Catalina).

classroom (Catalina). The first involves a trained human transcriber who takes down all speech interchanged in the course and transcribes it into a laptop, which then wirelessly relays that information to the hard of hearing or deaf student. This student can then read it on an e-reader or tablet computer. In addition, by typing into her tablet computer, Alice could ask questions in the class through her transcriber. After Alice typed her question, it would be relayed back to her transcriber who would then raise her hand to

ask the question on her behalf. After receiving an answer, the transcriber would then type a response back into her laptop computer, which would then relay that answer back to Alice's tablet.

In essence, the transcriber embodied Alice, who oversaw the process from her tablet. Perhaps not surprisingly, Alice did not ask many questions through TypeWell. For each question Alice wished to ask through TypeWell, these steps would need to take place, in this order: (1) Alice reading, (2) Alice typing, (3) transcriber reading, (4) transcriber asking, (5) transcriber translating, (6) transcriber typing, and finally (7) Alice reading. For Alice, this process was too slow, and would deprive her of many of the fleeting *kairotic* moments of learning within the course that she could still access better herself than with TypeWell. Some students, especially those who would identify as fully deaf, might not have that luxury.

The second prong of TypeWell's approach to expanding student access is potentially even more problematic. It involves the transcriber's training in what TypeWell calls "meaning-for-meaning transcription":

A meaning-for-meaning transcript condenses the language used while maintaining the full meaning intended by the speaker. TypeWell meaning-for-meaning transcribers are taught to capture all spoken content in class communication access, including jokes, off-the-point comments, behavioral control, etc., but to omit false starts, repetitions and other non-meaningful speech. (Catalina)

Certainly, the process involves important decisions for the transcriber in privileging certain meanings over others. What exactly was non-meaningful in that exchange? What about this lecture was non-meaningful? TypeWell's model assumes that speech will contain non-meaningful distractors and that

a transcriber can come to the real content of a course. The process appears more as *translation* than transcription in this regard. Of further concern is the transcriber, who is rarely an expert in the course material but rather another student who may be taking classes similar to that in which transcription is taking place. How can we ask developing students to translate the content of our course into meaningful, *kairotic* learning moments when they may be incognizant to the complex processes of learning and teaching that have taken instructors years to develop?

What I also failed to realize in the weeks I was required to use TypeWell in my classroom is that the technology removed the need for meaningful conversation between Alice and myself for collaborating on her specific path to success in the class. There was no need for a bodily intelligence once TypeWell became a substitute for Alice's hearing. The problem with this, however, is that TypeWell—while granting access to areas of the classroom that would otherwise be inaccessible—risks responding to disability with a cure for bodily difference that, instead, could have been an opportunity to remove social assumptions of ability latent within the course. Instead of supporting a flexibility of composition pedagogies, TypeWell's model claims that hearing loss cannot be part of a normative curriculum nor a contributing factor in the *mētis* required to access moments of *kairotic* learning. This is even more an issue when TypeWell becomes mandated as accommodative technology in the classroom.

Even so, Alice was fortunate. She expressed to me later in the term that she enjoyed the flexibility TypeWell gave her in participating in the class. Seeing it as a tool, rather than a requirement, to her success in the course, Alice developed a bodily knowledge of her ability to participate in classroom activities—though this most likely was refined on her own over the three terms Alice had enrolled in the course. Using TypeWell as one would another sensory organ, Alice would glance at her TypeWell transcript to help support her when she was unable to hear multiple people talking at once, when someone spoke too quickly or softly, or when what she heard did not coincide with her expectations of what she should have heard. TypeWell was an extension of her own ability, not her sole ability, to success in the course. Seeing herself as part of (and more than) TypeWell technology, Alice was able to develop a *mētis* on her own that contributed to her ultimate success in the course.

And Alice's experience with TypeWell is not uncommon. In an exchange with the Program Director for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at my institution, I discovered that "the technology that's being used for transcribing is the best [she has] seen in many years of working with students with a hearing loss ... many times [she has] heard that the service is life-changing for [students who identify as deaf or hard of hearing]" (Alexander). Historically, problems with access have centered on economic feasibility. And while such claims are certainly at the heart of concern for an understanding of access to certain technologies within the classroom, it is

first beneficial to consider how these technologies impact students, how they embody identification and naming of students' own abilities, and how they necessitate a critical examination of how they align with the goals and objectives constructed by student and teacher toward a student's path to success. To this end, TypeWell is doing better than most. And yet, even at its best, TypeWell is still problematic. This is TypeWell's paradox: though it begins to take up the challenge of accessibility in our historically inaccessible institutions, TypeWell cannot be a substitution for the meaningful collaboration between student and teacher. Though some students such as Alice might be able to define a *mētis* through the use of TypeWell, not all will have this ability. Not all have the ability to retake courses three times or mitigate their hearing disabilities until they are able to see the relation of a course's curriculum, their own ability, and accommodative technology. Most will be passed over.

What this experience with Alice reveals is that much more work remains to be done in exploring the intersections of disability and technology. While TypeWell ultimately was of benefit to Alice, it could have easily been another roadblock to her success in the course. Though accommodative technologies provide abilities to students who can benefit from them, instructors and their students must also collaboratively consider how these same technologies might be propagating medical models of disability, diagnosing and attempting to cure bodily inability. In this way, TypeWell is just one of many other "paradox machines": at once supporting and stifling

students with disabilities. Though few alternatives exist, it cannot be ignored that accommodative decisions can still create stigma for disability. Assuming that technology is the fix-all for students with disabilities neglects the potential for student development of rhetorical skill in understanding their bodies through *mētis* and neglects technology's intimate relation to the body and bodily ability. Instead of seeing accommodative technologies as separate and supplemental to a disabled body's success, it is time to envision how technology supports the generation of *mētis* within students, allowing for a holistic understanding of ability, technology, and the body.

In their introduction to *Disability and the Teaching of Writing*, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Brenda Jo Brueggemann express the need for instructors to continually humble themselves to theories of injustice. "As educators," they write, "we can and should all acknowledge and affirm the presence and the importance of embodied difference" (2). Not only, would it seem, that as composition instructors is it enough to understand the history and problems that disability studies have unearthed but we must also incorporate such work into our own pedagogies and demeanors. In a sense, it is upon our shoulders to bear the weight of an embodied, disabilities-minded pedagogy—one that is both inclusive and flexible to the varied needs and goals of our classrooms and students. To bear this weight is not to assume that students cannot complete the difficult tasks and goals that we have set before them in our quarters and semesters, but rather to embrace that we may need to provide new, universally-designed roads for students to

ride in order to arrive at these goals. Such a task might at first feel contradictory. How can an instructor respect a student's lawful right to be a member of her class without the stigma of disability, while also encouraging that student to celebrate his difference? How can a student at once mediate her disability through technology while also constructing a *mētis* that makes the classroom's many fleeting *kairotic* spaces of learning more accessible? Such a task starts with a clear agreement on our function as teachers: we are not builders of the ivory tower's steep steps, nor are we keepers of the university gate into which only a few may enter. Rather, we are facilitators of academic writing and must work to connect and improve upon what we value of the written word to those who are so commonly placed within our classrooms and have traditionally been viewed as second-class (or third- or fourth-class) students. As writing teachers, we are uniquely privileged in understanding the power and liberation of writing—but what good is that skill if it is only reserved for the powerful and liberated?

Recent scholarship has suggested that the first step in opening our classrooms to these students is to redefine the identities that have traditionally been applied to them and explore the assumptions latent within the composition classroom that segregate students into groups of those able and those unable to participate in the process of writing. Some have also suggested that technology can mediate this divide. Using TypeWell as just one example of these accommodative technologies, we have seen that technology does not just work to mediate disability in our classrooms but

also works against it. In viewing the complex role accommodative technology has in our classrooms, we ultimately see that these technologies—these paradox machines—reveal a need for further investigation into the processes of assimilation and empowerment that are at odds when technology and disability collide. Future technologies may hold great promise in providing unparalleled access for classroom presence and participation to traditionally excluded and undervalued students with disabilities; however, scholars in disability studies and rhetoric and composition will need to work collaboratively in determining how these paradox machines can be made most useful for the classroom. This also means that instructors will need more participation in the selecting of technologies that are being mandated in their classrooms. Having more of a say from collaboration with students will allow for collaborative efforts between students, instructors, and Disability Access Departments be able to select from a range of technologies that fit the specific needs of students and courses best. And before we can remove the risk of stigmatizing these technologies, we will need to find ways of making accommodation more available to all students who identify with disability.

If TypeWell can be introduced within the writing classroom as a tool that not only supports learning with disabilities but also the changing nature of the composition process itself, we can see our students as participants in their own learning process and developers of their own *mētis*. In this, we are changing our assumptions of what constitutes correct forms of learning in

*kairotic* learning moments. Analysis in this area has shown that variant notions of correct classroom practice could produce spaces of access for students with disabilities within our classrooms. But this is certainly not an exhaustive examination, nor is it the only area that is primed for exploration. Further analysis in this area might also explore how such technologies represent a changing attitude toward disability within our institutions, or at least how such a change should be taking place.

Yet even though much more work remains to be done, this does not mean there is no place for disability in our classrooms today. Quite the contrary, this work reveals that the way to inclusive pedagogies is built upon constant back and forth dialogue with students—students who feel safe and open in speaking about what they need in order to be successful in our classes. Such communication is, perhaps, the most honest and genuine accommodation that we can provide. This accommodation offers our time and resources as privileged individuals within the university system beyond connecting our knowledge writing with our students but also in sharing and growing understandings of composition and flexible, inclusive pedagogies. Through this collaboration, we generate *mētis* with our students. With this bodily knowledge, this roadmap for embodied success within a course, crucial *kairotic* moments of learning become more accessible for the student with disabilities. We are creating space for our students to discover their *mētis*, creating space for their abilities to flourish and succeed through any movement, forward or side-to-side. Not despite disability, but because of it.

Here, I have shown a case study experience teaching a class with students with varying abilities, and from this experience I encourage more critical attention be paid to how instructors and students collaboratively work toward the generation of *mētis* in the classroom. I have argued that instructors be aware of how pedagogies and technologies may limit the agency of students with disabilities and the collaboration that students and instructors need to foster in order to help students succeed in the writing classroom. In the next two chapters, I explore how implementing these pedagogical tools and technologies have affected classrooms and teaching styles.

## Chapter 4

### Enthymemes of Ability and the Imagined Bodies of Universal Design

I once heard sages say that we are now dead, and the body is our tomb.  
-- Plato, *The Gorgias*

By calling our bodies tombs, Plato suggests that bodies enslave the soul with bodily desires. However, if Plato is correct in that we are entombed in our own bodies, the need for *mētis* becomes all the more urgent. Understanding how bodies are changed by their locations and in turn change their environments through agency and action, *mētis* informs a reading of persuasion that is based on rhetoric as “the strategic study of the circulation of power through communication” (*Disability Rhetoric* 3). In this chapter, I explore how one such circulation, of enthymemes, influences pedagogical choices that contribute to the silencing of bodies. I also assert that ancient and contemporary scholarship on the enthymeme supports a problematizing of the ways in which teachers interact with students of different abilities in their classrooms.

This thesis has thus far explored problems with contextualizing disability and framing it within only one model of interpretation. Even before bodies enter into a space, there are competing notions of how bodies can and should perform within these spaces, which previous chapters of this thesis have worked to show cannot simply be universally named as only products of a body’s ability or only a society’s assumed deviance of that body from an imagined *normate*. Seeking a more flexible definition of disability, these

chapters have called into question models that limit the agency of people with disabilities and have focused on methods that empower bodily experience and diversity.

This chapter builds upon this work of complicating disability to examine how such an analysis applies to a leading response to disability today: Universal Design. This design method attempts to open all spaces physical and by accounting for the diversity of bodies that may access those spaces, *before* they are constructed. In other words, instead of retrofitting spaces for accessibility as briefly explained in Chapter 2, Universal Design seeks to account for and accommodate these bodies before they enter the constructed space. Having begun as one such solution to disability in the field of architecture, Universal Design has spread in influence since its inception around 1966 to various fields that seek to open up accessibility to bodies. This chapter argues that Universal Design, though a leading triumph for equity in access among diverse bodies, still oversimplifies the complexities of disability. By its nature, a Universal Design seeks a *universal* approach to solving disability that is at odds with the flexible nature of disability explored in the previous chapters of this thesis. Furthermore, I argue Universal Design risks the erasure of student agency when applied to writing and composition classrooms. By appropriating bodies with disabilities before they have had an impact on a space, Universal Design encourages students and instructors to build communal understandings of a new version of the *normate*, which I refer to as the *disabled normate*. This idealized, imagined body of diverse

ability in turn risks the silencing of the real diversity of bodies that dwell in these same spaces. Building a storehouse of fictionalized bodies that could access newly constructed spaces, Universal Design uses consensus to create a (paradoxically) perfected *disabled normate* through rhetorical construction of a form of persuasion known as an enthymeme.

By exploring enthymemes, and their recent application to power over and through bodies, we can begin to see that though Universal Design has made many triumphs in allowing instructors to integrate students with disabilities into their classrooms, the design method must still be recognized as a tool that risks the separation—and by extension risk the inaccessibility—of people with disabilities and the classes in which they compose. Universal Design is just one tool for creating open, accessible classrooms. Though it is currently heralded by many disability scholars as the best method for integrating disability into a classroom, as certainly it should be for its power in allowing instructors to view their classrooms from outside their own abilities, Universal Design sets itself upon a fixed point from which a flexible understanding of disability cannot also be present. Approaches to disability must, as this thesis has consistently argued, embrace a humble acceptance that students with disabilities are often the best able to determine how their surrounding can best be accessible. Reading Universal Design as an enthymeme reveals that the philosophy cannot act alone and should not be implemented in such a way that removes student responsibility in collaboratively molding classes to fit the needs for accessibility.

## **An Enthymematic Foundation: Greek and Roman Theories on the Enthymeme**

Before understanding how Universal Design operates as an enthymeme, we should be clear on what enthymemes are and how they contribute to the working of rhetoric within social settings, such as the classroom. Aristotle defines an enthymeme as a syllogism, an argument with a part missing that is implied or understood by the audience that receives it, an audience culturally situated to understand this implication even without hearing it. Aristotle's Book I of *Rhetoric* is one of the earliest sources that remains to represent ancient Greek theories of the enthymeme, but the concept of this special form of syllogism has been expanded and theorized since then, even receiving critical attention today. Understanding the enthymeme as it has come down through its earliest thinkers, specifically Aristotle and then Quintilian nearly 350 years later, these concepts have come to inform contemporary cultural theories of the enthymeme and bear some worth in exploring further how. Looking through enthymeme and understanding the effect it can have in persuasion on a community, I argue that Universal Design is an enthymeme that overlooks a pressing need to connect with disabled bodies. Instead, the design method supplants this present body with a fictionalized, separated *disabled normate*.

Though

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is one of the earliest surviving texts that extensively discusses the enthymeme, it is generally agreed among scholars

of rhetoric and composition that Aristotle's definition of the enthymeme is relatively weak and insufficient. Ed Dyck, for example, has argued that "students of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* typically come away with as many questions as answers" (105). Jeffrey Walker, too, has suggested no less than three different definitions of enthymeme from Aristotle's work and ultimately concludes that even the strongest definition is "inadequate" ("Body of Persuasion" 46). For Aristotle, the enthymeme is "the substance of rhetorical persuasion" (179). But rather than offer concrete definitions of the term, Aristotle offers relative examples of the enthymeme. This chiefly paints the enthymeme as a formation (and, thus, example) of rhetoric and the faculties of rhetoric—perhaps even a snapshot of how persuasion functions in rhetoric as a whole. Working about a generation after Plato had posited a rhetorical ability that would guide the soul toward truth, Aristotle offers an expanded and slightly altered depiction of rhetoric (and through it, the enthymeme) as a situated "counterpart of Dialectic," one that works not only in formulating truths but also in making good guesses toward probabilities (179-80). This distinction is important because Aristotle is making claims about rhetoric that expand upon those of Plato, who argued that rhetoric should only be used as a vessel to absolute truth. For Aristotle, the enthymeme symbolized the potential of rhetorical possibilities and the ability for rhetoric to operate in the here and now.

But in complicating the enthymeme and focusing on the "differences between it and the syllogism of dialectic," Aristotle leaves further discussion

on the enthymeme to later scholarship (225). Brad McAdon takes up this challenge by beginning to reconcile Aristotle's disparate sources for the creation of enthymemes in "Probabilities, Signs, Necessary Sign, Idia, and *Topoi*: The Confusing Discussion of Materials for Enthymemes in the *Rhetoric*." By examining the many "sources" or "materials"—what we might also call "ingredients" for the creation of enthymemes—McAdon suggests Aristotle makes the first strong case for common place or *topos* used in the invention of persuasive statements. "The term *topos* as it is understood in the technical Aristotelian sense," McAdon writes, "was not in common usage prior to the Aristotelian texts" (225). Therefore, in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle revolutionizes the topics as constructive of a culturally-based understanding of argument, where invention of syllogisms can be based in shifting and ambiguous definitions of probabilities. For McAdon, this is frustrating because it reveals that "materials of enthymemes do not relate [to each other] in any recognizable way" (242). In fact, McAdon even admits to the frustration he feels in the inability to reconcile these materials by admitting to the temptations to "throwing [his] hands up in utter frustration" (243). However, Aristotle's complex use of *topoi*, signs, idia, and the rest of the materials of enthymeme might also point to an understanding that *Rhetoric* comes to us as lecture notes, which Joshua D. Prenosil reminds us contextualized Aristotle's perspective as a student with more conclusions missing than available (282).

Where McAdon finds a valid frustration with the ambiguity in Aristotle's enthymeme, Ed Dyck finds an opportunity to rectify and clarify. Primarily, Dyck challenges McAdon's assertion that enthymeme is built on multiple materials or sources. Rather, Dyck reads Aristotle as arguing "the enthymeme, the most important of the specific means of persuasion, is related to the *topoi*" (106). Specifically, Dyck approaches this relation as offering "the More or the Less" as Aristotle's intended translation of *topoi* (107). For example, *topoi* could be used within an enthymeme as such: "If A and B are both greater than C, and if A less C is greater than B less C, then A is greater than B" (108). As such, Dyck's interpretation more overtly suggests that enthymemes (and their relation to *topoi*) are based in relativity of terms, of equating terms to each other, and in making relations between terms clear. The *topoi*, then are binary (greater or lesser) relation "used to construct some unspecified kind of deduction" (109). Interestingly, Dyck's interpretation of Aristotle's enthymeme suggests that the syllogism is formed primarily to draw persuasive ties between two (or more) things. In this view, the enthymeme's power is in utilizing a culturally-situated reasoning to create probable connections between two otherwise improbably related items.

Such reasoning aligns well with Quintilian's (and, by extension, Roman) theories on the enthymeme. Though the topic is rarely discussed in what remains of Roman rhetorical teaching, Quintilian devotes an entire chapter of Institutes of Oratory to the subject, where he defines enthymeme

outright as “an imperfect syllogism” that “contains a proposition and a reason, but no logical conclusion” (V.14.1). Like Dyck, Quintilian builds upon the premise of the enthymeme as a culturally-dependent argument, one where a “major proposition is either an acknowledged truth [...] or requires proof, as, ‘He who wishes to lead a happy life ought to become a philosopher,’ this is not universally admitted and the conclusion cannot be drawn unless the premises be established” (V.14.13). In this example, the argument depends on a culture that values philosophy and the contributions of a philosopher. Such an argument builds ethos, which Quintilian also acknowledges; “the enthymeme is satisfied if merely what is stated in it be understood” (V.14.24). For Quintilian, the benefit of enthymeme to the orator is ultimately in building ethos in the community. Even if the syllogism is weak, it implies a connection between orator and audience that builds upon stronger proofs an orator may employ during an argument. Quintilian is even more dismissive of the enthymeme later in this chapter, arguing,

I should by no means like it [rhetoric] to consist wholly of syllogisms, or to be crowded with a mass of epicheiremata and enthymemes, for it would then resemble the dialogues and disputations of logicians, rather than oratorical pleading, and the two differ widely from one another. [...] [W]e orators must compose our speeches to suit the judgment of others and must frequently speak before people altogether uneducated, or at least ignorant of any other literature than what we teach them, and unless we allure them by gratification, attract them by force, and occasionally excite their feelings, we shall never impress upon them what is just and true. (V.14.27-29)

For Quintilian, the enthymeme is too complicated to use for the everyday orator, and too potentially nuanced to be used for the benefit of the everyday audience. Completely disagreeing with Aristotle, Quintilian prefers a solid

rhetoric that upholds the three appeals of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*, and not one that leaves any concluding arguments to ambiguity and cultural assumptive reasoning.

And yet, just as McAndon and Dyck differ in their dealing with *topos* and enthymeme, so too does Jeffrey Walker complicate Quintilian's breaking apart of rhetorical appeals and enthymeme. For Walker, the enthymeme is not only related to the rhetorical appeals but based solely within pathos and cultural appeals to audience. Citing Cicero's use of anger in oratory, Walker creates an "enthymemic account of pathos" ("Enthymemes of Anger" 360). For Cicero, anger becomes "emotional arousal in the form of a specific, logologically constituted emotion" that is then used either against an enemy or to solicit the same response in an ally in order to achieve rhetorical effectiveness ("Enthymemes of Anger" 364). Using these enthymemes of anger, Cicero is "truly a force, as Aristotle says, that 'wraps' or channels deliberation according to the pressures of an aroused intentionality" ("Enthymemes of Anger" 365). For Walker, this aligns Cicero more with Aristotle's complex and ambiguous definitions of enthymeme than with Quintilian's "pseudo-pathos" dealing with the syllogism ("Enthymemes of Anger" 374). For Aristotle, "emotions, appetites, desire and enthymemes all belong [...] to the 'spirited' and prereflective part of the psyche, the *thymos*, to which we accord rationality in the form of an inferential power to swiftly intuit relationships between ideas" ("Enthymemes of Anger" 376). Aristotle and Quintilian can be united, then, in both praising the enthymeme for its

power to cunningly argue—through a type of textual *mētis* of its own—a culturally-understood concept while simultaneously building an appeal to character. Aristotle, however, ultimately views this as one of the more powerful forms of persuasion; Quintilian, on the other hand, saw it as ornamental support for building rapport within a community and subpar to the effectiveness of a tailored *logos*, *pathos*, or *ethos* that would more immediately and more clearly resonate with an audience.

### **Embodied Enthymemes: Contemporary Criticism, Application, and Manifestations**

While it has been explored that the enthymeme in itself is contested and discussed as a vital and fundamental tool of rhetoric, other contemporary scholars have suggested ways that this form of syllogism has connections to our classroom environments and the bodies that compose these communities. These scholars have begun to show how enthymemes prove vital to a cultural understanding of disability as flexible and cultural. Joshua D. Prenosil, for example, uses forms of protest as a bridge to explore manifestations of enthymemes in contemporary social movements. Setting out to encourage a broader reading of enthymeme that is based on more contemporary theories of today, Prenosil “includes materiality along with interpellation, discursive circulation, and subjectivity” in expanding a social definition of enthymeme. Prenosil views materiality as inclusive of the body, as an object that in itself comes to form the enthymeme: “As protestors returned [to the protests in Greensboro in the 60s] day after day, public

awareness of their actions grew through local, regional, and national media” (285). Similar to McAdon, Prenosil is interested in complicating the enthymeme in a way—by expanding what we might be seen as the “ingredients” for cooking an enthymeme. For Prenosil, this ingredient list expands by adding a human element, the material body, as part of formulation of enthymemes. But by placing the body into the material from which arguments take shape, Prenosil also instigates an understanding of embodied enthymemes as “providing an opening for a theory of the enthymeme that implies both materiality and significance” (285). In Prenosil’s enthymeme, the body can play a part in the formation of syllogism as “present-at-hand rhetorical productions for the conscious public” (295). Such a notion is unique to Prenosil, who by expanding the enthymeme to include bodies as products of society, suggests that bodies can be locations for rhetorical analysis of communities and cultures, and especially “material-semiotic relationships” (298). By viewing enthymemes as not only culturally-understood arguments but also traceable networks of material interaction and knowledge-creation, Prenosil suggests that enthymemes are vital—that they are in fact part of our bodily compositions, generating “networks of interaction” for our being in the world that surrounds us, and they are vital ingredients for understanding the world that persuades us (299).

Jeffrey Walker, too, has demonstrated how enthymemes are vital, but as a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of modern ideas. Offering another historical account of the enthymeme beyond Aristotle and Quintilian, Walker

contributes two more theories of the enthymeme by looking to early, non-Aristotelian sources of the enthymeme, to Isocrates and the Anaximenes of Lampsacus. Piecing together a handful of lines from Isocrates's *Panegyricus* and *Against the Sophists*, Walker argues that Isocrates is clear in drawing attention to the importance of kairos in the crafting of enthymemes. For Isocrates, Walker argues, kairotic elements form the best enthymemes, what is referred to as *apotomos*. Defined loosely as "abrupt," *apotomos* also functions as a verb, which contributes further meanings such as to "cut off" or "sever," "as in the feeling of coming suddenly upon the edge of a cliff" ("The Body of Persuasion" 52). As such, for Isocrates "the best and most effective enthymemes will in some sense come as a surprise and stand apart from or go beyond what precedes them" ("The Body of Persuasion" 52). This vision for the enthymeme imagines the syllogism as a part of supporting and persuading a certain cultural understanding of a topic. Not only, then, does the enthymeme create an appeal to character or add to an orator's credibility in the eyes of the audience, such as Quintilian suggests, but Isocrates' emphasis on surprise suggests that this form of syllogism takes part in the constructed reality of a topic with its invention. In its brevity and authority, the enthymeme acts as a definitive statement in absolute cultural understanding of a topic; however, in doing so it also must make careful assumptions about the culture in which it is formed. Calibrating itself within this culture, the enthymeme at its most effective surmises cultural opinions

surrounding a topic while also making implicit suggestions that move the discussion of that topic forward.

To illustrate, Walker uses the example of Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" to show how King constructs enthymematic moments that hinge upon *kairos*. Offering the following sections as this example, Walker suggests that King is able to "seize the possibilities available at any given moment and to give those possibilities a particular realization and salience" ("The Body of Persuasion" 60):

If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands. (¶44, quoted in Walker 60)

Drawing upon the *kairotic* situation of his speech in time and space, King creates enthymematic moments in these lines—according to Walker—because he assumes imagined futures in which slavery has a tangible reality that calls for a change from the nation.

Walker further contributes to the understanding of enthymeme by looking to *Rhetoric to Alexander*, written by the otherwise unknown philosopher Anaximenes. Walker's interest in Anaximenes reveals the interest of the pre-Socratic philosopher in an understanding of the enthymeme as an emotional context for argument, not unlike Walker's application of the same topic to Cicero explored above. Walker argues that Anaximenes views the enthymeme as "a concise, emphatic statement of an emotionally charged opposition, one that serves not only to draw conclusions but also to foreground stance or attitude toward the subject under discussion" ("The

Body of Persuasion" 50). Like Isocrates, Anaximenes treats the enthymeme as a culmination and point of departure for argument. Constructing itself from the emotional electricity of a community, the enthymeme is not simply a summary or conclusion of that emotion. Rather, it is built upon that electricity in order to then motivate further action or discussion. Walker suggests this aligns the enthymeme with Perelman, who has called the syllogism "a 'web' or network of emotively significant ideas and liaisons that may or may not appear as a structure of value-laden opposition" ("The Body of Persuasion" 55). In this view, Walker suggests the enthymeme is fertile ground for the meeting place of ideas and exchanges of arguments, and as such is fertile ground for the critical analysis of further hidden enthymemes in contemporary discourse.

Walker's extensive overview of the possibilities still latent within the study of enthymeme inspires a call to action by scholars to analyze and uncover ways in which "a trained excellence in enthymeming [...] culminates not only advanced literacy but phronesis (judgment and intelligence) and sophia (wisdom, skill) through critical, argumentative engagement with the argumentation of others in many discursive genre and in many fields of thought" ("The Body of Persuasion" 62). This is exactly the application of enthymeme that Maxine Hairston attempts in her 1986 article "Bringing Aristotle's Enthymeme into the Composition Classroom." Applying a practical approach to a discussion of the enthymeme in the teaching of writing, Hairston purports that "a reappearance of the enthymeme would be a

healthy development, I think, because used imaginatively the enthymeme has the power to generate content and suggest patterns of organization in almost any writing situation" (87). For Hairston, the enthymeme is not only a powerful tool for oratory but also a practical tool for invention and understanding the rhetorical situation. Furthermore, Hairston follows Quintilian's example by suggesting the practice in analyzing enthymemes teaching student "how to identify the common ground they are assuming exists between them and their audience and to think about what information that audience has that they can draw on for examples and support" (87). By applying the enthymeme to the composition classroom as a practical tool for exploration of rhetoric, Hairston suggests that the enthymeme can (and should) be used to critically analyze arguments for the purpose of making students better writers and communicators, not only during the time of Aristotle and Quintilian but also in modernity.

Hairston pursues work that can be done teaching enthymeme in the composition classroom, but scholarship remains quiet on how such work can also incorporate Prenosil's concept of embodied enthymeme. As such, enthymemes remain fertile ground for application to a flexible and cultural understanding of disability as it occurs throughout differing spaces. It remains to ask, how do the bodies within the writing classroom formulate an enthymeme? Are these underlying enthymemes asking teachers, administrators, or students to make assumptions about those bodies that may be at odds with the ability to perform in the classroom? And if so, can

we learn something from these new enthymemes that can in fact empower that ability? Prenosil, Walker, and Hairston lay the foundations for a more complicated understanding of how enthymeme can be used outside its original context in ancient Greece, and by their example it is possible to use the expanded definitions of Aristotle and Quintilian's enthymeme they provide to explore how this form of syllogism is manifest through different areas of culture—and not just the abrupt delivery of a spoken argument—to propagate certain ideas and practices, even within our classrooms.

### **Toward a Universal Design: The Triumph and Failure of Enthymematic Accessibility**

Universal Design, as a key concept in education that describes the process of drafting course syllabus or lesson plan with the intention of accounting for differently-abled bodies in the classrooms, asks instructors to make decisions about bodies before those bodies are present. An example of implementing Universal Design in this way would be taking into account a final project for a writing course that envisions how to make that project multimodal, such that a student with any disability would be accommodated into the classroom learning environment and made empowered and able to complete that assignment. Of course, such planning is impossible to do with students present—and certainly cannot wait until the first days when classes meet. But instructors cannot be satisfied with believing that Universal Design is the tool that makes classrooms accessible. Universal Design, for all the benefit it has been in empowering teachers to more fully uncover the

layers of bias toward able-bodied individuals that congregate in a class, also complicates a composition classroom's dealing with disability. As an enthymeme, the philosophy asks instructors to make assumptions about their students' bodies and appropriate those assumptions into lessons and curricula that suggests the process for collaboration during class is less important than the process before class. As an enthymeme, Universal Design risks effectively cancelling any collaborative dialogue between those students who need to craft a bodily knowledge of their success in a course and their instructors who hold the keys to that success.

Ronald L. Mace, a polio survivor and wheelchair user, developed the architectural concept of Universal Design around the time of his graduation from North Carolina State in 1966. The design process, as defined by historians Doris Fleischer and Frieda Zames, "is the holistic approach to accessible environments that goes beyond minimum codes and standards to create designs that serve the broadest public [including people with disabilities] throughout their life spans" (124). Universal Design acknowledges the range of bodily difference that may engage in a space and considers how spaces might best fit that range of difference.

The concept, however, was soon re-contextualized and heralded as philosophy for responding to disability in many fields, including education. Jay Dolmage shares a recent restatement of the aims of Universal Design in his chapter of *Disability and the Teaching of Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*, entitled "Mapping Composition: Inviting Disability in the Front Door."

Principles for Universal Design, developed by a team of researchers at North Carolina State University, and now widely accepted as definitive of the concept, include these design considerations:

**Equitable Use.** Useful and marketable to people with diverse disabilities.

**Flexibility in Use.** Accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

**Simple and Intuitive Use.** Easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

**Perceptible Information.** Communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

**Tolerance for Error.** Minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

**Low Physical Effort.** Can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

**Size and Space for Approach and Use.** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility. ("Mapping Composition" 24)

The seven precepts that have become the binding values of Universal Design ask designers to consider the variously-abled bodies that enter their constructed space and tune their design to include those bodies as best it can. For teachers of writing, this has meant a movement toward creating syllabuses and lesson plans that take into account how certain assignments and classroom activities can better include and value the abilities of students who may not be able to move, hear, see, or speak in the same way. And, while Universal Design has been a powerful concept that has helped to transform the educational spaces in which people with disabilities dwell, the

very core of Universal Design asks teachers of writing to create imagined disabled bodies and appropriate them into their classrooms and lesson plans. In this sense Universal Design is an enthymeme; according to Quintilian an enthymeme “contains a proposition and a reason, but no logical conclusion” (V.14.1). In Universal Design the proposition is to create better classrooms by making assignments and course materials more accessible. The assumption is that instructors can invent within their own faculties a complete image of the bodies that will exist within their courses. This leaves the (unstated) conclusion, which argues that an instructor can know all bodies and appropriate them into spaces in which a fictionalized, constructed knowledge lacking in students with disabilities can be made accessible without the collaboration and *mētis* of those student bodies themselves. The process, while accounting for differently-abled bodies, also threatens to remove that body from its ability to develop course engagement, creativity, responsibility, and flexibility—all core concepts within the stated mission of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* as published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project (CWPA, NCTE, & NWP).

Though Universal Design pursues the increased accessibility of our writing classrooms, it becomes problematic to value it over humbly acknowledging an inability to imagine a design that is universal. Instead, Universal Design risks the erasure of meeting with students and collaboratively making pathways for their individual success in our

classrooms. Though this process is costly in our time and resources, it is a philosophy that does not suppose that teaching can be universal—because so rarely can teaching ever be an act of rote repetition—but rather tailored to fit the student body. Viewing Universal Design as an enthymeme allows us to embrace the rich historical tradition of the field of rhetoric and composition while simultaneously enacting pedagogies that put students and the empowered act of writing first in our composition classrooms.

In conclusion, Universal Design, for all of its benefits, cannot be practiced without the influence of student bodies; instead, Universal Design should be seen as a stepping stone to conversations with disabled bodies, who should have a stronger say in alterations and amendments to course curricula. By examining Universal Design, I have shown how one such pedagogical tool can still create assumptions about bodies and by so doing strip those bodies of agency within the classroom. Let us not invoke Plato and reveal that the sages were right, and the bodies of Universal Design are our tombs. Instead, through an expansion of Universal Design, let this stepping stone allow for students to begin the process of creating pathways to success in the classroom and make accessible what we can only attempt to make universal.

## Chapter 5

### The Cyborg With(in) You: Technology and the Changing of Human Identity

Up to this point, this thesis has explored how disability and technology generate a *mētis* in students within writing classrooms. But how does disability and technology affect others in the classroom as well? Drawing a connection between the bodies of varying abilities within a space, this chapter pursues an understanding of how technology further complicates disability within a classroom, and how it reveals the changing nature of human experience and capability at large. Once again drawing upon my experience with Alice, this chapter will examine the writing classroom as the breeding ground for new methods of understanding disability as intricately woven into the identities that we place within the technologies we learn, need, use, and become.

#### **Hunting and Hiding from Technology: Sherry Turkle and Donna Haraway**

Sherry Turkle has called into question the ways in which we compose our identities in the internet age. Initially optimistic that the creation of our online selves opens up opportunities for exploring the many complex facets of human character, Turkle—later in her career—becomes more nervous at what human/machine interactions can actually do to human awareness. However, not all scholars have been as antagonistic toward the integration of human and the machine. Donna Haraway, for example, claims that we as a

society have already conformed enough toward the machine in our daily lives that to a great extent we are already all cyborgs: part human, part machine. If this is true, then, how does an increased awareness of the connection between humans and machines complicate our notions of ability? As this exploration of 'the cyborg within' progresses, we can begin to see that technology does dramatically alter both our individual and social identities through ultimately proposing that we are unable to ever exist in only one dominant self. Rather, technology allows us to explore the many extrem(e)ities latent within each individual, not least of which is (dis)abled. By exploring these polar extremes, as they have traditionally been established, we begin to see more and more that we exist through technology somewhere in the middle—both partial and whole, both human and machine.

Turkle's work initially suggests that the integration of technology and our personal identities is of benefit to society. Claiming that "the adoption of online personae ... are contributing to a general reconsideration of traditional, unitary notions of identity," Turkle asserts that the power of online composition allows us to explore the many components of an individualized identity, which may occasionally upset societal assumptions about identities that are unitary ("Identity" 107). Furthermore, such disruptions of the societal norm begins to reveal that "ways of thinking about healthy selves as nonunitary" are quickly becoming a new standard in understanding the individual as "a flexible self," one with "fluid access among [identity's] many

aspects" ("Identity" 108). Thus, society is beginning to accept that to understand the individual as the product of only one personae is unhealthy. Rather, the human identity is composed of many different layers and countless facets, which Turkle suggests can be explored through play online and through other technological constructs.

Later in her career, however, Turkle begins to see human/technological interaction differently. Instead of translating her zeal for human interaction with technology to the same interaction with robots, Turkle sees such interaction as damaging to the human identity. Her primary concern with human/robot interaction is that it exposes human vulnerabilities in projecting feelings and emotion into the machines with which humans interact (510). "To have a relationship," Turkle writes, "the issue is not only what the human feels but what the robot feels" (504). In this sense, humans no longer explore their own identity within technology but actually project the same complexities of human psyche onto the inanimate machine itself. Though problematic for Turkle, who is by profession a psychologist, such interaction calls into question what technology has become to those who personify robotic interchanges. But also, it begins to point back toward the start of Turkle's career and begs, again, for societal redefinition of human identity. Just as Turkle claims the complexity of online identities has helped us understand diseases that eat away at their fluidity—namely multiple personality disorder (107-8), so too can it influence our understanding of the

seemingly dangerous interaction that humans take up with empty, lifeless machines.

Not all scholars are as pessimistic as Sherry Turkle. Donna Haraway, whose research informed Turkle's, does not seem to feel threatened by the interaction of human and machine. In fact, her "Cyborg Manifesto" argues that the ultimate interaction of human and machine has already taken place: mechanical assimilation. "We are all chimeras," Haraway writes, "theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (150). Operating primarily within feminist theories of socialism, Haraway suggests that as participants in social assumptions of identity we are subjected to those assumptions despite any feelings of individuality that may surface. In other words, we are always part of the machine uttering who we are but also part human in rebellion against the machine, defining who we try to be. "Consciousness of exclusion through naming is acute," writes Haraway (155). "Identities seem contradictory, partial, and strategic. With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity" (155). Essentialism, then, takes Haraway's metaphor of the cyborg into an understanding of human identity as it relates to actual robots. If we assume that cybernetics have no human psychological purpose, as Turkle does, then we neglect the fact that the machine in its many manifestations is continually subjecting humanity to its agenda. The robot who is programmed to find its electricity is essentially programmed to want electricity. As such, it arguably

identifies itself as instrumental in achieving its purpose. Though cybernetics, arguably still in its infancy, is unable to produce a fully-humanoid robot, this does not necessarily equate our understanding of robotics as separate from the complex and varied responses humanity has made in its identification of itself. Instead, it expands human notions of identity and dramatically aggregates it to include the complex social relations it can have with technological extensions of itself, including the robot.

### **Toward a New Theory of Human: Ability and Identity as a Cyborg**

Such an extension of human capability, though, does not only need to focus on the capabilities of identity or personae but also on human physical capabilities. Neil Harbisson, for example, suffers from achromatopsia, a rare disease that renders him completely blind to all color. Through the implant of an eyeborg, however, Harbisson is able to hear frequencies and interpret them as chromatic, though perhaps more appropriately he can feel frequencies as a vibration at the end of his eyeborg on his neck bone (Harbisson 1:05-1:15). Interestingly, he describes this process as a literacy: he had to learn how to name the response his body took to these frequencies. But after assimilating this process, he has since been able to feel beyond the spectrum of human sight. He can feel ultraviolet. He has also begun to react in interesting ways to other frequencies. Music, as a string of audible frequencies, has become "colorful" to him. He is able to identify features across a spectrum of human faces through sound. Far beyond

simply aiding him in seeing color, Harbisson's implant has allowed him to interact and interpret the world around him in unique and—at least potentially—superhuman ways. As a self-proclaimed cyborg, Harbisson



Fig. 7. Neil Harbisson, dressed in colors that represent vibrations generated by his eyeborg in harmony similar to that of C Major (Harbisson).

identifies the transition from disability to (super)ability as redefining of his personae. He, for example, dresses himself as anyone might—based on how they would like to represent themselves to the world around them. For Harbisson, however, this projection takes the shape of how colors in his wardrobe sound or feel: “so today I’m dressed in C Major,” Harbisson relates during his 2012 TED Talk, “which is quite a happy chord (see fig. 7). Thought, if I had to go to a funeral, I’d dress in B Minor, which would be turquoise, purple, and orange” (Harbisson 3:50-4:05). For Harbisson, his emotional identification becomes the outward symbolic representation of the relation of color, sound, and touch—and none of this complex, human

responses to emotion could possibly occur without the implant of his eyeborg. It is only as a cyborg that Harbisson can identify with the subjective chromatic scale that otherwise would deem him as disabled in society. But to him, he is at the very least enabled to participate in this practice of deeply human subjectivity to color.

Harbisson is proud to be able to display his cyborgism, and is even featured with it on his government-issued passport. For this, Harbisson claims he may be considered the first cyborg: his government would not recognize his eyeborg as an inseparable extension of his body, if it would not photograph him as both human and machine on an official government-issued document. But, whether we agree with Harbisson on his legal declamation as a cyborg or not, the relationship between him and his technology is certainly confusing notions of what we may identify as human and what we may consider to be technology. If we are to accept Haraway's socialist definition of technology as the structures of a community that conflict with the human rebellion for individuality, Harbisson's challenges this as his example reveals technology as in fact a key component for some—specifically, at least, for persons with disabilities—to access and cultivate personal individuality.

Specifically in his understanding of fashion as related to emotional responses that originate in the translated frequencies of his eyeborg, we see an individualized construct of how Harbisson expresses emotion as tied to color. Furthermore, his relationship to color does not conform to traditional relation of color and emotion. Instead, Harbisson relates color through

combined harmonic frequencies and vests emotion into chords and dissonances rather than reading singular or multiple pigmentations. Of course, some may suggest that Harbisson remains subject to Haraway's technological constraints: his understanding of color remains tied to his technological (and literate) translation of frequency. And while this might be true if Haraway were part of a group of cyborgs showcasing eyeborgs transmitting similar frequencies, the fact remains that his is a unique and creatively individual response to personal disability. Harbisson is not defined by his technology; instead, he finds identity in concert with his technology. Instead of showcasing the conflict of machine and human, Harbisson's example reveals a deeply-rooted dependency for technology as required to explore his human identity.

Through Turkle, Haraway and Harbisson, we can begin to see the complex human identity at the crossroads of disability and technology. Our growing interaction with technology and robotics is calling into questions traditional notions of what is human and what is machine. Perhaps this is what frightens Turkle—and the society she represents—most when we contemplate the intricacies of human/robot interaction: We are the machine; the machine is us. For all the potential technology has in supporting or diminishing human character, that potential is always the driving force of human identity as part of the machine that is—for Haraway—in constant rebellion against the individual but also—for Harbisson—an integral part of that same individuality. The robot cannot perform good or evil. It is when we

assign these ethical designations to the machine that they become who we are.

### **Cyborgs in the Classroom: Disability and Accommodative Technology**

Harbisson's example is strongly pronounced: he is broadcasting his status as a cyborg for the world to see. And yet, we do not have to go further than our own classrooms to see how the ethical interaction of human and robot are being explored before our very selves. Technology in the classroom gives us a meaningful look into how our students use machines to identify themselves as hybridized nature and mechanism. Revisiting the example of TypeWell and my interactions with Alice, we can see that the TypeWell classroom produces two semblances of the cyborg in writing: first through Alice, and second through the TypeWell transcriber.

For Alice, the technology is a method of moving from disability to ability. With TypeWell, she could participate in the classroom unlike ever before. And her experience is not uncommon with this particular technology. Having, perhaps for the first time, access to real-time classroom exchanges allows students with hearing loss to participate in their own education and become actively engaged in the learning process. But in order to use this technology, a significant—though silent—change must occur to the user and the classroom in which it is used. Almost invisibly, TypeWell technology integrates itself into the human elements of the classroom experience, repairing “false starts, repetitions and other non-meaningful speech”

(Catalina). On the one hand, this is a buffer for students that would be wasting time reading transcriptions of imperfect speech, but on the other hand the technology subtly begins to erase traces of learning that can often be messy, imperfect, a process. Instead, TypeWell delivers to students a product that has been edited, however so neatly, and translated through training in meaning-for-meaning transcription. Haraway's cyborg society comes into view here: hard of hearing students become the inescapable mixture of imperfect human learning within the messy process of education and streamlined, efficient electronic written speech. As the amalgamation of both, students receiving TypeWell educations land somewhere in the middle, part digitally-edited product and part messy human student.

What we see in Alice's use of TypeWell is that the technology not only allowed her to function better within the classroom—better at least by terms of the company that sponsors TypeWell technology—but also influenced her identity within the class as well. Through TypeWell, a program intended to give Alice access to the interactive nature of the classroom, she was able to generate an understanding of how her own body—both as fleshy human and technological machine—operate together to give her body agency in better accessing moments of learning in the classroom. Instead of rejecting TypeWell as the bridge between disability and access, Alice chose to assimilate the technology as an extension of her own abilities to better generate a *mētis* that could connect her to these *kairotic* moments in the course. Because of this, it becomes impossible to separate Alice's experience

within the classroom from her use of TypeWell. Alice was in many ways part of the space as TypeWell; TypeWell manifest itself during class through Alice. The course, filtered through meaning-for-meaning transcription, becomes the manuscript from which Alice identifies as student: on the one hand submissive to the assurance that meaning has been preserved in text from the messiness and complexities of speech, but on the other hand an acting participant in clarifying meaning and using her body in other ways to generate *mētis* with the technology.

But even more cyborgs are present in the use of TypeWell technology. Not only does Alice embrace her abilities as a cyborg, but so too does the TypeWell transcriber herself—as well as every other student and instructor participant in interacting with Alice through the technology. For TypeWell, the primary function of the transcriber is to act as invisibly as possible within the course. According to the TypeWell Transcriber’s Code of Ethics, a transcriber “will not offer opinions or input of any kind in classes and meetings, even if invited to do so by instructors or others” (Disability Access Services). The transcriber, then, acts as conduit for TypeWell technology, imparting expertise only insofar as meaning-for-meaning transcription will allow. In my experience with Alice, her transcriber would often feel the pressure of the smaller composition classroom to speak up. Once, after class, Alice’s transcriber confided in me that she often wanted to speak up and contribute to what she felt was lively and interesting conversation, discussion that she felt she could improve with her vocal presence. Restricted to her obligation

through TypeWell technology, however, she remained posted to her position in meaning-for-meaning transcription, privileging words she felt were appropriate for Alice's understanding of the course as selected from material spoken to all students.

Even despite her evocation of her opinions in the course, the transcriber exercised humility and restraint in allowing space for Alice to learn to use the technology as an act of accessibility in the classroom for herself. To borrow the metaphor of the cyborg once again from Haraway, she exhibits both responsibilities as a human compelled to contribute to communal learning and a machine selecting meaning from that learning and passing it into technology to be received elsewhere. Furthermore, she acts both humanly for expressing interest in coming to understand the content of a course and mechanized as taking meaning from that content and making decisions about how to project that into space separate from herself. Interestingly, the transcriber's presence within the course (or non-presence in the course) comes to conflate a definition of her identity as employee and student. While acting as invisible judge over the content of the course, the transcriber allows the human within to rebel and interact with that content as it relates to her understanding of the course. Undoubtedly, this conflict arises again in her decision to select content to pass along and content to cut as it travels to Alice. Naturally, the questions the transcriber must ultimately ask are characteristic of her function as a cyborg: should she privilege content that generates interest within herself and expertise as a human and student

or should she privilege context that speaks to the heart of the TypeWell Code of Ethics, devaluing her human presence within the course and meaningful only insofar as it summarizes the knowable content of the classroom.

Our investigation of TypeWell technology, and my anecdote of how the technology has been implemented into the classroom, reveals that we do not need to take such leaps as Neil Harbisson to become cyborgs. The transition between human and machine is taking place in the most unassuming of places: namely, within our classrooms. And the transition is not only taking place within persons with or supporting those with disabilities. As we have explored, it is becoming more and more difficult to draw lines between where humanity ends and machinery begins, where disability ends and ability begins.

In our lives, technology is a vital ingredient in the diverse mixture that manifests as human identity. Furthermore, that technology is making it more difficult to identify humanity as separate from that technology. Though our individual humanistic impulse and mechanized structured assimilations work in harmony to contribute to the complexities of our understanding of ourselves and the world around us, these two distinct pieces of human experience also conflict in ways that are often ignored or intentionally overlooked. Such oversight may be part of the fear Sherry Turkle feels, an empty interaction between life and lifeless. Or, it may be hope for what Margaret Price echoes years later in *Mad at School*: the goal of our classroom is to have all students find ways to "speak, write, dance, and otherwise

communicate," it is because we have allowed our students to move "against the grain of able-mindedness" (57). As cyborgs, we remain committed to our mixed identities as machine and human, finding solace in the places when our unable bodies fit within the confines of the machine, rejoicing in the times when technology has helped rather than hinder us. These technologies help accommodate the body no matter its ability to perform new literacies and methods of performance never before imagined, whether that body is disabled or able-bodied. Technologies allow for a generation of *mētis* that takes into account a great variety of bodies and necessitates new, flexible understandings of disability as applicable to all. This universal disability sees all bodies to some extent as technologies that fall short of the potential that accommodative technologies could afford them. The result is that we all must embrace our dual nature as part human and part machine; take up the possibility for new frontiers of ability, new methods of composition that can flexibly change in any case, and in any body.

### Conclusion: Making Space for Hephaestus

Our lives are not our own.  
From womb to tomb, we are bound to others.  
Past and present.  
And by each crime and every kindness,  
We birth our future.

-- *Cloud Atlas*

Disability is a messy term. It is both objective *and* subjective—deterministic. It works itself into culture as a mark of stigma against a body that does not fit within the prescriptive structures of how bodies can and cannot function within a community. Primarily, disability comes to us as a legal term—one that seeks to level the playing field for people whose minds and bodies do not fit within the mold a society has places on bodies as normal. In a word, disability marks a body out as deviant. Furthermore, disability is not the same today as it was hundreds of years ago; it is problematic to see disability as an objective diagnosis since to do so assumes that bodies perform the same function in one society as they do in other spaces and times. This thesis has surveyed some of the stories about bodies that come to us from various cultures and different times. Such a study has revealed that while disability does not operate in the same way throughout society, divergent stories about the function and cunningness of the body must move us toward a flexible definition of disability that accounts for this complexity. A definition of this kind sees disability as a lens through which communities treat and retreat from objectionable bodies that are variant aberrations of an imagined, perfected body, or normate.

This working of disability as a flexible term in society necessitates leaders and teachers within these communities to value an individual, subversive working of the body that finds meaning for itself—not despite disability but because of it. This value is embodied in the image of the Greek god Hephaestus, who with his bodily knowledge (or *mētis*) came to fashion materials celebrated by his worshipers as products that only he could have created with only his body. *Mētis* requires us to work to understand how the bodies can operate uniquely across communities—and there is no handbook included with our bodies that inform us of how such work can be done. Furthermore, such a work does not come without risk; exploring the contours of the body violates prescriptive and idealized forms of the imagined perfected normate from which all others are judged by a society. But the work of *mētis* also comes with great rewards. Not only are bodies empowered in the spaces in which they dwell with *mētis*, but discovered *mētis* empowers the discovery of new methods of being, speaking, writing, dancing, crafting, building, and composing—new ways of presence that have been ignored or otherwise devalued.

This thesis began with a look into how historical depictions of embodied disability—which I separate as a term from disability to mean any physical or mental mark of stigma against a body or mind within a community—complicate our moment’s focus on disability as a social construct. Highlighting the models of disability that reign over our understanding of the disabled body—first the medical model, and then the

social model—this thesis explored how scholarship and Disability Rights activism are beginning to unearth moves toward understanding disability as a flexible term in a society. In activism, disability has always been pulled along by a current of discourse that seeks the growing agency of people with disabilities over their own futures and their own bodies. This, I argue, is a movement that is seeking a greater inclusion of diverse ways to *mētis*, seeking the ability to discover new solutions through a bodily understanding and cunning to the same social boundaries and problems that confine them. And, while the beginning of this thesis imagined how a growing awareness of *mētis* influences social movements in disability rights activism, it also progressed to view how such cunning could apply to intellectual boundaries in educational systems and university writing classrooms.

Building upon the work of Jay Dolmage and Margaret Price, among others, I see the opportunity for disability to become a crucial piece of any writing classroom as it must incorporate accommodative technologies of many different kinds into these learning environments for both registered and unregistered students with disabilities. These technologies challenge a traditional sense of what we might consider composition and encourage us to evaluate how, when, and where moments of learning come into being. Price has called such environments *kairotic* spaces because they are built upon assumptions of students as normates—that all students have equal access to fleeting moments of learning and connection within the classroom.

*Kairos*, another term that comes to us from ancient Greece, considers when the best moment to act is at hand. An understanding of action within *kairos* reveals that these moments are ephemeral. They are temporary and furthermore require training and cunning in order to reach the resulted action. In the writing classroom, these moments are those in which a complex issue or concept is passed to a student, a discussion is ripe for a student to participate, or the wording within an essay finally fits just right. But these moments are also less formal in space, yet just as crucial in communicating moments of learning: a question asked after class that clarifies meaning, the office hour in which a student is able to articulate a problem with the course material, or collaborative group time in which students build upon each other's knowledge to complete a project. Opportune moments for action build a framework of disability into the classroom and into writing that challenges our notions of who has access to learning in a classroom and who our processes and *kairotic* spaces relegate to the outside of learning. Who do these assumptions welcome into our academic spaces? And who do these assumptions reject?

Applying these concepts to the use of accommodative technologies in my own classroom, I have argued that neglecting moments for *mētis* in the classroom mistreats the nuanced ways in which writing can be embodied in our courses. TypeWell technologies, though both paradoxically productive and reductive in my own writing course, provides students with access to spaces of learning that are otherwise inaccessible and is clearly working to

bring students closer to those fleeting *kairotic* moments that might otherwise escape them. But can TypeWell be, as its creators at Catalina Solutions suggest, a *solution* to disability in the classroom?

To believe that it can risks discarding the empowered forms of writing and being that *mētis* offers both to the body and to our understanding of composition beyond even those we might attempt in a universal design. To believe that disability is a problem awaiting solution by technology neglects the methods in which our bodies operate with technology in ways that discover new ways to knowledge and performance in our classrooms and beyond. To believe that disability is a problem suggests that our bodies cannot be made able in ways that challenge our communal understandings of the normalized body and realize that *mētis* is just as much about understanding our bodies as we might consider a learned capacity for understanding any technology. In a sense, we have always already been cyborgs: our bodies just as much an agent of our ability as the other technologies that envelop us. By encouraging a cunning understanding of the body in order to access moments of *kairos*, we encourage a humanistic response to technology that sees ourselves as agents in the mechanical. We act through the body just as much as we do technology. Plato saw the body as a tomb, but it is so much more if we frame it as a technology—where disability is the result of neglecting it as a vital component in human identity.

If nothing else, this thesis has argued that assumptions of disability take the greatest amount of responsibility away from bodies. Imagining ways

to incorporate disability is a good start to opening access to our communities and classrooms. But it cannot be the only step, and it cannot be done without attention to the risk of developing *disabled normates* (idealized fictions of the disabled body) that act just as reductively. Attention to disability must be grounded in the agency people with disabilities have over their own learning and pathways to *mētis*, whether that *mētis* comes through collaboration with other students or instructors or through their own abilities. It is time to refocus and rethink how bodies involve themselves in composition, and ways that diverse bodies continue to affect composition. This work will not be unique in disability studies, as it has been the labor of many of those surveyed here to see such action come to fruition. Similarly, it is not unique to disability studies, as much scholarship in feminism, queer theory, and others have all claimed the same. But, even if this claim is not new, it is certainly applicable and needed: It is time to be intentional about making space for those bodies that challenge such traditional notions. Making space for these bodies—in a way, the bodies of Hephaestus—empowers not only diverse bodies but also the future of a discipline that values what only these bodies could create through *mētis*: a celebration of the body, not despite disability but because of it.

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