Uncommon Places: The Multimodal Art of Embodied Invention

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This dissertation develops the concept of embodied invention, an epistemology and design philosophy that treats multimodal media—such as comics and videogames—as heuristics for translating knowledges between bodies, communities, and cultures. In classical rhetoric invention refers to the art of discovering knowledge through the commonplaces—those opinions, beliefs, and values common to a particular time and place. Rhetors would train themselves in invention by studying commonplace books—texts that contained common expressions, phrases, and allegories of a particular community, region, or culture. Drawing on phenomenology, semiotics, and media theory, this dissertation puts forward an embodied account of invention, one that correlates knowledge of the world with one's position or place in the world. The commonplaces, then, are as much bodily and sensory as they are social and cultural, and as such the notion of commonplace books needs to be expanded to include media that capture not just the common expressions and phrases of a particular time and place but the common sensations and sensory experiences of particular bodies and cultures. This novel understanding of invention sheds light on conceptions of embodiment, normalcy, and knowledge translation. Feminist and disability studies scholarship exemplifies how some places are—culturally, socially, and phenomenologically—more common than others, and that commonality (or lack thereof) facilitates or inhibits the movement of knowledge. Multimodal media afford people marginalized by what is held to be common or normal—such as women, LGBTQ persons, persons of colour, and persons with disabilities—with the means to convey the sensory and semiotic situation in which their knowledges are situated. Graphic autobiographies and memoirs—such as Cece Bell's *El Deafo* and Paul Karasik and Judy Karasik's *The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family*—and (semi-)autobiographical videogames—such as *Mainichi*

and *The Oldest Game*—can be seen to represent both the sensory and socio-cultural

commonplaces of their authors, fostering a form of invention that is capable of translating

knowledges embedded within sensory, social, and cultural situations. In order to make this point

effectively, and to demonstrate its applicability to design, a portion of this dissertation is argued

through an accompanying videogame called *Allergies & Allegories*.

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While there is only a single name on the title page, this dissertation involved the support and encouragement of many mentors, colleagues, friends, and family members, only some of whom I have space to mention here. I'd like to begin by thanking Allan and Janice Wilcox for their endless support and for imparting on me the value of education and the appreciation of the world and everyone in it that learning fosters. I'd also like to thank my sister, Ashley Graham, for acting as a sounding board as I toiled away on this document and the accompanying game. Both my parents and my sister have provided me with an invaluable and unending source of encouragement when I needed it most.

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Introduction

This dissertation is focused on developing a single concept: *embodied invention*, a sensory and rhetorical method for translating knowledges. Embodied invention is a critique of normative theories of communication that rely on a common or shared experience, but it is also a design philosophy, a method for creating tools that translate knowledges between bodies and places. These acts of knowledge translation reflect our capacity to understand, empathize with, and be by motivated by others, and as such I see embodied invention as a crucial component of creating and maintaining inclusive communities and cultures.

To understand embodied invention the concept itself needs to be seen as an act of invention. In rhetorical theory invention refers to a method for discovering arguments based in the *koine ennoia* or 'common ideas.' To invent a persuasive argument one must first study the opinions, beliefs, and values common to a particular time and place. Rhetors grouped these common ideas into various places or *topoi* (the word '*topos*' means 'place') and instructed students to study the *koine topoi* or 'commonplaces.' Students were aided in this process through commonplace books, texts that contained common phrases, aphorisms, arguments, and allegories grouped into various topics. These books facilitated the discovery of knowledge on a range of topics, from morality to economics to law. This dissertation is itself a commonplace book— a collection of theories and concepts from the topics of rhetoric, phenomenology, feminism, disability studies, comics studies, and game studies. From these places I invent the concept of embodied invention, a method for translating knowledges and practices between bodies, communities, and cultures.

In inventing the concept of embodied invention I engage in various acts of *misprision*, a creative, productive misinterpretation of a concept or theory. In fact, the crux of the dissertation turns on three principal acts of misprision. For example, I look at Aristotle's definition of common sense (*koine aisthesis*) as that faculty by which one sense incidentally invokes or supplies another, and I creatively misinterpret this as a source of *sensory enthymemes*. An enthymeme is a rhetorical argument in which there is an implied but unstated premise; so long as the implied premise is familiar to the audience, they need not hear it spoken as the mind supplies it. The faculty of common sense functions in much the same way where if there is a sensation known to the perceiver it does not have to be sensed as the mind supplies it. This misprision of common sense (*koine aisthesis*) allows me to approach perception itself as a rhetorical phenomenon, opening up the possibility of including the body and the senses into the art of invention. After all, Aristotle defines a commonplace as a collection of enthymemes (*Rhetoric* B 26, 1403a, 18-19); common sense, as a source of sensory enthymemes, would thus create a personal sensory commonplace from which embodied knowledge of the world is invented.

These various acts of misprision allow foundational theories of rhetoric, perception, and epistemology to be merged with more contemporary scholarship on multimodal rhetoric, phenomenology, and positional epistemology. For instance, in a second major misprision I read the above understanding of common sense (*koine aisthesis*) into Giambattista Vico's theory of sensory and artistic invention. For Vico, common sense, as a shared faculty of perception, creates a common sense of place or a sensory commonplace (*topica sensible*); Vico held that it was within this sensory commonplace that humans first discovered common knowledge and common knowledge-making practices. I go on to merge Vico's theory of invention with contemporary

postmodernism, feminism, and disability studies, thereby pluralizing the notion of sensory

commonplaces in order to account for a range of bodies and senses.

Finally, this rethinking of invention precipitates a misprision of the commonplace book.

Whereas the traditional commonplace book contained common topics—such as law, morality, or

economics—in which one discovers various arguments, embodied invention looks to the

common stories of particular persons and places in which one discovers various everyday or

commonplace experiences. I approach these stories insofar as they are conveyed through various

media, including as memoirs and autobiographies, but also autobiographical films, comics, and

videogames. In this way I extend the heuristic role of the traditional commonplace book beyond

the printed word to embrace more contemporary multimodal artforms. In doing so I demonstrate

the benefits of sharing not only common ideas but common sensations and common sensory

experiences. In order to demonstrate the heuristic potential here this dissertation is accompanied

by a commonplace videogame—*Allergies & Allegories*. This food allergy awareness game

represents a relatively uncommon place in society and seeks to translate the knowledges and

practices situated therein by engaging the audience in an act of embodied invention. This game is

supplemented with a study of autobiographical comics and videogames that already function as

commonplace media, training the senses and minds of their readers to invent or discover

knowledges situated in various sensory, social, and culture places.

In lieu of a more comprehensive overview of this document I'd like to use the remainder

of this introduction to make four brief clarifications before proceeding to outline the individual

chapters. The first has to do with the nature of this dissertation. As a commonplace book that

undertakes various acts of misprision, this document is decidedly more inventive and less

expository. Readers looking for exegesis on the various theories and concepts discussed here

may be left wanting more. However, it is my hope that the assemblage of these theories and concepts from a range of disciplines and fields leads to novel insights that are best expressed through a more straightforward narrative. That said, I do delve into specifics insofar as they inform the current project and I do draw connections with texts and authors that expand the conversation on various topics.

The second clarification is in regards the concept of a place or situation. By these terms I do not mean a specific geographical location. Instead, I define place as a product of the embodied subject utilizing various sensory and semiotic practices to situate the self in the world. Conventionally, these practices for making sense have been associated with common sense, in this case meaning a common or shared rationality; however, if we divest common sense from the notion of a common or 'normal' body, then we can recognize without judgement a plurality of sense-making practices and sensory situations or places in which those practices 'make sense.' One of the consequences of this approach is to reject the notion that we can occupy the situations or places of others and thereby accrue the same knowledges. These kinds of social, cultural, and body tourisms elide the embodied practices that individuals use to make sense of their place in the world. In order to understand that embodied knowledge it must first be translated. Thus, embodied invention breaks with theories of knowledge and experience founded on common sense and the notion that humans naturally sense, feel, or reason about the world in the same or similar ways.

A third issue I'd like to address at the outset is how I talk about marginalized experiences in relation to normalcy. Throughout this document I shift between discussing the experiences of women, autists, persons who are Deaf, blind, and food-allergic. My aim here is not to equivocate—in fact, just the opposite: I want to and do speak about specific lived experiences

and actual everyday circumstances, emphasizing meaningful distinctions between individuals, communities, and cultures. My approach has been informed by feminist-pragmatism and I hold lived experience in the highest regard in respect to epistemology. However, I also want to address why certain experiences and knowledges appear to be more common (i.e. socially prevalent) than others. In fact, much of this dissertation involves distinguishing what is 'common'—as in personally familiar, ordinary, everyday—from what is 'common'—as in normal, average, or even universal. Normalcy can be understood as the conflation of these two meanings, such that a 'normal' subject is one for whom what is familiar or ordinary experientially is reflected as 'normal' or average socially and culturally.

One of the consequences of being considered 'normal' within a society is that most people will already be familiar with your sensory and semiotic practices—i.e. your ways of making sense. Neurotypical people, for instance, seem to prefer particular patterns that reflect uniformity and conformity, and these preferences can be seen to pervade Western culture in everything from the design of print media to the structure of buildings and public spaces. What many feminist disability studies scholars, such as Alison Kafer (*Feminist, Queer, Crip*) and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (*Extraordinary Bodies*), have argued is that the familiarity that normalcy affords confers a measure of privilege and power that needs to be interrogate and deconstructed. It is with this imperative in mind that I carry out a critique of normalcy with and through marginalized experiences.

Lastly, I'd like to clarify that a critique of normalcy is not a critique of anyone who conforms to the normate identity, such as myself. Rather, in interrogating the notion of what is 'common' or 'normal' I want to emphasize the ways in which normalcy leads to *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive* accounts of the world. As disability scholar Tobin Siebers writes, "our

current theories of reality…are part of a rhetoric that exists less to explain how the body works than to make claims about how it 'ought' to work in the society we all apparently desire" (180). This normate rhetoric suggests that humans do or ought to share the same techniques and practices for making sense of the world. The result is that theories of reality often come to represent the situation of the normate, whose sensory acuity and able body leads him to conclude that aspects of his experience, such as visual fidelity and a freedom of movement, are hallmarks of experiencing the 'real world.' As disability scholars have made clear, humans are only temporarily able-bodied and able-minded beings; from birth until death our bodies and minds are in a state of transition, where our motility, perception, and cognition vary dramatically throughout any individual's life. Normalcy identifies not only a particular moment in that process but also a particular subjectivity, favouring the able-bodied, white, male adult. In this regard we all stand to gain from critiquing normalcy and normate rhetoric as we will all benefit at one point or another from a diversification of the ways of making sense that circulate throughout our culture. With these clarifications in mind I will turn to briefly outlining the following chapters.

Chapter 1—Embodied Invention

In the first chapter I put forward a theory of embodied invention, a means of translating knowledges between bodies, communities, and cultures. I describe embodied invention as a variation of Giambattista Vico's sensory invention. For Vico, invention begins with common sense (*sensus communis*) which creates a common sense of place or a sensory commonplace. Within our sensory commonplaces we discover various ways of making sense, what Vico calls *poetic genera*. At this point I introduce into Vico's theory the concept of *dissensus communis* or

simply dissensus, meaning that humans sense or feel apart from one another. Dissensus

encourages us to recognize that the faculty of common sense varies from person to person, such

that we occupy intersecting but nevertheless distinct sensory places. It follows that while our

personal ways of making sense are given to us through our own common sensory experience, the

poetic genera of others must be invented or discovered through language, art, and culture. I then

turn to Deaf studies and autistic studies, relating how rhetorical scholars working in these areas

have posited discrete commonplaces, distinct places from which knowledge of the world is

invented.

This leads into the second part of the chapter, which is centered on the concept of the

commonplace book. Conventionally, a commonplace book was a heuristic text used to train

students in the art of invention. Such books contained various phrases, aphorisms, expressions,

metaphors, allegories, and fables that could be studied in order to invent knowledge on a

particular topic. Following Vico's suggestion that the poetic genera, or ways of making sense,

give rise to "true poetic allegories" (75) or 'true stories' ("*vera narration"*) (311), I suggest that

personal stories, such as autobiographies and memoirs, can be thought to convey the poetic

genera of their authors. Furthermore, I suggest that authors working in multimodal media, such

as comics and videogames, are creating novel forms of commonplace texts, one's capable of

conveying various ways of making sense using rhetorics that span numerous senses and

modalities. This sets up the rest of the dissertation in which I argue for commonplace comic

books (Chapter 2) and commonplace videogames (Chapter 3).

Chapter 2—Commonplace Comic Books

In the second chapter I develop the notion that in sharing stories we are sharing ways of making sense. In taking this approach I am building on the work of Michel de Certeau who argued that stories collate the various tactics or techniques used throughout society. But rather than focusing on myths and fables, as de Certeau does, I look to autobiographies and memoirs, 'true stories' of everyday or commonplace experiences of various persons. However, because the focus here is on dissensus, there is a need to study not just differences in language but in perception and experience as well. And so I look specifically to autographics, autobiographical comics or 'true graphic stories.' Autographics allow us to study 'true stories' told through a multi-sensory medium, thereby fostering the discovery of sense-making practices at work throughout and between the senses of various authors. In taking this approach I am following Vico's suggestion that while classical invention encouraged students to study the social commonplaces through the discursive arts of speech and writing, invention based on the senses entails studying the sensory commonplaces through the perceptual arts of poetry and painting— to which we can add contemporary arts of photography, film, comics, and videogames.

Thus, what I am proposing is that we treat autographics as *commonplace comic books*. As already noted, the term commonplace book refers to a heuristic text that students were encouraged to study so as to refine their knowledge of a particular topic and develop their capacity for inventing things to say on that topic. What I suggest is that autographics take the same heuristic principle of a commonplace book and extrapolate it into various sensory modalities. That is to say, whereas commonplace books traditionally focused on common linguistic and discursive relationships, autographics, or commonplace comic books, convey common sensory and semiotic relationships. They are ideal texts, then, for conveying practices that permeate not just written or spoken language, but the senses themselves. Throughout the

chapter I look to comics like *El Deafo*, an autobiographical comic about growing up deaf, and *The Ride Together*, a memoir comic about autism, demonstrating how the cartoonists leverage the multimodality of the medium to convey various sense-making practices.

Chapter 3—Commonplace Videogames

In the third chapter I put forward the notion of a *commonplace videogame*. What distinguishes commonplace videogames is that whereas stories convey ways of making sense, games are a means of generating stories. Commonplace videogames, then, are a means of procedurally generating accounts of sensory, social, and/or cultural places in the world. These accounts, in turn, teach players the sense-making practices or poetic genera that are inherent to those places. In this way commonplace videogames are a novel instance of didactic new media in the way that they train players to understand how knowledge of the world is situated through various places or positions in the world. In speaking of commonplace videogames I want to think of them as invitations for players to use the poetic genera inherent to a particular sensory, social, or cultural place to produce an account of that place. This reading is reinforced by noting that games function through *procedural enthymemes* (Bogost *Persuasive Games*), arguments completed through interaction. By enacting the procedural enthymemes in a commonplace videogame, players bring forth an account of that place that makes sense, situating their knowledge of the subject in the process.

In the chapter itself I define commonplace videogames and provide an overview of their common features. I then describe how these games function rhetorically through procedural and participatory arguments that involve various senses. I go on to note how games are particularly suited to creating a common sense of place through their unique blend of play, place, and poiesis.

Videogames are, I suggest, *topoietic* media. The word poiesis, which is the root for poetic in poetic genera, means 'to make or bring forth.' Thus, to think of games as *topoietic* media is to note that they bring forth (*poiesis*) a sense of place (*topos*) and in doing so they foster the exchange of knowledges and practices situated in those places.

Chapter 4—*Allergies & Allegories*

In the final chapter I demonstrate how embodied invention can inform the creation of knowledge translation tools. Embodied invention seeks to foster the exchange of knowledges situated in bodies, communities, and cultures, and it conceives of media as commonplace texts capable of sharing the methods by which knowledges are situated. While I have looked at media that incidentally function in this way—such as commonplace comic books and commonplace videogames—in this chapter I explore what a commonplace text founded explicitly on the ideals of embodied invention might look like. I designed such a text in the form of *Allergies & Allegories*, a commonplace videogame that seeks to raise awareness of life with a serious food allergy. The game itself is based on interviews conducted with food-allergic children, as relayed in the paper "Illustrating Risk: Anaphylaxis Through the Eyes of the Food-Allergic Child" by Nancy Fenton et al. In *Allergies & Allegories* players are introduced to Mia, a young girl with a peanut allergy, who is also a composite of those children interviewed in the study. Players work with Mia to navigate various social situations related to her allergy. I go on to describe how the game came together, its design and mechanics, what it is like to play, and my overall objectives in producing such a text.

Chapter One: Embodied Invention

In this dissertation I define and develop the concept of embodied invention—a form of situated knowledge translation that is rooted in the body and the senses. When talking about situated knowledges I mean knowledge of the world that has been embodied through a particular body and in respect to a particular perspective. Given that bodies and perspectives vary in accordance with age, gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, class, and many other factors, knowledges invariably differ from one another. I take it for granted that our capacity to translate these knowledges corresponds to our capacity to understand, empathize with, and, ultimately, be motivated by the various persons and perspectives that make up our communities. Nevertheless, if knowledges differ from one another, how is that we develop common knowledge?

All theories of communication encounter the challenge of how disparate individuals, communities, and cultures communicate across and through their differences. One approach to this challenge is to assert that communication is a process founded on consensus. Such a premise suggests that understanding is achieved by revealing a fundamental similarity and commonality between dissimilar and uncommon subjects. This speaks to the literal interpretation of consensus, which means 'to feel or sense together.' The approach explored here is to develop a theory of communication founded not on consensus but dissensus, meaning to feel or sense apart or separately. Dissensus encourages us to recognize the dissimilarity and uncommonness between subjects, aspects of effective communication which are often disregarded when interlocutors seek only to find common ground. Thus, dissensus involves treating that which is uncommon as indicative of larger contexts in which knowledges attain meaning. Embodied invention, then, is a theory of how we discover such contexts.

In rhetorical theory invention refers to the art of discovering knowledge through the common topics or commonplaces (the word topic or *topos* means place). The commonplaces are those commonly held beliefs and opinions that have been discursively formed in a particular community or culture. Training in invention involves becoming familiar with the discursive commonplaces of one's audience, for in doing so the rhetor is capable of making arguments that follow from commonly held beliefs. Traditional invention, however, does not account for the origins of these common beliefs. In *The New Science* Giambattista Vico put forward a theory of invention that situated common beliefs in the body and senses. Vico begins from the premise that humans share a common means of sensory perception, that is to say, a common sense or *sensus communis*. Common sense suggests that despite our social or cultural differences we nevertheless possess common relationships between the senses and as such all humans could be said to occupy the same sensory commonplace. In this way Vico puts forward the notion that sensory experience itself is a kind of invention. He held that by studying the sensory commonplace we discover poetic genera, common sensory techniques or tactics for making sense out of the world. Vico held that the poetic genera give rise to "true poetic allegories" (75) or 'true stories' ("*vera narration*") (311), common or shared narratives that make sense out of the sensory world. We find these 'true stories' in the myths and fables that span across communities, cultures, and continents; their (apparent) universality is a testament to the fact that underneath the plurality of discourses there resides common ways of making sense. Based on this originary relationship between sense and knowledge, Vico held that the discovery of knowledge was fostered through sensory media, as typified by the arts of poetry and painting.

Embodied invention is a variation of this form of sensory knowledge discovery. But whereas Vichian invention begins from the premise that there exists a *sensus communis* and thus

a sensory commonplace in which we discover common ways of making sense (i.e. common poetic genera), embodied invention follows from the premise of *dissensus communis*, meaning that there are a plurality of sensory commonplaces and thus numerous and varied ways of making sense (i.e. uncommon poetic genera). Embodied invention looks to those 'true stories' that have been marginalized by conceptions of what is 'common' or 'normal' in search of poetic genera that are socially uncommon or unfamiliar. At the same time embodied invention retains the relationship between knowledge and the senses by approaching contemporary media, such as comics and videogames, as a means of conveying poetic genera across bodies, communities, and cultures. However, in learning these novel ways of making sense we are not so much discovering the basis of common knowledge but the means by which knowledges are situated in various practical positions or common places. Embodied invention, then, is a means of translating these situated knowledges, fostering our capacity to understand one another through our differences rather than despite them.

To put all of this in terms of contemporary theory, *dissensus communis* or dissensus enables a rethinking of Vico's humanist account of knowledge moving between *like* bodies and *common* places into a feminist disability studies theory of knowledge moving between *unlike* bodies and *uncommon* places.[1] For example, dissensus encourages us to look at the formation of the discursive commonplaces (i.e. commonly held beliefs) of Western culture and see common relationships that are founded on a 'common' or 'normal' body—e.g. the common belief that reality is primarily a visual phenomenon or that speech is commensurate with intelligence or that

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[1] It could also be said that embodied invention offers a posthumanist theory of communication as well, if by humanism one means an epistemology founded on the existence of a common human subject. In this way embodied invention is post-humanist in the sense that it offers a means of thinking beyond the limitations that humanism imposes on human subjects vis-à-vis the body, senses, mind, rationality, etc. Thus, readers may find a certain affinity between posthumanist scholarship and the present work. That said, both feminism and disability studies are already carrying out such posthumanist endeavours and so I have opted to frame the project through them.

language is a disembodied medium. In this way, embodied invention recognizes that invention has historically been restricted to the commonplaces of the *normate*. The normate refers to the culturally constructed notion of the normal or common human subject. In Western culture, the "normate position" is "masculine, white, nondisabled, sexually unambiguous, and middle class" (Garland-Thomson *Extraordinary Bodies* 64). To speak of the commonplaces as normative is to note that the discursive *topoi* of Western culture are based on the sensory *topos* of the normate— i.e. they are based on a 'normal' or a 'common' mode of sensory experience. This is noteworthy given that the discursive commonplaces are those socially common or familiar places to which the mind goes when it seeks to discover knowledge about a particular topic. To recognize the discursive commonplaces as normative is to note that they inhibit the discovery of knowledges located in positions and experiences that have been marginalized by the construction of normalcy. As Jay Dolmage writes, "A normate culture… continuously re-inscribes the centrality, naturality, neutrality and unquestionability of [the] normate position" (22). Similarly, the discursive commonplaces have re-inscribed the 'centrality, naturality, neutrality and unquestionability' of the normative sensory experience and thus normative ways of making sense and as a consequence they reflect the biases of an able-bodied, neurotypical, masculine subject.

In what follows I develop the concept of dissensus by combining disability studies critiques of normalcy with feminist standpoint theory. I then put this feminist disability studies epistemology in dialogue with Vico's theory of invention, giving rise to the notion of uncommon places and discrete poetic genera. I then turn to Deaf studies and autistic studies, relating how rhetorical scholars working in these respective areas have each described discrete commonplaces, distinct places of invention. Inherent to these places are various sense-making practices, i.e. poetic genera used to make sense of one's place or situation in the world.

Embodied invention ties our capacity to understand one another to our familiarity with various poetic genera. Thus, I end by suggesting that poetic genera are shared through commonplace books. Conventionally, a commonplace book was a heuristic text used to train students in the art of invention. Such books contained various phrases, aphorisms, expressions, metaphors, allegories, and fables that could be studied in order to invent knowledge on a particular topic. Following Vico's suggestion that the poetic genera, or ways of making sense, give rise to "true poetic allegories" (75) or 'true stories' ("*vera narration*") (311), I suggest that autobiographies and memoirs are the commonplace books of embodied invention in that they convey discrete and situated ways of making sense that need not conform to the consensus of all persons to be considered true. [2]

Consensus & Dissensus

In Western philosophy, common sense can refer to many things: common sensory perception (*koine aisthesis*), common notions or concepts (*koine ennoia*), common rationality (*bon sens*), common moral judgement (*sensus communis*), and/or common social knowledge (*koine ennoia* and *sensus communis*). These varied and overlapping definitions can be found in a variety of philosophies of the body, mind, and language, including those philosophies of perception (such as Aristotle and Husserl), rationality (Aquinas and Descartes), and rhetoric (Aristotle and Vico). When common sense is deployed in these philosophies it is often done so on the basis that there exists a shared *sensus* between human subjects. This *sensus* can refer to

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[2] Much has been written about autobiographies, memoirs, and truth. See, for instance, Philippe Lejeune's "The Autobiographical Pact" or Sidonie Smith's "Construing Truth in Lying Mouths: Truthtelling. In Women's. Autobiography." For a more general overview of the subject, see *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. In talking about truth and autobiography I mean something similar to Stanley Fish's remarks that, "Autobiographers cannot lie because anything they say, however mendacious, is the truth about themselves, whether they know it or not"("Just Published: Minutiae Without Meaning" New York Times, Sept. 7th, 1999). That said, my focus here is primarily on how truth is conveyed and not necessarily whether an author is being truthful.

the body, through perception, or to the mind, through rationality, or to language, through rhetoric. When it is paired with the notion of *communis,* or commonality, this *sensus* is often taken to be transcendental. As a consequence, it exists above and beyond any individual instantiation—i.e. any individual body, mind, or rhetoric. This allows common sense, as a concept, to function as a prescriptive norm; it gives rise to the possibility that one should perceive, think, or be persuaded of this or that.

Such an understanding of *sensus communis* is captured by C.S. Lewis in his history of the phrase 'common sense' (*Study in Words*). Lewis notes that the word 'common' can be interpreted as 'generic' or even 'banal.' "But common may also contrast the *sensus* of humanity in general, favourably, with what is thought or felt by the irrational, the depraved, the sub-human. Common, so taken, has no association with vulgar. It is the *quod semper, quod ubique*, the normal and indeed the norm" (Lewis 149). In fact, this correlation between common sense and normalcy is recurrent throughout history. Summarizing Lewis's work on common sense, Bugter relates four principal interpretations of the phrase in Western philosophy: "1. The elementary mental outfit of normal man," "2. *Sensus communis* as social virtue," "3. *Sensus communis* as common wit," and "4. *Sensus communis*…[as] the collection of all the *sensus* that we have in common, because they are 'normal.'" (83).

In drawing attention to normalcy and common sense I want to focus on the ways in which knowledge and reason have, historically, been situated in the experience a 'common' or 'normal' individual. Feminist disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson refers to this 'normal' figure in Western discourse as the normate. She writes that "The term *normate* usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human

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beings" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 8). [3] Common sense, in the above formulations, clearly

participates in this process, as it allows for the validation of one's own body (and mind) as

rational, moral, and, ultimately, human, through its marking of others as "irrational," "depraved,

and "sub-human" (Lewis 149). Garland-Thomson goes on to write that the normate constitutes

"the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others

whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries" (8). Similarly, common sense can be

thought of as that 'veiled' sensory and cognitive faculty that derives its meaning and privilege—

its commonality—through its contrast with 'uncommon' senses, bodies, and minds.

Part of what maintains the 'veil' surrounding common sense is the belief that humans

possess a common means of perception. In the above definitions the notion of common sense as

common wit is attributed to Vico who sought to correlate common ideas—what the Stoics

referred to as *koine ennoia*—with common perception—what Aristotle called *koine aisthesis*. For

Vico the common ideas are first discovered or invented through common perception, a move that

suggests that a 'common' or 'normal' body is not only the basis for a common or shared

understanding, but it is the foundation for Western knowledge and discourse. [4] Rather than

simply critiquing the normative foundation of Vico's philosophy I'd like to engage in an act of

misprision by creatively misinterpreting its foundational claim. Thus, where Vico sees a common

basis for human knowledge and understanding in our (supposedly) common bodies and senses, I

see an explanation of how the bodies and senses of culturally 'normal' subjects—i.e. the

normate—became the foundation of Western discourse. At the same time I see the act of

recognizing bodies and senses that differ from the normate as commensurate with the recognition

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[3] On a similar note, disability scholar Lennard Davis has argued that disability arises from the active and passive
(re)construction of what is normal (*Enforcing Normalcy*), leading him to suggest that disability studies is, in many
ways, a form of normalcy studies.
[4] Vico goes on to argue that the sensory discovery of common ideas precedes the creation of mythology,
philosophy, and science (*The New Science*).

of distinct situations in which knowledges and rational practices inhere. In the next section I examine the former claim in detail, before moving on to the latter.

From Perception to Reason

In using common sense to connect sensory perception with cognitive comprehension Vico is building on a long-standing association in Western philosophy. As van Holthoon notes, from Greco-Roman antiquity onward common sense follows a "journey from perception to reason" (101). This journey, I suggest, also charts the process by which the sensory perception of normative individuals (i.e. able-bodied and able-minded) becomes the foundation for reason regardless of one's body or mind. That is to say, by assuming the existence of a common or normal perceiving subject, reason itself comes to transcend the body, even as it remains closely tied to it.

This journey from perception to reason begins with Aristotle's definition of common sense as *koine aisthesis* or common perception. In *De anima* Aristotle argues for the existence of a faculty by which the disparate senses supplement one another in order to form a unified experience of the world. Common sense (*koine aisthesis*) is that means by which the senses share information with one another such that we perceive multi-sensory objects as unified entities. Put differently, common sense (*koine aisthesis*) is the faculty by which we observe the parts but perceive the whole. This understanding of common sensory perception then gets taken up by philosophers in the Middle Ages. For instance, in *A Commentary on Aristotle's De anima* Thomas Aquinas translates *koine aisthesis* as '*sensus communis*,' aligning Aristotle's sensory concept with the Roman tradition in which common sense referred to common social knowledge and, indeed, a kind of common rationality. In fact, Aquinas goes on to treat *sensus communis* as

a synonym for reason (van Holthoon 100), [5] such that the capacity to 'observe the parts but perceive the whole' becomes that process of observing parts but perceiving the whole truth. At this point common sense becomes less of a sensory faculty and more of a cognitive one, a move that works to divest knowledge and reason from the embodied subject such that common sense moves towards more abstract and universal notions of reason.

Viewed in this way, the journey from perception to reason reaches its conclusion in Cartesian philosophy where common sense becomes 'good sense' (*bon sens*). Not only is 'good sense' seamlessly equated with reason, but it marks a definitive break with the body and the senses—Descartes saw sensory perception not as a source of truth but potential deception. For him, common sense or *bon sens* is a form of reason that is naturally and normally conferred upon the mind, not something that propagates upwards from one's sensory experience. This can be seen in the opening paragraph of Descartes' "Discourse on the Method":

> Good sense (*bon sens*) is the best distributed thing in the world: for everyone thinks himself so well endowed with it that even those who are the hardest to please in everything else do not usually desire more of it than they possess. In this it is unlikely that everyone is mistaken. It indicates rather that the power of judging well and of distinguishing the true from the false—which is what we properly call "good sense" or "reason"—is naturally equal in all men, and consequently that the diversity of our opinions does not arise because some of us are more reasonable than others but solely because we direct our thoughts along different paths and do not attend to the same things. ("Discourse on the Method" 5)

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[5] The shift in Aquinas from sensory common sense to reason is in line with other philosophers of the Middle Ages, such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus, who hypothesized a ratio sensibilis, a kind of reason of the senses (Summers "Optics and the common sense" 158).

Indeed, Descartes inherits the work of his predecessors, especially Aquinas, who diminished the role of the senses in relation to reason. As Lewis observes,

> there is no need to distinguish *sens* from *le bon sens* or *le sens commun*, nor *sense* from 'good sense' and 'common sense'. Whatever the idea (or ideas) of a *common sense* contributed to the final flavour of the brew, it is now indistinguishable. Thus Descartes opens his *Discourse on Method* with a definition of *le bon sens ou la raison*; but by the second paragraph it has changed into *la raison ou le sens*. Descartes does not notice the change. With or without *bon*, *sens* is a synonym for *raison*. (Lewis 153)

Van Holthoon summarizes (a little too uncritically) the role 'good sense' plays in Cartesian philosophy: "The *bon sens*, the right insight, equivalent to the 'ratio,' with which nature endowed everybody equally, will reveal to everybody the true and false. This *bon sens* is normative, and dominates all our knowing and acting, individually and collectively" (126).

Ultimately, the journey from perception to reason reflects two important conflations. The first is the conflation of sense (*sens*, *sensus, aisthesis)*—as in meaning made from embodied sensory experience—with reason—as in a disembodied means of sensing or discerning truths from falsehoods. But there is also the conflation of common (*commun, communis, koine*)— originally a reference to the shared role of the senses in making perceptual meaning—with that which is 'natural' or 'normal'—as in that which is common or given to all or "equal in all men." In this way whatever common perception (*koine aisthesis*) contributes to an individual's capacity to 'make sense' of the world it is either already common or shared by all rational subjects or it is uncommon and potentially irrational.

In this context Vico's philosophy, in which common social knowledge originates in and is conveyed through common perception, proves useful insofar as it maintains the relationship

between bodies and knowledges. Vico, it's worth noting, was a staunch anti-Cartesianist.[6] He

felt that the Cartesian method—which valued solitary contemplation—risked cutting students off

from the community, inhibiting their capacity to communicate with the public. Furthermore,

Vico's belief that sensory perception was itself a form of thinking and reasoning and therefore

sensory media had a role to play in conveying knowledge was wholly at odds with the Cartesian

method which viewed the senses as potentially misleading and held that clear logical proofs

were, in a manner of speaking, the language of reason. Thus, Vico's philosophy moves the

conversation closer to discussing a non-normative form of knowledge translation, one that

acknowledges and respects the role of the body and the senses in the production and

dissemination of knowledges. However, there remains Vico's reliance on a common or shared

faculty of common sense which could be seen to shift the universalizing or normalizing tendency

from the rational mind to the body and the senses. Both posit a consensus—either a rational

consensus or what all reasonable people would agree to be true, or a sensory consensus or what

all able-bodied and able-minded people perceive in common. Either way there is little room to

acknowledge, let alone come to terms with, those ways of making sense that do not conform to

that which is 'common' or 'normal.' Thus, a second misprision is in order, one that bases Vico's

theory of sensory invention not on *sensus communis* but *dissensus communis*.

Dissensus

     The word dissensus means disagreement or dissent. It combines the Latin 'dis,' meaning

apart or away, with an abbreviation of consensus. The word consensus literally means 'to feel or

sense together.' Thus, *dissensus communis* means a common difference in feeling or sensing. As

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[6] Vico's *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* is largely regarded as an argument against the Cartesian pedagogy, for instance.

J. F. Lyotard notes, dissensus is as a means of critiquing epistemologies and politics founded on

common sense and consensus. For Lyotard, common sense asserts a "transcendental *sensus*"

("Sensus Communis" 7)—that is, a way of transcending one's own embodied situation in order

to imagine and evaluate the perspectives and knowledges of other persons.[7] By interrogating the

transcendental *sensus* Lyotard is, as one scholar put it, forwarding a critique of "transcendental

intersubjectivity and normative consensus" (Beardsworth 44). As another scholar notes, the core

issue with transcendental intersubjectivity is that it assumes that "[h]uman beings can enter into

the potential standpoints of others—they can share the world with others through the faculty of

judging what is held in common" (Visker 2). The project here is an attempt to come to terms

with the epistemological implications of dissensus in light of the fact that many of our theories of

communication and rhetoric are founded on common sense.

In exploring the relationship between *dissensus* and *communis* I mean to recognize

fundamental differences in bodies, minds, languages, and rhetorics. For this reasons I associate

dissensus with disability studies, and its various critiques of cultural normalcy surrounding the

body and the senses. But dissensus also incorporates feminist epistemology through standpoint

theory, which holds that knowledge is situated in respect to one's position or place in the world.

As standpoint theorists such as Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding have argued, there are

numerous and intersecting positions in respect to gender, race, class, culture, sexuality, and

ability, and thus there are necessarily numerous and intersecting bodies of situated knowledges.

In this regard, dissensus can be seen to emerge from the incongruity between standpoint theory

and common sense. In the context of standpoint theory common sense and its implicit notion of a

shared consensus suggests a transcendental perspective, a means of perceiving that which one

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[7] Following Lyotard, scholars such as Jacques Rancière (Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics) and Rudi Visker
("Dissensus Communis: How to Keep Silent 'after' Lyotard") have developed the postmodern notion of dissensus
into the concept of dissensus communis, thereby furthering the critique of common sense.

has not (and perhaps cannot) experience directly. Haraway calls this the "god's eye view," a "[way] of being nowhere while claiming to see comprehensively" (584). Like postmodern dissensus, standpoint theory rejects the false objectivity of a god's eye view or a transcendental *sensus*. But standpoint theorists go further by proposing an alternative objectivity, that of embodied, socio-historically situated experience—what Haraway calls *feminist objectivity* or what Harding calls *strong objectivity*. Strong objectivity involves locating or situating knowledges in those contexts in which they have practical meaning. For instance, Harding describes strong objectivity as constituting "a rigorous 'logic of discovery' intended to maximize the objectivity of the results of research and thereby to produce knowledge that can be for marginalized people (and those who would know what the marginalized can know) rather than for the use only of dominant groups in their projects of administering and managing the lives of marginalized people" (54).

What is missing from these theories, however, is a method for translating knowledges between situations or places. Here the concept of invention—as the means of discovering knowledges through studying various places—proves useful. As noted above, I want to begin with Vico's notion of sensory invention. However, this theory is based on *sensus communis* and so it conceives of knowledge discovery on the basis that all persons share a common *sensus* (i.e. a shared way of situating knowledge). However, in practice, this *sensus* allows one to forgo the various and divergent ways in which bodies and senses vary in favour of a 'common' or 'normal' body. By adopting the notion of dissensus, I aim to articulate a theory of embodied invention that recognizes as meaningful various and divergent ways of making sense. Vico called the common ways of making sense poetic genera and he held that they were invented or discovered in the sensory commonplace. Dissensus suggests a plurality of sensory commonplaces and thus it

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posits numerous poetic genera, various ways of making sense of the world. Sharing poetic genera, then, is the key to translating knowledges in embodied invention.

Poetic Genera

The phrase poetic genera refers to common or familiar ways of making sense. The word poetic comes from *poiesis* meaning 'to make or bring forth.' In a manner of speaking, the poetic genera are the means by which we bring forth knowledge of our place in the world. They are fundamentally bodily and sensory in nature, referring to the relationships between our various senses insofar as they work in concert to produce meaningful interpretations of the world. We use our poetic genera whenever we measure distance in relation to our bodies or time in relation to our sense of motility or space in relation to our sense of sight or sound. In portraying poetic genera in this way I am deviating from Vico's original conception of the term but in a way that (I think) allows the concept to function productively within contemporary philosophy. That said, I want to draw on Vico's original articulation of the poetic genera and so it is worth providing his definition here.

In *The New Science* Vico sets out to account for the origins of language, culture, and truth. He starts with the 'first humans'—pre-linguistic peoples who experienced the world through sense and feeling alone. Vico proceeds to describe how the first humans used their senses to "hew out topics" or places, a process that "has the function of making minds inventive" (166-7). Within those sensory places the 'first humans' invented the poetic genera. The first poetic genus arose by attributing the sound of thunder to the god Jove. In this act Vico held that humans created the first sensory metaphor, transforming for the first time perceptual data into something more coherent and descriptive. This originary act of invention begins a process

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through which humans first began to reason and think with the senses. As Vichian scholar Donald Phillip Verne notes, the poetic genera involve "regarding sensibility, feeling, or expression as a form of thought" (92). And as John D. Schaeffer observes, the poetic genera constitute a "metaphorical translation" one that allowed the 'first humans' to "make sense out of their sensations, to objectify them in ways that both constellate a meaningful interpretation of external reality and generate a level of self-consciousness of sensation itself" (89). In this way sensory invention "creates human self-consciousness by suspending the flux of sensation, fixing sensation in time and projecting it onto external reality" (Schaeffer 90). In a manner of speaking, nonsense (i.e. the din of rumbling thunder) begins to 'make sense' (i.e. Jove is the source the storm) and since humans (supposedly) share the same senses, this also becomes a common sense, a common way of making sense out of the world.

Vico goes on to argue that over time the sensory metaphors gave rise to linguistic metaphors, words that could recall common sensations. Through common language there arose myths, collective stories that make sense of the natural world, such as the myth of Jove whose temperament could help explain the volatility of the weather. Myths, for Vico, naturally give way to philosophy, and philosophy to science and this is the basis for his eponymous "new science." All, however, owe their origins to the originary acts of invention and the poetic genera that emerged in first making sense of the world.

Invention

Invention, then, is crucial to understanding how poetic genera, or ways of making sense, are discovered and shared. In rhetorical theory, invention is the first of the five canons of rhetoric. It is concerned with the initial formation of an argument. Classical rhetoricians such as

Aristotle and Cicero wrote extensively on the subject of invention and its central role in the discovery of persuasive arguments. Both approached invention as that formative process that instructs rhetors where to begin assembling an argument. Rhetors refer to these starting places as the topics—a word that literally means place (*topos*). Aristotle's *Topics*, for instance, makes reference to numerous categories in which one finds various templates for constructing arguments. Similarly, Cicero's *Topica* sets out various *loci* or locations in which a rhetor might look to discover various forms of argumentation depending on the occasion.

In both cases the art of invention is closely associated with a sense of place. At times this is meant abstractly, such as when the *topoi* or *loci* are treated as various headings or topics in which similar forms of argumentation are grouped—such as *topoi* based on cause-and-effect (see Cicero's *Topica*) or those based on past and future (see Aristotle's *Rhetoric*). Rhetoricians also distinguish between common and special topics. Aristotle refers to the commonplaces (*koine topoi*), for example, meaning general or generic forms of argumentation. But the topics can also refer to places in the geographical, social, and cultural sense as well. Aristotle, for instance, treats invention as the means of discovering arguments based in commonly held beliefs and opinions (*endoxa*).[8] Thus, studying the commonplaces involves examining the common language and discourse of various communities, societies, and cultures, for in doing so the rhetor learns the common associations between words, ideas, and values that will become the basis of his or her argument. In rhetorical theory these common associations are referred to as *enthymemes*.

Formally, an enthymeme is a syllogism with an implied but unstated premise where "if one of [the premises] is known, it does not have to be stated, as the hearer supplies it" (Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.2 1357a). Aristotle defines a topic or *topos* as "something under which many

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[8] The opening line of *Topics* reads: "Our treatise proposes to find a line of inquiry whereby we shall be able to reason from opinions that are generally accepted about every problem propounded to us" (*Topics* i.2 100a18-25).

enthymemes fall" (*Rhetoric* B 26, 1403a, 18-19). The classic example of an enthymeme is: 'Socrates is human, therefore Socrates is mortal.' The implied but unstated premise being: 'All humans are mortal.' Less formally, an enthymeme is an argument that draws on common or likely relationships between thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and values. This is nominally present in the word 'enthymeme' itself which literally means 'from the mind'; enthymematic arguments draw from the minds of the audience in order to complete the act of persuasion. In fact, Aristotle held this quality to be "the body of persuasion" (*Rhetoric* l.1 1354a15), meaning that persuasion is fundamentally related to this process of drawing on the familiar and known in order to introduce the unfamiliar or unknown. Indeed, part of what makes the enthymeme an effective form of communication is that the audience becomes involved in the act of completing or making sense of the argument itself by supplying implied but unstated knowledge. This can all be brought to bear on our understanding of invention, which involves studying the commonplaces, where a commonplace is a collection of enthymemes or common relationships. Thus, in studying various commonplaces the rhetor discovers arguments based in common semiotic relationships for in this way the rhetor learns which words, concepts, and premises do (and do not) need to be stated as the minds of one's audience will supply them.

Sensory Commonplaces & Sensory Enthymemes

With this understanding of invention in mind we can return to Vico's notion of sensory invention noted above. For Vico common sense creates a shared or common sense of place or simply a sensory commonplace in which one finds common sensory relationships. Expressed in the language of invention Vico is asserting the existence of *sensory enthymemes*, common relationships between the senses. His theory of invention states that in studying the sensory

commonplace—the common sensory world we all inhabit as human beings—one discovers

sensory enthymemes and through them various techniques for making sense, i.e. the poetic

genera: "The first founders of humanity applied themselves to a sensory topics [*topica sensible*],

by which they brought together properties or qualities or relations of individuals and species

which were, so to speak, concrete, and from these created their poetic genera" (*The New Science*

166). For Vico the sensory world can be considered a commonplace by virtue of common sense,

which can now be understood as that faculty by which we possess common relationships

between the senses. In this way common sense suggests common or universal sensory

enthymemes. This understanding of perception as enthymematic becomes clearer by engaging in

another act of misprision, in this case creatively misinterpreting Aristotle's concept of common

sense (*koine aisthesis*) as a source of sensory enthymemes.

　In *De anima*, Aristotle argues that there exists a sense that is common to all the senses—

koine aisthesis. He arrives at this concept after examining the five senses of sight, sound, touch,

taste, and smell, concluding that there are properties of sensory experience that cannot be

accounted for by the individual senses alone. One of those properties is that perception yields

complex sensations in which various senses appear simultaneously and incidentally:

> The senses perceive each other's special-objects incidentally, not in so far as they are
>
> themselves but in so far as they form a unity, when sense-perception simultaneously takes
>
> place in respect of the same object, e.g. in respect of bile that is bitter and yellow (for it is
>
> not the task of any further [perception] at any rate to say that both are one); hence too one
>
> may be deceived, and if something is yellow, one may think that it is bile. (*De anima*
>
> 425a30)

What Aristotle's description of *koine aisthesis* clarifies is the role common sense plays not just in binding sensations to one another but how such relationships contribute to a whole or unified experience.[9] For instance, he describes how bile is perceived as—at once—a bitter *and* yellow substance. Thus, to look at bile is to *see* something that already *tastes* bitter, such that one sense incidentally invokes or *supplies* another, creating a more comprehensive multimodal perception of the object in the process.

I say supplies here in order to invoke the language Aristotle uses to describe the enthymeme, a kind of argument where "if one of [the premises] is known, it does not have to be stated, as the hearer *supplies* it" (*Rhetoric* 1.2 1357a, emphasis added). Similarly, common sense (*koine aisthesis*), as described above, suggests that if a sensation is known it does not have to be (directly and immediately) sensed as common sense supplies it. To provide another example, in *looking* at a glass of water I perceive how to *grasp* it; the visual sense supplies an analogous tactile sense, both of which appear all at once in my perception of the glass. In fact, just as the discursive enthymeme involves the mind in the act of completing or making sense of verbal arguments, sensory enthymemes involve the mind in the act of completing or making sense of perceptual arguments. A key point here is that this would cast perceptual experience itself (i.e. 'reality') as an argument, one in which we are always-already persuaded of the legitimacy and veracity of our own embodied experiences as we draw from our own personal sensory commonplaces in completing—subjectively speaking—our perception of the world.

This misprision of common sense (*koine aisthesis*) as the source of sensory enthymemes sets up the need to recognize the distinct persuasive relationships various bodies and minds have

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[9] As scholars have noted, this aspect of *koine aisthesis* appears in contemporary psychology and neuroscience as *cross-modal binding*—that process by which one sense becomes bound to another through sensory perception. See *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* and *Aristotle on the Common Sense*, both of which connect passage 425b30 to cross-modal binding.

with the world—that is to say, the need to recognize distinct sensory *topoi* from which knowledge of the world is invented. This follows from the realization that if the sensations that the mind supplies follow from common sense binding one sense to another, and if bodies and senses differ, then so too do sensory enthymemes, suggesting that the world brought forth through perception varies between persons. What might be thought of as reality, then, is in fact various dissimilar worlds or uncommon places through which each of us brings forth a particular body of knowledge.[10]

Consider, for instance, the following remarks from Jim Sinclair: "Autism is a way of being. It is pervasive; it colours every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter, every aspect of existence" (*Loud Hands*). Or consider Paddy Ladd's statement that, "Deaf children and adults have their own epistemologies, their own ways of thinking about and constructing the world" (403). What I want to suggest here is that these remarks are indicative of distinct, often unrecognized places or sites of invention in which various poetic genera inhere. When Ladd speaks of Deaf epistemologies, for instance, such ways of "thinking about and constructing the world" are indicative of d/Deaf[11] poetic genera. But what does this mean, practically speaking? In the following section I turn to Deaf culture and the notion of a d/Deaf commonplace as a way of describing the relationship between a sensory commonplace and poetic genera. Given Vico's example of the originary poetic genera in which the sound of thunder becomes a metaphor for Jove, d/Deaf culture presents perhaps the most striking affirmation that poetic genera exist outside of the 'normal,' able-bodied commonplace.

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[10] Conversely, normalcy involves constructing and enforcing a supposedly common or shared world in which knowledge of the world supposedly originates.

[11] In the Deaf community the lower-case 'deaf' is meant to refer to the physiological condition of being hard-of-hearing or deaf. In contrast, the upper-case Deaf refers to one's membership in Deaf culture, typically in conjunction with one's fluency in sign language. Because I am interested in the relationship between the senses and culture I will frequently make reference to either one or the other or both as the context dictates.

d/Deaf Commonplaces

In *Understanding Deaf Culture* Paddy Ladd remarks that with the emergence of Deaf culture "one is confronted with the inescapable conclusion that there exists a 'Deaf Way', or ways, of thinking, of viewing the world; in short, Deaf epistemologies" (18).[12] Ladd describes these epistemologies as "Deaf ways of being in the world, of conceiving that world and their own place within it (both in actuality and in potentiality)" (81). What I want to suggest here is that Deaf ways of being in the world follow from a d/Deaf instantiation of common sense (*koine aisthesis*), one that forges enthymemes or common relationships through d/Deaf experience. And just as the hearing use common sense to "hew out the topics" or places of the hearing world, finding therein various ways of making sense, so too do d/Deaf persons create a place in the world in which poetic genera emerge. These d/Deaf poetic genera, I suggest, are synonymous with Deaf ways of thinking and viewing the world and they form the basis of d/Deaf rhetoric. Furthermore, they are not present within the commonplaces of the hearing; rather the hearing come to understand d/Deaf experience by engaging with Deaf culture and discovering therein d/Deaf ways of making sense. Delving into Ladd's history of Deaf culture can help make this point clearer.

In providing an overview of Deaf culture Ladd also sets out to define a Deaf identity, what he calls Deafhood. In a manner of speaking, Deafhood exchanges the generic—and arguably normalizing—concept of personhood for a specifically Deaf identity. In defining Deafhood Ladd goes to great lengths to assert its relation to Deaf culture as opposed to medical discourse. The medical perspective has very little concern for what it means to be Deaf—that is,

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[12] This sentiment has been expressed by other scholars as well, see for instance Owen Wrigley, *The Politics of Deafness*: "Deafness is less about audiology than it is about epistemology" (1).

one's identity as a member of a community with its own language and discourse—and is instead fixated on what it means to be deaf—that is, to have no hearing or partial hearing. As Ladd remarks, "Deafhood is not…a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness'. Instead, it represents a process—the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world" (3). The point in defining a Deaf identity is not to definitively or reductively assert what being Deaf means in its individual specificity, but rather, and quite simply, "[Deafhood] affirms the existence of a Deaf sense of being" (4). As Ladd relates, this common sense of being Deaf is reflected in a recurrent theme in Deaf discourse, one that "insists on the commonality between all Deaf people, no matter where they live" (59). And so, just as Vico looked upon the commonalities of the discursive commonplaces and traced them to an underlying sensory commonplace, Ladd carries out a similar project, connecting Deaf discourse with a shared sensory commonality or sensory commonplace amongst d/Deaf persons.

This connection between Deaf discourse and the commonplaces is made more explicit in the work of rhetorical scholar Brenda Jo Brueggemann. In *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places* Brueggemann sets out to write a "commonplace book on 'the deaf subject'" (9). She envisions the various chapters as different *topoi* for inventing arguments regarding the place of the modern deaf subject. In the first chapter, for instance, she talks about a sensory technique or strategy that is endemic to her experience as someone who is deaf. She calls this *think-eye*, a way of making sense of the world that combines the personal, thinking subject and the ocular means by which that subject locates herself or himself in the world. Think-eye, I submit, is one of the d/Deaf poetic genera, a way of making sense of experience that discovers a d/Deaf place in the world, and thus is instrumental in bringing forth and translating knowledge situated in that place.

Think-eye, like all poetic genera, emerges from a sensory *topos*, and thus Brueggemann writes that, "deaf space is a visual space, an 'eye' space. It is also, I submit, an I-space. We still have a lot to learn from each 'I' and each 'eye.' Perspective ('eye') really matters; the personal (the 'I') experience really matters, as well" (24). This definition of "deaf space" as 'eye/I' space speaks to variances in the sensory commonplaces, i.e. to the ways in which the senses establish various sensory and semiotic relationships, and thus distinct enthymemes. For instance, think-eye can be seen to manifest itself in the ways in which visual cues inform communication between d/Deaf persons. Facial expressions, lip-reading, contextual awareness, and attention to hand gestures—either as reinforcing speech or more directly through sign language—all serve instrumental roles in Deaf discourse. Ladd, for instance, remarks that "Deaf people place huge cultural weight both on visually presented information and discussion, and on being able to observe and digest other Deaf people's sign language…" (54). And this tends to be distinct from the kind of occularcentrism found in hearing discourse, especially in regards to practical, everyday experience.[13]

And yet, despite the significance of d/Deaf *topoi*, Deaf history is pervaded by the hearing asserting the proper place for Deaf subjects. That place was seen as integrated, socially productive, vocal members of society, a belief that led educators to ban the teaching of sign language in 1880. These educators—none of whom were deaf—saw the oral practices in society as incontrovertible ways of making sense, thus substantiating the belief that deaf persons should be compelled to adopt speech and to refrain from developing languages that were more resonant with how d/Deaf persons themselves made and shared sense. The decision to ban sign language education had a profound impact on the place of d/Deaf persons—both in the sensory and

[13] See also *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*, edited by H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Joseph J. Murray, in which deafness is considered not from the ableist perspective as a loss but from cognitive, linguistic, and cultural perspectives in which deafness is a creative and generative way of being and thinking.

discursive senses. As Carol Padden notes, "There are very few 'places' Deaf people can call their own. For most of their history in the United States, they have occupied spaces built by others and largely controlled by others" (169). There are two valences here: explicitly, Padden is referring to the institutional, recreational and social places in which Deaf persons may congregate, socialize, and converse, places that have often been created and administered by the hearing. But there is also the sense in which the sensory places of d/Deaf persons have also been built and controlled by others—namely, persons in positions of authority, such as teachers, instructors, law makers, medical professionals, and laypersons, who have authorized themselves to define the sensory place of the d/Deaf as a diminutive or lesser variation of the (supposedly) proper or common place of the hearing. In effect, these decisions have ensured that not only is d/Deaf experience uncommon or unfamiliar to the rest of society, it is in a sense uncommon even to deaf persons themselves, who have been denied the right to explore their own place in the world. However, now that sign language has re-entered schools Deaf culture is expanding and so are the conversations and stories surrounding d/Deaf experience.

Uncommon Sense

At this point it is worth asking and clearly answering: what is at risk when poetic genera, such as think-eye, are socially uncommon or unfamiliar? Put differently, what is at stake when various ways of making sense remain at the margins of popular discourse and culture? Well, if the poetic genera are the means by which we make sense of not only our own experiences but those other persons, then the risk is a perpetuation of misunderstandings and miscommunications between persons, communities, and cultures. The stakes are continued lapses in justice, omissions in the creation and enforcement of policies and laws intended to recognize the

practical realities various people face. This is especially pressing in regards to persons with disabilities. As disability scholar Tobin Siebers writes, "the most urgent issue for disability studies is the political struggle of people with disabilities, and this struggle requires realistic conceptions of the disabled body" ("Disability in Theory" 180). Engaging with various kinds of poetic genera, I suggest, brings us closer to the realism of bodies, to their common places. Think-eye for instance can bring us closer to the practical, lived experiences of d/Deaf persons. Similarly, the notion of *crip time* (Gill; Zola) can bring us closer to the lived experiences of persons with disabilities, where crip time reflects the temporality experienced by those who require additional time to move from one location to the next or to navigate ableist barriers.[14] While these poetic genera are familiar to those who use them in their everyday lives they remain outside of popular discourse, constraining thought and action to speculation and preconceived biases.

Thus, there is a need to look critically at normate culture and the limitations it imposes over what we can and should know about ourselves and each other. Normate culture puts at the centre of all discourse the common ways of making sense of able-bodied/masculine/white/heterosexual experience. Faith in the centrality and supremacy of these sense-making techniques and practices precludes the recognition of the practical experiences of those marginalized by normalcy. For example, in the essay "Disabling Attitudes," Elizabeth F. Emens remarks on the influence of generally accepted opinions on legal interpretations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Emens writes that "When the ADA eventually reached the courts, it encountered prevailing societal attitudes towards disability. Judges interpreted it more narrowly than the advocates expected. Because the law was out ahead of common sense,

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[14] Additionally, Alison Kafer expands this conversation on crip temporality in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*.

the courts did what they often do in such moments: they narrowed the law to better fit their common sense" (Emens "Disabling Attitudes" 43). Emens goes on to ask,

> So what is that common sense about disability? It is commonly assumed that disability is unfortunate, even tragic, and at the same time very costly for employers and for society. Under this view, disability should be avoided at most costs and accommodated only at a very limited cost. There is little sense that disability can have benefits (to the person with the disability or those around her), or that accommodations benefit more than the individual who requests them. Disability is, in this view, something we should just keep hoping will eventually go away if science and medicine get good enough to cure or eliminate it. In the meantime, this common sense might say, 'we' (the nondisabled people, or sometimes just 'people') should be good enough, moral enough, to do some things to help disabled people, but not too much, lest we drag down society or the economy. (43)

What Emens identifies here are the ways in which disability is approached not as a collection of diverse and unique experiences, each deserving of its own consideration, but rather disability is understood only insofar as it comports with what is already known about persons with disabilities from a normative perspective. Here it could be said that by being unfamiliar with the poetic genera of persons with disabilities those tasked with upholding their rights are incapable of making sense of the law.

Rod Michalko approaches this issue in *The Difference Disability Makes.* There he sets out to interrogate what disability means—i.e. what difference it makes—in Western culture and how that meaning is predetermined by normative biases. Throughout the text he draws on his own experience of being blind and how it is often 'seen': "while we [sighted and blind] see

things differently, I am wrong and 'they' are right. The difference our difference makes is that I am different. Even though 'we' claim to see differently from one another, only my difference counts as such" (93). He goes on to identify the 'difference-of-disability' which "makes no difference to the world of the normal" (98), writing that

> The 'view' from blindness or from a wheelchair makes no difference since it has no value. The 'sighted world' sees blindness as distortion and the 'walking world' sees wheelchair use as confinement. Both are seen as misfortune. Blindness is understood as 'impotence' with respect to 'normal seeing' and the same holds true for wheelchair use with respect to 'normal walking.' (98)

Ultimately, this leads disability to count only as a "useless-difference" (99). However, if the everyday practices and tactics of those who are blind or who use wheelchairs were to become well-known and commonplace in the discursive sense, then those who see or who walk would have the means to ascertain how a difference makes a meaningful, practical difference. This relates back to common sense as a means of forging enthymemes between sensations, thoughts, and ideas. What difference a difference makes is first and foremost a matter of experience; in order to share the ways in which bodies are situated in the world differently, we require ways of supplying those differences in accordance with the situation of another. So long as normate culture is indifferent to the difference disability makes, there is little opportunity for meaningful change. That said, the poetic genera are persuasive and they have the effect of dis-placing the normate from his supposedly central location in culture. In the following section I turn to another commonplace and another set of poetic genera, those belonging to autists.

Autistic Commonplaces

In the essay "Autism and Culture" Joseph N. Straus sets out to "understand autism as a way of being in the world, a world-view enshrined in a culture…" (467). At the centre of his essay is the notion of an "autistic sensibility," that is "a distinctly autistic cognitive style and creative imagination" (467). What I want to explore in this section is the idea that an autistic sensibility constitutes an autistic common sense. Following Vico, common sense is that faculty by which we "hew out topics" and discover therein poetic genera or ways of making sense. Thus, when Paul Heilker and Melanie Yergeau refer to the commonplaces or *topoi* of autists ("Autism and Rhetoric"), I want to think of these as sensory commonplaces. And when Straus goes on to define several traits common to autistic experience, I want to conceive of these as autistic poetic genera.

In their essay "Autism and Rhetoric" Heilker and Yergeau put forward the notion that autism constitutes its own rhetoric and thus autists possess their own commonplaces. Here both authors are drawing from personal experience. Yergeau is herself autistic, while Heilker's son is autistic. For her part, Yergeau talks about "my commonplaces—repetitive hand movements, rocking, literal interpretation, brazen honesty, long silences, long monologues, variations in voice modulation—each its own reaction, or a potentially autistic argument, to a discrete set of circumstances" (488). Heilker offers a different perspective, relating that he has gained a better understanding of his son through attending to his commonplaces:

When he returns to his obsessive topics of interest, as people on the spectrum tend to do, talking about America's Funniest Videos, homestarrunner.com, or SpongeBob SquarePants, for instance, understanding autism as a rhetoric lets me see that he is returning to his favorite inventive universes, that he wants to share topoi in those

universes which he continues to find valuable over long stretches of time, that bear

repeated usage. (488)

These *topoi*, I suggest, reflect unique sensory commonplaces that norms and conventions regarding the body and mind have historically disregarded or disparaged. In a manner of speaking, whereas traditional humanist inquiry sought to discover in the commonplace of the human a proper or refined way of thinking and knowing—invention for Vico is the "art of regulating well the primary operation of our mind by noting the commonplaces" (166)—Yergeau and Heilker demonstrate that by recognizing the *topoi* of autists as distinct but equally as meaningful we can come to understand how the mind operates outside of the narrow confines of normalcy.

What, then, might be considered autistic poetic genera? In the aforementioned essay, Straus identifies several autistic traits. He remarks that these traits "can be found operating…in the daily lives of people with autism, what I think of as the culture of the everyday" (476). That is to say, in the commonplaces of autists. He arrived at such traits by studying autistic high-culture—that is, the writing, art, and music of autists—and he names them *local coherence, fixity of focus*, and *private meanings*. These traits, I submit, are autistic poetic genera, various ways of bringing into being an autistic reality or world view. Understanding these poetic genera can help neurotypicals understand how "[a]utism…colours every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter, every aspect of existence" (Sinclair *Loud Hands*). In connecting the concept of poetic genera with autistic traits it can be seen how each trait influences how sensory enthymemes are formed, thus guiding what sensations are brought forth or supplied by the mind in completing or filling in perception.

For instance, in terms of local coherence, Straus describes a process in which "[o]bjects are apprehended in their full discrete and concrete individuality rather than as members or representatives of a larger subsuming abstract category" (467). Local coherence is distinct from the more neurotypical style of 'global' coherence in that it marks "a refusal to subsume perceptions into a hierarchy" (468). Here Straus draws evidence from the memoirs of Temple Grandin and Gunilla Gerland. Grandin, for instance, writes that,

> Unlike those of most people, my thoughts move from video-like, specific images to generalization and concepts. For example, my concept of dogs is inextricably linked to every dog I've ever known. It's as if I have a card catalog of dogs I have seen, complete with pictures, which continually grows as I add more examples to my video library…My memories usually appear in my imagination in strict chronological order, and the images I visualize are always specific. There is not a generic, generalized Great Dane. (Grandin *Thinking in Pictures* 11).

For Grandin there is an order to her thoughts that differs from that of neurotypicals. Whereas neurotypicals discover or invent hierarchies amongst perceptions and memories, such that an individual object might bring forth the notion of its general type, Grandin indicates that time and specific instances constitute the formative means of relating one thing to another.

The second tactic Straus identifies is what he refers to as fixity of focus, likening it to what Oliver Sacks calls the "gift for mimesis" (241) that many autists possess. Fixity of focus reflects the ways in which autists can remember and recall minute details and distant memories with great clarity and precision. Straus remarks that this trait translates into the "autistic cognitive and artistic style [which] often involve[s] doing one single thing with great intensity, again and again" (468). Fixity of focus indicates what Heilker noted above as his son's unique

topics of interest, places that he returns to repeatedly. Fixity of focus can be seen to forge strong relationships between various sensations and signs, such that the recollection of one things readily brings forth many others. In contrast, neurotypicals seem to forge weaker bonds, and thus they struggle to recall particular details. In fact, even in immediate sensory perception neurotypicals tend to prioritize certain aspects of the environment over others.

Lastly, Straus singles out private meanings as a distinct trait of autistic experience. These private meanings refer to idiosyncratic associations made through experience that are meaningful for individuals but may not be as readily meaningful to others. Here Straus directs us to Kristina Chew and her remarks that, "Autistic language is a fractured idiom, its vocabulary is created from contextual and seemingly arbitrary associations of word and thing, and peculiar to its sole speaker alone…Autistic language users think metonymically, connecting and ordering concepts according to seemingly chance and arbitrary occurrences in an 'autistic idiolect'" (qtd. on 469). Perhaps even more clearly than the previous traits, private meanings emphatically demonstrate that neurotypicals and autists differ in how they correlate the senses with one another. Whereas neurotypicals often rely on and assume relatively stable and common associations between sensations, words, and objects, autists exemplify that such commonalities are predicated on a narrow set of conventions. While these conventions facilitate understanding between neurotypicals, they can also obscure meaningful differences as well.

Taken together, these autistic traits or poetic genera indicate various ways of making sense of the world that while irreducible to the sensory experience of a normative, neurotypical individual, are nevertheless equally as meaningful and inventive. What's more, Straus's method of examining autistic culture art, including life writing by autists, indicates a means of sharing

poetic genera across bodies and neurologies. Such a method can be better understood by looking

at the function of commonplace books within the history of invention.

Commonplace Books

So far I have described how common sense (*koine aisthesis*) creates a common sense of

place in which we discover poetic genera—common or familiar ways of making sense. We use

our poetic genera to bring forth knowledge of our place in the world. I based this epistemology

on dissensus, meaning that we sense or feel apart from one another. Dissensus encourages us to

recognize that knowledge is situated in a plurality of sensory and embodied places, meaning that

there are distinct poetic genera. What I want to turn to now is how we share such poetic genera

through media. In fact, a precedent already exists here in the concept of the commonplace book.

Conventionally, commonplace books contained various phrases, aphorisms, metaphors,

allegories, and fables under different headings. By studying these texts readers developed their

capacity to invent arguments on certain themes or issues. The commonplace book, in other

words, was a heuristic for invention; a text for training the mind to discover knowledge of a

particular topic or place (*topos*). What I put forward here, and elaborate on throughout the

remainder of this dissertation, is an expanded definition of the commonplace book, one that

encompasses more contemporary multimodal media such that web pages, comics, films, and

videogames, among other forms of media, can be thought of as heuristics for embodied

invention.

At the core of this expanded definition is the correlation scholars saw between text and

world that the commonplace book captured. As Ann Moss relates, the commonplace book was,

in its simplest form, an "information retrieval system" (53), one that facilitated the reader's

capacity to invent arguments on a particular topic. But commonplace books aspired towards a much higher ideal. As Moss relates, the commonplace book can be seen to follow from the concept of the Book of Nature that emerged in the Middle Ages. The Book of Nature was a means of thinking of the natural world itself as a text, where all phenomena are signs to be read and interpreted (52). Moss goes on to note that,

> the commonplace book…make[s] rhetoric's most cogent claim to be considered an adequate representation of the true nature of things. Some, if not all proponents of commonplace books contended that the places, or heads, into which the books were divided were not at all arbitrary or conventional, but did indeed represent the 'forms and rules of things deep-seated in nature.' (54).

What I want to suggest here is that commonplace books can be read as representations not of 'the natural world' *per se* but of particular embodied places in the world. The discoveries we make through commonplace books are various means of interpreting the world from particular positions or places. In fact, in the following chapters I go on to argue that with the emergence of media such as comics, films, hypertext, and videogames, our capacity to represent our commonplaces and thus share our potentially unique poetic genera have grown exponentially. What I want to do in the remainder of this chapter is describe in general terms how commonplace texts facilitate our capacity to share poetic genera and thus to invent or discover knowledges situated in the experiences of other persons, communities, and cultures. This begins by recognizing the relationship between poetic genera and rhetoric.

Rhetoric, I suggest, is a poetic phenomenon in that it is a way of bringing forth meaning through signs—the word *poiesis* means 'to make or bring forth.' In thinking of rhetoric as poetic I have in mind C.S. Peirce's notion of *speculative rhetoric*. In the essay "Ideas Stray and Stolen"

Peirce introduces speculative rhetoric as a form of semiotic inquiry into the sciences. Speculative rhetoric seeks to "ascertain the laws by which in every scientific intelligence one sign gives birth to another, and especially one thought brings forth another" (CP, 2.229). While Peirce has a very specific context in mind here, his phrasing aptly captures the enthymematic and poetic quality that rhetoric plays in our everyday lives. For instance, the differences between autistic rhetoric and neurotypical rhetoric could be characterized as differences between the ways in which signs and thoughts supply or bring forth one another in accordance with the neurology of the embodied subject. In this way when a rhetor tailors an argument to the common associations of their audience, they engage in a form of speculative rhetoric.[15] That is to say, rhetors must speculate about the laws or rules by which their words, sounds, images, gestures, etc. bring forth or supply different meanings for different audiences and audience members. In fact, this can be pushed even further here by noting that such an understanding of rhetoric can also refer to the way that one sense brings forth another. As noted above, common sense (*koine aisthesis*) forges common relationships between the senses; when a related sensation is implied but absent the mind supplies that sense. In this way perception itself has a rhetorical and enthymematic quality to it; to speculate about the rhetoric of another is, thus, to speculate about how distinctly embodied subjects bring forth sensations, thoughts, and signs that create a common or familiar sense of place in the world.

A commonplace text then, regardless of its medium, seeks to capture some aspect of that common sense of place such that the implied but absent sensation, thought, or sign that completes perception of the mediated representation is analogous to the implied but absent

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[15] The word 'speculative' can mean both theoretical, which is Peirce's usage, but also exploratory and in a sense creative.

sensation, thought, or sign that completes the embodied subject's perception of the world.[16] In this way we can understand commonplace texts as works of mimesis. In *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* Erich Auberbach refers to the titular concept as the "[i]mitation of reality" which is also the "imitation of the sensory experience of life on earth" (191). As already noted, sensory experience is not merely the perception of individual sensations but a poetic and generative process where common sense (*koine aisthesis*) brings forth or supplies that which fills in or completes experience. Mimesis, then, seeks to capture not a definitive, accurate depiction of the world (whatever that might be) but the ways in which a representation brings forth a particular situation in the world. Within this process rhetoric is that which coordinates language with our ways of bringing forth (i.e. our poetic genera) such that our representations come to be mimetic, persuasive, and in a sense, real.

However, by introducing Peirce here we not only add a poetic understanding of rhetoric, but a theory of signs as well. In semiotics a sign is any discrete unit of meaning, such as a thought, an idea, a gesture, an image, a sound, etc. Semioticians hold that signs have meaning not in and of themselves but because they relate to other signs. For Peirce, the founder of semiotics, the relationships between signs begin in the body and develop through embodied experience. For instance, we witness cars stopping at a traffic light and discover that a red light means stop. Peirce held this to be a rhetorical relationship, insofar as rhetoric refers to the process by which "one sign gives birth to another, and especially one thought brings forth another" (CP, 2.229). Subsequently, the next time we approach an intersection and see a red light it brings forth or

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[16] For instance, while watching a cartoon hearing individuals supply the implied but absent relationship between the audible voices and the indistinct movement of a character's lips. Thus, despite the fact that voices rarely coincide with vocal animations, the mind unifies these sensations, creating a cohesive experience. In contrast, for those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing reading the lips of the animated characters often fail to bring forth or supply the words they are speaking. Artists who wish to have accessible animations, be them in cartoons, CGI films, or videogames, would do well to keep these various relationships in mind.

supplies the idea of stopping. In fact, like Vico and his quest for universal sensory enthymemes, Peirce was interested in ascertaining common or fundamental relationships between signs. He conceived of his aforementioned speculative rhetoric as part of an inquiry into how

> every picture, diagram, natural cry, pointing finger, wink, knot in one's handkerchief, memory, dream, fancy, concept, indication, token, symptom, letter, numeral, word, sentence, chapter, book, library, and in short whatever, be it in the physical universe, be it in the world of thought, that, whatever embodying an idea of any kind (and permit us throughout to use this word to cover purposes and feelings), or being connected with some existing object, or referring to future events through a general rule, causes something else…to be determined to a corresponding relation to the same idea, existing thing, or law. ("Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing" EP 2:23, 326).

This notion of laws or rules governing the relationships between signs can be seen as the very ambition of rhetorical invention, which, generally speaking, seeks to discover knowledge through common or familiar relationships. Similarly, Moss described the commonplace book as that which seeks to "represent the 'forms and rules of things deep-seated in nature'" (54).

However, unlike Vico, Peirce does not rely on the faculty of common sense for the origin of these relationships. Rather, he proposed the notion of a *semiotic trivium*. In medieval philosophy the trivium referred to a scholastic method for discovering knowledge through the senses; it is composed of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. In the traditional understanding of the trivium grammar refers to "the art of inventing symbols and combining them to express thought"; logic refers to "the art of thinking"; and rhetoric "is the art of communicating thought from one mind to another" (Joseph 3). With these historical antecedents in mind, Peirce provides a similar account with his semiotic trivium, in which he proposes a physiological grammar that

first differentiates signs from one another, a logic that correlates signs with the objects to which they refer, and a rhetoric that describes how signs bring forth or supply one another. By basing rhetoric in physiology Peirce was recognizing the body's influence over how sensations, signs, and thoughts come to be related to one another. In this way the semiotic trivium is similar to common sense but unlike Aristotle's account of *koine aisthesis* where common sense supplies sensations that unify or complete one's perception of the world, the semiotic trivium constitutes a process by which the mind brings forth signs in order to complete a particular representation of the world. In this process rhetoric, as a bodily and sensory phenomenon, is that which guides our representations such that they cohere with our embodied experience.

What Peirce's poetic rhetoric establishes is that in sharing rhetorics, we are, in fact, sharing the various ways in which we represent reality. A commonplace book, then, as an "adequate representation of the true nature of things" (54), is a text that shows in various ways how a particular rhetoric can be used to construct a true or accurate representation of the world. This can be related to Vico's claim that the poetic genera give rise to "true poetic allegories" (75) or 'true stories' (*verra narratio*) (311). A commonplace book could be thought of as a collection of these 'true stories' from a particular subject on various topics. But in what way are these stories true? In Vico's philosophy truth has a praxical connotation to it, in that he argues that doing (*factum*) or making (*poiesis*) is the basis of knowing; to make (sense of) something is to truly understand it. However, the notion of *sensus communis* leads Vico to think of the true poetic allegories as common or shared stories for making sense of the world; they are true in the universal sense of the concept. Viewed in this way it would be conceivable to produce a commonplace book that transcribed the Book of Nature, such that it contained all of the 'true stories' of humankind.

But I want to approach commonplace books, and invention in general, from the premise of dissensus, meaning that the poetic genera are potentially uncommon or discrete and that 'true stories' vary between bodies, communities, and cultures. Put differently, because our bodies and senses differ, so too do our ways of making sense and these differences (or perhaps *différances*) are reflected in our stories. Thus, by *true* stories I do not mean universal, as this would entail a transcendental *sensus*, but rather true in the sense of strong objectivity—these stories are true because they describe a "limited location" (Haraway 583) and thus present their knowledge of the world as situated within that location. Furthermore, there could not be one comprehensive commonplace book but a plurality of books, each containing its own 'true stories.' This sets up the possibility that poetic genera, and the means for situating knowledges, are shared not through rote scholastic texts containing phrases, allegories, and fables, but as more diverse personal stories, as seen in diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies.[17] Such collections of 'true stories' facilitate the discovery of poetic genera, the poetic practices or rhetorical techniques of their authors, just as Straus above derived numerous traits from the memoirs of autists.

In thinking of commonplace books in this way I'm drawing inspiration from Michel de Certeau when he argues that stories record the various tactics endemic to a society. Tactics, in de Certeau's usage, are various means of organizing the world in practical, productive ways; they appear in mundane activities, such as how we talk, read, move, walk, shop, and cook (xix). He goes on to write that the stories of particular communities or cultures "participate in the collation of these tactics" (23); they are "living museums of…tactics, the benchmarks of an

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[17] In fact, this relates to an existing sub-genre: the personal commonplace book. These texts were not unlike diaries or journals in which authors collected various personal discoveries on a range of topics. Notable personal commonplace books were written by the likes of John Milton and Thomas Jefferson. That said, I want to think of commonplace books more as descriptions of one's common places (i.e. common experiences) and less like the tomes of facts and statements that typified the conventional commonplace book genres—Milton's personal commonplace book, for instance, was broken into headings like morality and economics with various facts on each.

apprenticeship" (23). What I want to suggest here is that stories also record sensory and rhetorical tactics, i.e. poetic genera. The implication here is that in reading stories we are not only sharing tactics or "ways of operating" (30) but poetic genera or ways of thinking and making-sense. For instance, de Certeau argues that we can treat "the stylistic effects" of stories—the "devices and 'figures,' alliterations, inversions and plays on words" (22)—as tactics, I would suggest that such styles reflect the kinds of rhetorics that the poetic genera give rise to.

Consider, for instance, the poem "Apologia" by Jim Ferris. The text begins by stating that, "This poem/does not need/to march/across the page," where each break indicates a point at which the words are offset from those that came before. In fact, the poem as a whole adopts a style that positions the words as continually cascading off and to the side. In this way the poem parallels Ferris's own irregular gait. In the essay "The Enjambed Body" Ferris remarks that "If my meters are sprung, if my feet are uneven, if my path is irregular, that's just how I walk. And how I write." This brings to mind de Certeau's observation that, "Just as in literature one differentiates 'styles' or ways of writing, one can distinguish [tactics or] 'ways of operating'—ways of walking, reading, producing, speaking, etc." (30). In "Apologia" Ferris utilizes the way that each step in his gait brings forth another to give shape to the way each word brings forth another—"This poem/is free/to lean/and limp/and lurch"—and in so doing he is demonstrating a poetic relationship between the body and language.

At this point I want to bring this chapter to a close by raising the issue of normalcy in relation to commonplace books. As Moss observes in her aforementioned discussion, commonplace books could be thought of as a means of recording and perpetuating various norms. This connection becomes clearer by noting that commonplace books were part of a pedagogy used to educate the ruling class. This leads Moss to ask,

Is their popularity within an education system serving a power élite (and serving it very

ably) to be explained by the fact that [commonplace books] could be made to inhibit new

thought? This was, perhaps, because they implied that every new text, every new

discovery had to find a place in the corpus of received wisdom, so that, in effect, they

contained the consensus, and even possibly connived with the *doxae* of the dominant

political and social power structure. (57)

Drawing from the preceding conversation, I want to build on this recognition by suggesting that

such texts not only contained a consensus on social, cultural, or political topics, but on sensory

ones as well. This is owing not only to the regnant cultural biases regarding the body and the

mind but also to the media themselves insofar as commonplace books relied on the printed word

which contains its own implications about the body and the senses. When this is paired with the

inaccessibility of publishing methods to those outside of a certain socio-economic class, there are

grounds for seeing invention as a form of knowledge discovery and translation that has

historically been constrained and limited. In contrast, the contemporary media ecology in which

publishing through the web is relatively accessible (though by no means universally so) and the

modalities through which one can publish—visual, acoustic, haptic, tactile, and proprioceptive

media are all prevalent or becoming so in Western culture—are significantly more diverse, then

there is reason to believe that invention is perhaps poised for a resurgence.[18]

Nevertheless, Moss's observation should bring into even sharper focus the complications

that accompany a normative, and normalized culture, one that limits the circulation of stories,

representations, and rhetorics to that of the most 'common' or 'normal' subjects and their topics.

This is especially pernicious given that rhetoric has, historically, privileged the 'normal,' able-

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[18] In this respect, Gregory Ulmer's approach to computational media as constituting a "new…logic of invention" (Heuretics 20) is particularly noteworthy. See *Heuretics*.

bodied subject. As Jay Dolmage writes, rhetoric has been "canonized…as a normate, normalizing force" (Dolmage 83). He notes that "efforts to define rhetoric have so often denied and denigrated the body" (Dolmage), in part, because the body needs to operate in a culturally idealized way in order for persuasion to function as anticipated. This normativity is especially apparent in the rhetorical canon of delivery: the means of persuasively and eloquently communicating one's argument. For instance, the ability to speak is often considered a prerequisite for one to be proficient in rhetorical delivery, as is the capacity to control and direct one's body for the purposes of presentation. Conversely, "those without the ability to speak and those without the ability to 'control' their bodies have been omitted from considerations of rhetorical capacity" (Dolmage 25). Similarly, Brueggemann has remarked that the emphasis on delivery in rhetoric has privileged a particular body while marginalizing those bodies that differ from that ideal. She writes, that, "Through its more than twenty-five-hundred-year history, rhetoric has never been particularly friendly to 'disabled,' ' deformed,' 'deaf,' or 'mute' people, the 'less than perfect' in voice, expression, or stance" ("Delivering Disability, Willing Speech" 18). She looks to the beginnings of rhetoric, noting the start of a "historical march of rhetoric's descriptions and prescriptions for the canon of delivery, the performance of a speaker, and the normalization of speaker's bodies" (18).

In focusing on commonplace texts I want to critique not so much limited conceptions of delivery—the fifth canon of rhetoric—but invention—the first canon of rhetoric. What I want to suggest here is that just as Moss sees the lack of diversity in commonplace books as "inhibit[ing] new thought[s]" (57),the lack of diversity in popular media and discourse more broadly inhibits our ability to make sense of experience outside of an able-bodied, masculine, heterosexual way of being. Consider, for instance, Hélène Cixous' "Laugh of the Medusa" in which she describes

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the constraint exerted by a pervasively masculine discourse. She writes that, "Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason…[and] it has been one with the phallocentric tradition" (879). In contrast, she puts forward the notion of *écriture feminine*—a form of writing that reproduces the feminine body and difference in language. In a manner of speaking *écriture feminine* is a kind of feminine mimesis, a way of representing the sensory experience of women. Cixous describes *écriture feminine* as a way of "bring[ing] women to their senses and to their meaning in history" (875-6) for "By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her" (880). What I want to suggest is that when Cixous tells her audience, "Write your self. Your body must be heard" (880) she is imploring women to listen to and express the way their bodies think and feel, to explore their poetic genera and to reproduce those ways of bringing forth in the rhetoric of the language.

Indeed, *écriture feminine* gestures towards a larger point here; namely, the need to foster the discovery and exchange of all forms of rhetoric. By rhetoric here I do not mean Aristotle's notion of the available means of persuasion, but rhetoric as that poetic process whereby sensations, thoughts, or signs bring forth or supply one another in creating a unified sense of place. In this way there is a correlation to be drawn between the plurality and diversity of rhetorics circulating within a culture and the capacity for members of that culture to locate or situate one another. In this way a diminished quantity of rhetorics shares many of the same complications that accompany what Wayne Booth refers to as a diminished quality of rhetoric:

> The quality of our lives, especially the ethical and communal quality, depends to an
> astonishing degree on the quality of our rhetoric…Unless we pay more attention to
> improving our communication at all levels of life, unless we study more carefully the
> rhetorical strategies we all depend on, consciously, unconsciously, or subconsciously, we

will continue to succumb to unnecessary violence, to loss of potential friends, and to the decay of community. (xxii)

What I have been arguing throughout this chapter is that there are distinct kinds of rhetorical strategies, various tactics or poetic genera that are inherent to our own embodied places in the world. This can be seen in the breadth of intersecting rhetorics, a short list of which might include feminist rhetoric (Koss and Griffin), African American rhetoric (Atwater), autistic rhetoric (Heilker & Yergeau), d/Deaf rhetoric (Brueggemann), mental disability rhetoric (Price), and queer rhetoric (Morrison; Brand). Through commonplace texts, our own personal 'true stories,' we share these rhetorics with one another and in so doing we share the means of translating that which is uncommon or unfamiliar to others into something that makes sense. In the following chapters I delve into these commonplace texts, examining how authors are using the affordances of contemporary multimodal media to convey their multi-sensory and poetic rhetorics.

Chapter Two: Commonplace Comic Books

Last chapter I put forward the notion of embodied invention, a means of translating knowledges between bodies, communities, and cultures. I described embodied invention as beginning with common sense (*koine aisthesis*) which creates a common sense of place or a sensory commonplace. Within our sensory commonplaces we discover poetic genera—common or familiar ways of making sense. We use poetic genera to make or bring forth knowledge of our place in the world. I based this epistemology on dissensus, meaning that we sense or feel apart from one another. Dissensus encourages us to recognize that knowledge is situated in a plurality of sensory places, meaning that there are distinct poetic genera or various ways of bringing forth knowledge. Thus, while our personal ways of making sense are given to us through our own common sensory experience, the poetic genera of others must be invented or discovered through language, art, and rhetoric. This set up the notion of commonplace texts as a means of sharing poetic genera. Commonplace texts, I suggested, are a means of representing our commonplaces; they foster the discovery of poetic genera located in various positions or places in the world.

In this chapter I want to focus on a particular kind of commonplace text, what I call the *commonplace comic book*. In defining this genre I want to make two key alterations to the conventional sense of a commonplace book. The first is that while commonplace books typically contain various phrases, aphorisms, metaphors, allegories, and fables, I want to think of autobiographies and memoirs as constituting their own personal commonplace books. The second change I want to suggest is that commonplace texts need not be restricted to print. In fact, because dissensus refers to differences not just in language but in perception and experience as well, I want to look at a variety of multimodal media, including comics, as texts that provide

rhetorical instruction through a plurality of semiotic modes. This follows from the recognition that while classical invention encouraged students to study the social commonplaces through the discursive arts of speech and writing, embodied invention entails studying the sensory commonplaces through the perceptual arts of poetry, photography, film, comics, and videogames. Commonplace comic books allow us to study the commonplaces of their authors as told through a multimodal medium, thereby fostering the discovery of various rhetorics and rhetorical techniques at work throughout and between the senses.

In the following sections I outline my approach to media, multimodality, and rhetoric. I then go on to examine a particular medium, relating how comic books facilitate sharing poetic genera through multimodal rhetoric. I illustrate these arguments through two commonplace comic books—*El Deafo* an autobiography by Cece Bell and *The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family* by Paul Karasik and Judy Karasik—demonstrating how their use of d/Deaf rhetoric (Brueggemann) and autistic rhetoric (Heilker & Yergeau), respectively, facilitate the discovery of poetic genera.

Media and Situated Practices

In placing emphasis on multimodality and the role of media in fostering understanding across bodies and between cultures I am building on the work of the New London Group. This diverse collective of scholars espouses a new pedagogy founded on the notions of multiliteracy and multimodality ("Pedagogy of Multiliteracies"). They argue that "all meaning-making is multimodal" (81) and that our literacy in various modalities is instrumental in learning how to successfully navigate the contemporary multimedia world. The New London Group goes on to argue that these literacies facilitate our capacity to Design—a concept that reflects that "we are

both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning and at the same time active designers of meaning" (65). Design is a three-part process, beginning with Available Design—resources for meaning-making, such as grammars of semiotic systems and discursive conventions. Available Design enables Designing—semiotic activity that involves using Available Design to represent some aspect of the world. As the New London Group note, "Designing transforms knowledge in producing new constructions and representations of reality" (76). The culmination of this process is the Redesigned, which reflects those newly constructed representations of reality; the Redesigned provides additional resources for Designing, such that this process is both iterative and generative.

There are a number of connections here between Design and embodied invention that are worth drawing out. This begins with a shared objective between the two projects. As the New London Group states, "The challenge is to make space available so that different lifeworlds— spaces for community life where local and specific meanings can be made—can flourish." (70). Lifeworlds, in this context, could be considered analogous to those commonplaces in which 'local meanings' or common sensory and semiotic relationships inhere. In turn, Available Design can be thought of as the poetic genera that are endemic to our commonplaces. In this way the poetic genera are similar to what the New London Group's call Situated Practice, which "draws on the experience of meaning-making in lifeworlds, the public realm, and workplaces" (65). If Available Design varies between bodies, communities, and cultures, then so too does Situated Practice. Embodied invention describes that process by which we discover and exchange these practices situated in our various commonplaces. When we employ these practices we engage in a form of Designing that transforms knowledges situated in various bodies and places thereby

"producing new constructions and representations of reality" (76) that are themselves situated perspectives on the world.

Embodied invention ascribes to media the role of sharing these situated and multimodal practices, a process that allows us to invent or discover knowledges situated in various contexts or places. In fact, this can be drawn out further. As the New London Group remarks,

> human knowledge, when it is applicable to practice, is primarily situated in sociocultural settings and heavily contextualized in specific knowledge domains and practices. Such knowledge is inextricably tied to the ability to recognize and act on patterns of data and experience, a process that is acquired only through experience, since the requisite patterns are often heavily tied and adjusted to context, and are, very often, subtle and complex enough that no one can fully and usefully describe or explicate them. (84)

Mediated representations of the commonplaces—i.e. commonplace texts—provide these contexts, these situations or places in which the subtle complexities of experience can be discovered, providing audiences with new perspectives on the world.

In this regard it is worth connecting the New London Group's notion of Situated Practice with Haraway's work on situated knowledges. Using vision as a metaphor for limited, partial perspectives, Haraway argues that knowledge is inherently positional—that is to say, knowledge describes and is characterized by a particular location or situation in the world that shapes and is shaped by the practices of those who occupy such positions or standpoints.[19] Haraway notes, for instance, that "Positioning is…the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision, and much Western scientific and philosophic discourse is organized in this way. Positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices" (Haraway 587). These

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[19] This is echoed in the multiliteracies manifesto when the authors write: "Our view of mind, society, and learning is based on the assumption that the human mind is embodied, situated, and social. That is, human knowledge is initially developed not as 'general and abstract,' but as embedded in social, cultural, and material contexts" (82).

connections between positioning, perspective, and responsibility are key here as they demonstrate that the movement of situated knowledges relies on familiarity and facility with various situating practices. As Haraway notes, "Struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over *how* to see" (Haraway 587, emphasis in original). In a manner of speaking, our capacity to perceive the truth is contingent on the various ways we've learned how to perceive, i.e. the various practices that we have discovered that expand "what counts as a rational account of the world" (587), both for ourselves and others. In fact, Haraway goes so far as to suggest a kind of topology of practices: "Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices…" (595). Similarly, the boundaries of our commonplaces can be drawn by mapping our everyday practices, i.e. our various sensory and semiotic tactics, or simply our poetic genera. These practices are then shared across bodies, communities, and cultures by representing our commonplaces.

But Haraway adds a particularly crucial observation to this conversation: namely, that practices are enabled or disabled in accordance with the distribution of power and privilege across social, cultural, political, and technological dimensions. Thus, when the practices of some subjects and communities are socially and culturally more common or familiar than others—as are the practices of the able-bodied, white, heterosexual, and/or masculine subjects—that subject's account of the world is more readily perceived as rational, legitimate, and, ultimately, truthful. Furthermore, given that these practices draw on sensory and semiotic resources endemic to the subject's position (i.e. Available Design) their cultural prevalence facilitates the re-construction and re-presentation of reality as experienced by a normative individual. Thus, as the New London Group notes, the challenge is to open up the exchange of practices and knowledges between situations, and as Haraway emphasizes this needs to take place by recognizing those

systems that have historically and continue to inhibit the exchange of marginalized practices while facilitating the movement of normative practices.

Inventing Phenomena

With these formative observations on multimodality and situated practices in mind, I'd like to look specifically at how media exchange such practices through blending phenomenology with rhetoric. While there are a number of ways to broach this subject I want to pick up on an observation made by Haraway in her aforementioned essay. "Situated Knowledges" opens with Haraway setting the stage for a conversation on objectivity, knowledge, and science. In doing so she draws attention to the social constructionist critique of scientific objectivity as being more rhetorical than objective:

> …social constructionists might maintain that the ideological doctrine of scientific method and all the philosophical verbiage about epistemology were cooked up to distract our attention from getting to know the world *effectively* by practicing the sciences. From this point of view, science…is rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one's manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power. (577)

She goes on to note that from such a perspective "artifacts and facts are parts of the powerful art of rhetoric" (577) and that "[p]ractice is persuasion" (577). Ultimately, this critique "insist[s] on the rhetorical nature of truth, including scientific truth" (577).

While rhetoric here is meant to function pejoratively, scholars such as Aristotle, Quintilian, and Vico have argued earnestly regarding the rhetorical nature of truth. In terms of Vico, his maxim—'the true and the made are interchangeable' (*verum et factum convertuntur*)—

attests to the notion that practice is persuasion if only because the truth is praxical—which is to say, the truth 'makes sense.' In this way poetic genera or situated practices reflect that meaning-making and sense-making are also truth-making and that these process are themselves deeply persuasive. Thus, as John D. Schaeffer observes, "…Vico conceives [of] the mind as rhetorically situated in an existential way" (164). Rhetoric, at least to a certain degree, is ontological and phenomenological as well as epistemological. So while the truth is rhetorical, rhetoric is also instrumental in conveying truths.

Rhetoric becomes problematic when we fail to recognize that different minds (and bodies) are rhetorically situated in different ways. In other words, it is important to recognize the situatedness not only of practices and knowledges but bodies and rhetorics as well. Rhetoric, in its poetic form, refers to that process whereby sensations, thoughts, or signs bring forth or supply one another in creating a unified sense of place. Media, I want to suggest, have the capacity to represent these places and thus foster the discovery of situated practices, knowledges, and rhetorics. This is accomplished, in part, because media are capable of reproducing everyday phenomena located in various rhetorical situations. In this way I conceive of media as *phenomenotechniques*.

The concept of *phenomenotechniques* comes from Gaston Bachelard[20] who deploys the term in the context of the sciences, arguing that scientific instruments are "materialized theories" (qtd. in "Instrument as Embodied Theory" 377) that create the phenomena they seek to discover. As Bachelard notes, "new phenomena are not simply found, but invented, that is, thoroughly constructed" (qtd. in "Gaston Bachelard and the Notion of 'Phenomenotechnique'" 315). Bachelard's point here is that the discourse that precedes the invention anticipates and gives

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[20] Much of Bachelard's work on *phenomenotechniques* has yet to be translated into English. In this respect "Gaston Bachelard and the Notion of 'Phenomenotechnique'" by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger offers a succinct summary and translation of key passages.

shape to the discovery itself. To provide a contemporary example, it could be said that the idea

of the Higgs-Boson led to the invention of the Large Hadron Collider, an instrument that

materializes the theoretical particle such that it can be 'discovered' in reality. In naming

scientific instruments *phenomenotechniques* Bachelard does not mean the term pejoratively;

rather, *phenomenotechniques* are a means of realizing some aspect of reality that human

perception alone cannot realize.

Once again I want to engage in an act of misprision here and creatively misinterpret the

concept of the *phenomenotechnique* as referring to media in general. Television, film, radio,

poetry, comics, videogames—all are *phenomenotechniques* in which designers and audiences

collaborate to invent various phenomena. But whereas scientific *phenomenotechniques* set out to

discover phenomena outside of the realm of human perception (i.e. outside of the collective

human sensory *topos*), media help us invent phenomena within and across bodies, communities,

and cultures (i.e. within various sensory, social, and cultural *topoi*). That is to say, television

shows, comic books, and videogames, as cultural artifacts embedded in the senses and

sensibilities of various social groups, foster embodied invention—the discovery of knowledges

rooted in various sensory and semiotic places. When such media are autobiographical and

mimetic—where mimesis is the "imitation of the sensory experience of life on earth" (Auerbach

191)—they capture in the process that rhetoric that grounds perception and knowledge in one's

situation or place in the world. Thus, when Bachelard notes that with scientific instruments,

"phenomena must…be carefully selected, filtered and purified" (qtd. in "Instrument as

Embodied Theory" 377), there is a similar selection process in autobiographical mediations

where various phenomena are selected and filtered in accordance with the most salient aspects of

an author's commonplace experiences.

Treating media as *phenomenotechniques* addresses an outstanding question facing any theory of communication founded on dissensus—namely, how do we discover knowledges and practices situated in the experiences of other human beings if we do not share a common or shared means of perceiving and knowing? The answer is through various forms of mediation, each of which demonstrate that "new phenomena are not simply found, but invented, that is, thoroughly constructed" (qtd. in "Gaston Bachelard and the Notion of 'Phenomenotechnique'" 315). From this perspective the audience is, first and foremost, in a position of deferral as they collaborate with the mediation in order to construct various places in which different phenomena manifest themselves. But whereas in the sciences "instruments are just materialized theories" (Bachelard qtd. in "Instrument as Embodied Theory" 377), mediations of the commonplaces are materialized poetic rhetorics—practical theories of how one sense, thought, or sign brings forth or supplies another. In engaging with such mediations audiences learn how such rhetorics can help situate knowledges and practices. As Haraway notes, "Technologies are skilled practices" (Haraway 587).[21] That is to say, the medium itself is a practice which assists in the reproduction of phenomena.

Viewed in this way the act of engaging with a mediation is not unlike Roland Barthes description of reading a text. Barthes refers to the act of reading itself as a playful practice which seeks to reproduce the meaning of a text: "'playing' must be understood…in all its polysemy: the text itself plays…and the reader plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which re-produces it…" (Barthes 162). From the perspective of dissensus, the practice that reproduces the meaning of a text is one situated in various sensory, social, and cultural contexts; engaging with various mediations teaches us these practices and facilitates our capacity to reproduce phenomena endemic to various positions or places. Just how media do this

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[21] Like Bachelard, Haraway is speaking of scientific instruments here but the point aptly applies to all technologies.

is, I argue, an extension of that multisensory and enthymematic process enacted by common sense. In the next section I look at how media put common sense into play through the process of *multimodal closure*.

Multimodal Closure

Last chapter I argued that rhetoric follows from the body and the senses. I based this claim in a misprision of common sense in which I creatively misread Aristotle's definition of *koine aisthesis* or 'common perception.' For Aristotle, common sense binds senses to one another such that sensations come to invoke one another. I (mis)read this as a testament to the enthymematic quality of perception. For instance, Aristotle notes that a verbal enthymeme occurs when "if one of [the premises] is known, it does not have to be stated, as the hearer supplies it" (*Rhetoric* 1.2 1357a). Common sense (*koine aisthesis*) operates on the same principle such that if a sensation is familiar to the observer it need not be perceived for the mind supplies it. In this way the perceiving mind fills in those implied but absent aspects of sensory perception in order to create a unified and persuasive experience of the world. Furthermore, this is a pre-linguistic process, one in which there is always-already a rhetorical and enthymematic character to the senses that persuade us of the legitimacy and veracity of our own embodied experiences. Media, I suggest, extend this process, putting common sense into play by prompting the mind to bring forth or supply sensory and semiotic information that unifies, closes, or completes perception from a particular perspective or position.

In art and media theory this act of unifying perception is referred to as *closure*—that process by which a representation is closed or completed by the mind's capacity to fill in implied but absent details. To refer to closure as multimodal is simply to emphasize the range of senses

and modalities that produce closure. By associating closure with common sense (*koine aisthesis*) I mean to demonstrate that 1) the same or similar enthymematic processes are at work in both mediated and unmediated experience and 2) that media extend the range of potential experiences we might have beyond our embodied and unmediated situations. From this perspective different ways of closing or completing perception can be treated as equivalent to different poetic rhetorics such that multimodal closure facilitates the dissemination of various ways of bringing forth situated knowledges and practices. After all, if closure involves implied but absent sensory and semiotic information, and if poetic rhetoric relates to the way that sensations, thoughts, and signs bring forth or supply one another, then multimodal closure can be used to draw forth particular sensations, thoughts, and signs, effectively instructing the audience in the ways in which the creator brings forth knowledge of their situation in the world.

Perhaps the most provocative scholar on the subject of closure and media is Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan argued that each medium prompts its own form of closure in response to the unique sensory properties of the mediation. He defines the latter as the "structural impact" (SI) of the medium, which "refers to sensory impressions as they affect the beholder or audience" (*Report on Project in Understanding New Media* 25).[22] These sensory impressions, in turn, prompt "subjective closure" (SC) which "concerns the effect of this impression as it is processed by the audience" (25). The distinction here is meant to highlight that the modalities employed by a medium (e.g. a primarily visual vs a primarily audile mode of communication) do not constitute the experience of a particular mediation—"The [sensory] impression is not the experience" (26). Rather, the various mediated modalities prompt the mind to add in or supply absent but implied modes of embodied experience. In this way all media can be treated as multimodal, whether they

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[22] *Report on Project in Understanding New Media* is the name of a commissioned report McLuhan wrote for the National Association of Educational Broadcasters in 1960. It is, in many ways, a more accessible expression of the ideas McLuhan would latter publish in his seminal *Understanding Media*.

explicitly (structural impact) or implicitly (subjective closure) invoke specific modalities. As McLuhan notes, "the SC of many visual presentations is not visual at all any more than the SC of radio's SI is auditory" (26). For instance, when we *see* a character in a novel (SI) speaking in all capital letters we *hear* their voice speaking loudly (SC). And when we *hear* a familiar voice on the phone (SI) we *see* their face in our minds (SC).

In this way media at once draw on the enthymematic quality of common sense (*koine aisthesis*) but also extend that quality beyond the limitations of unmediated experience by presenting audiences with novel situations, unexperienced (and in some cases un-experienceable) positions, perspectives, and circumstances. This, in turn, confers on media the capacity to enhance our capacity to understand ourselves and each other. To be clear, this is not an inherently emancipatory process—media can just as easily reinforce biases as deconstruct them—but it does indicate the potential for various forms of representation (i.e. poetry, music, film, radio, comics, videogames) to engage audiences with experiences and knowledges beyond those apparent in everyday experience, meaning that a plurality of media and content producers is indispensable in the process of translating knowledges between bodies, communities, and cultures.

Such an understanding of media can be brought to bear on the notion of invention by recognizing the capacity for media to represent various bodily, social, and cultural commonplaces. In such instances authors, artists, cartoonists, game designers, etc. craft sensory impressions through the various modalities of the medium in such a way that when the audience closes or completes the experience they do so in a manner that creates a situation that is analogous to that of the creator. In this way the 'new phenomenon' produced by the mediation "[is] not simply found, but invented" (qtd. in "Gaston Bachelard and the Notion of

'Phenomenotechnique'" 315), such that the mind participates in a multimodal act of situated knowledge discovery.

For example, perhaps that aforementioned character speaking in all capital letters is not, in fact, yelling but rather the person to whom he is speaking has a migraine; the sensory impression of reading all capital letters is thus meant to invoke a subjective closure in which the reader becomes situated in a place or position of discomfort and auditory sensitivity. Thus, the capitalized text (itself merely a visual perception) implies a connection between sound and volume that accompanies a migraine where even moderate sounds appear loud, jarring, and painful. For someone with chronic migraines this might be considered a commonplace experience, a sensory and semiotic situation that informs their knowledges and practices—i.e. when they know a migraine is imminent they might engage in various practices that mitigate loud sounds and bright lights, practices that 'make sense' based on subjectively commonplace sensory relationships. Thus, when audiences participate in reconstructing these common places or situations, such as through reading about them, they discover practices located in the sensory, social, and cultural relationships common to that place. In this way knowledges and practices situated in particular places can move between uncommon bodies and dissimilar positions as the mediation guides the audience to close or complete the representation in accordance with the situation of a particular embodied subject.

This process—whereby multimodal closure facilitates the transfer of knowledges and practices—is obliquely present in McLuhan's media theory as well. For instance, he observed that, "Those who experience the first onset of a new technology, whether it be alphabet or radio, respond most emphatically because the new sense ratios set up at once by the technological dilation of eye or ear, present men [sic] with a surprising new world, which evokes a vigorous

new 'closure,' or novel pattern of interplay, among all of the senses together" (*Essential McLuhan* 118). The word 'ratio' comes from the Latin *rērī*, meaning 'to think or reason.' The novel sense ratios established by media are, in effect, various ways of reasoning, thinking, or making sense. And as patterns of interplay between all of the senses they attest to the fact that "all meaning-making is multimodal" (New London Group). In this way the sense ratios are analogous to the poetic genera of embodied invention. As Verene notes, the poetic genera involve "regarding sensibility, feeling, or expression as a form of thought" (92). Media, then, allow us to share various poetic genera by creating situations in which varying ratios amongst the senses prompt us to think or reason in particular ways.

For example, film relies on various ratios between sight, sound, distance, and time. Consider a scene taking place on a busy street; many of the events we perceive make sense to us because as viewers we are filling in implied but absent sensory information in accordance with the ratios amongst our senses. Thus, we *hear* the distant staccato sound of a car horn and we imaginatively *see* an irate driver somewhere off-screen. Or we witness a pedestrian crossing the street and when the camera suddenly cuts to a speeding car, we perceive that the pedestrian is in danger of being hit, even though we see neither person nor car on screen at the same time. In both cases the mind—or more specifically common sense (*koine aisthesis*)—strives to maintain a balanced ratio amongst the senses, supplying what perception merely implies.

All media rely on these sense ratios, these ways of making sense that draw on common or familiar relationships between the senses. In fact, McLuhan ascribes to art and artists the role of teaching us new ratios, new forms of closing or completing perception (*Project 69* 25). What embodied invention explores is the potential for closure to convey various and novel ways of making sense (i.e. various poetic genera) between bodies, communities, and cultures. After all,

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those who are d/Deaf, autistic, blind, those with chronic migraines, those who use wheelchairs or walk with a limp—all possess ratios amongst their senses that cohere with their bodies and minds, i.e. with their embodied experiences. In what follows, I look to a medium that relies quite explicitly on closure—comics—and demonstrate how cartoonist use closure to convey various ratios between bodies and cultures.

Commonplace Comic Books

The term commonplace book refers to a heuristic text that students were encouraged to study so as to refine their knowledge of a particular topic and develop their capacity for inventing things to say on that topic. Traditionally, commonplace books were composed of various phrases and expressions that through repeated study one could memorize and deploy tactfully. But from a contemporary perspective commonplace books are rather simplistic in how they represent various commonplaces, such that they could find new life in more contemporary media, such as comics and videogames. We could think of a commonplace comic book, then, as a text that conveys not only common linguistic and discursive relationships, but through its various modalities, common sensory and semiotic relationships as well. More specifically, I conceive of commonplace comic books as collections of non-fictional stories or anecdotes by a particular subject on a variety of topics. Comics scholars refer to these texts as *autographics*.

On the face of it the term autographics simply refers to graphic life writing. However, Gillian Whitlock, who coined the concept, notes that autographics is as a way of recognizing "the distinctive technology and aesthetics of life narrative that emerges in comics" (965). The term autographics asserts that "[c]omics are not a mere hybrid of graphic arts and prose fiction, but a unique interpretation that transcends both, and emerges through the imaginative work of

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synthesis that readers are required to make between the panels on the page" (968-69).

Autographics can be seen to function as commonplace comic books in that they are texts that

engage in "cross-cultural translation" (978) and "[u]nique mediations of cultural difference"

(965). Furthermore, just as commonplace books make particular demands of their readers—e.g.

that they are studious and attentive—autographics ask more of their readers as well in that they

seek to cultivate a visual-verbal literacy that would allow audiences to "do more than consume

these images as passive spectators" and instead "move on to recognize the norms that govern

which lives will be regarded as human…" (966). While Whitlock has memoirs of trauma and

conflict in mind here, the same principle can be extended to other autobiographical comics as

well, such as those by persons with disabilities who are often treated as less-than-human by

prevailing ableist norms and biases. In fact, this can be considered one of the defining qualities

of commonplace comic books—that they move readers beyond norms and conventions towards

various commonplace experiences of the sensory, social, cultural, and political world.

In the table below I have listed several notable autographical works that function as

commonplace comic books. The list itself isn't intended to be comprehensive in any way but

more so to represent the breadth of topics. In what follows I describe the unique affordances that

allow comics to be treated as multimodal commonplace books. I then go on to examine two

comics from this list—*El Deafo* and *The Ride Together*—demonstrating how they help readers

memorize and deploy d/Deaf rhetoric and autistic rhetoric, respectively.

Title	Description
El Deafo	Cece Bell recounts her experience becoming deaf at a young age, including the recurrent misunderstandings of her friends, classmates, and teachers in regards to her sensory perception.
Epileptic	David B describes his complicated upbringing with his brother whose violent temperament and epileptic seizures defined both their lives.
Fun Home	Alison Bechdel describes her troubled childhood with an abusive father and

	an emotionally distant mother.
Maus	Weaving together past and present, Art Spiegelman tells the story of his father's survival of the Holocaust and how that shaped the rest of his life.
My New York Diary	Julie Ducet relates her move to New York City, a formative time in her career as a cartoonist but also one defined by anxiety over her craft, her epilepsy, and her turn towards self-medication.
Palestine	Joe Sacco chronicles his various encounters with Palestinians and Israelis during his time in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the early nineties.
Persepolis	Marjane Satrapi relates her upbringing in Iran, a childhood that was marked by violent conflict, punk music, and feminism.
Stiches	David Small recounts his childhood, which was defined by illness, cancer, and rebelliousness.
The Ride Together	Judy Karasik and Paul Karasik describe how their lives were influenced by their autistic brother David.

Table 1. Commonplace comics.

Multimodal Closure and Comics

In light of the preceding discussion I want to examine how cartoonists use multimodal closure to represent various commonplaces and thus foster embodied invention. Comics have been selected here, in part, because they illustrate multimodal closure perhaps better than any other medium. Consider, for instance, the following three-panel illustration in which the cartoonist has created various sensory and narratological gaps (See Fig 1). Closure names that process by which such gaps are filled in, producing a meaningful representation in the process. In fact, such gapes are part of the grammar of the medium. As Gillian Whitlock observes:

> The vocabulary of comics represents figures and objects across a wide iconic range from the abstraction of cartooning to realism; its grammar is based on panels, frames, and gutters that translate time and space onto the page in black and white; and balloons both enclose speech and convey the character of sound and emotion. This grammar makes extraordinary demands on the reader to produce closure. (968)

By closure here Whitlock means "the work of observing the parts but perceiving the whole"

(969) such that "comics require the reader to become a collaborator, engaging in an active

process of working through. As a medium of expression and communication, comics uses

closure like no other" (969-70).

Fig. 1 - This sequence ideally captures the concept of closure as readers need to fill in the

interceding actions (including momentum, gestures, and sounds) in order for the comic to make

sense. In the left-most panel Charlie Brown is seen running. In the final panel Charlie Brown

lands on his back with the word 'Wump!' to signify his landing. (Schulz *Peanuts* Sept. 28th

1969).

While I take my primary definition of closure from McLuhan—where closure works to

maintain a ratio between the sensory impression and the perceptual experience of a mediation by

filling in or supplying implied but absent sensory and semiotic information—there are a number

of similarities with the concept as used by comics theorists and scholars. Whitlock's definition,

for instance, notes the liminal space closure occupies by defining it as that which operates

between observing the parts and perceiving the whole. This echoes McLuhan's emphasis that

"The [sensory] impression is not the experience" (*Project 69* 26); rather the sensory impression

(i.e. observing the parts) of a mediation invokes a subjective closure whereby the mind

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completes an experience (i.e. perceives the whole) by adding in the implied but absent information. Furthermore, both Whitlock and McLuhan conclude that closure makes the audience a collaborator in the act of mediation, providing media with unique communicative affordances.[23]

It is also worth noting that Whitlock's approach to comics and closure is grounded in the work of Scott McCloud. In *Understanding Comics*—a comic illustrating how the medium functions—McCloud dedicates an entire chapter to closure. He too defines the concept as "[t]he phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (63) and holds that it is so central to the medium that "in a very real sense, comics *is* closure" (67, emphasis in original).[24] He goes on to note that, "In our daily lives, we often commit closure, mentally completing that which is incomplete based on past experience" (63). This is because "All of us perceive the world as a whole through our senses. Yet our senses can only reveal a world that is fragmented and incomplete" (62), such that "closure allows us to…mentally construct a continuous, unified reality" (67).

Such a description of closure recalls the definition of common sense given last chapter where Aristotle defined *koine aisthesis* as the means by which "The senses perceive each other's special-objects incidentally, not in so far as they are themselves but in so far as they form a unity" (*De anima* 425a30). More simply put, common sense is that faculty by which we observe the parts but perceive the whole. In this context closure is simply the name given to that

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[23] "The beholder must collaborate in creating the illusions of space, as of time." (McLuhan *Project 69* 26)

[24] In looking to McCloud and his work on comics and closure I do not mean to draw on his larger theories regarding the medium, including his general definition of comics or his general understanding of how they communicate. McCloud is, however, the most cited author on the subject of closure and comics. That said, other comics scholars have written about closure as well. Groensteen (*The System of Comics*), for example, names closure as one of six functions of the frame (39) and he associates closure with the act of reading comics (32). But for Groensteen reading comics is best understood through arthrology, a process in which meaning is made through the relationships between panels, images, and icons. For the present conversation, however, I find closure to be an apt concept for understanding comics in part because of its resonance with McLuhan's understanding of media in general as operative through closure, as noted above.

enthymematic process by which common sense supplies implied but absent sensory information. It should come as no surprise then that comics, as a medium equated with closure, is also one that has been recognized as explicitly enthymematic as well.

As J. Anthony Blair observes, "Visual arguments are typically enthymemes—arguments with gaps left to be filled in by the participation of the audience" (Blair 52). In "Beyond Visual Rhetoric" Dale Jacobs notes that Blair's remarks aptly apply to the medium of comics as the dividing line or gutter between panels acts as a visual demarcation that encourages the reader to supply the implied but absent information. But, as the title of Jacobs' essay suggests, comics are not constrained to just visual arguments. Rather, it is a multimodal medium, meaning that the enthymemes employed by comics "combine multiple semiotic modes" (502) in order to produce meaningful representations. This can be seen in the way that comics create relationships between various perceptual modes, such as sight, sound, motion, distance, and time. For instance, a cartoonist could depict a character as being far away by drawing a small figure whose speech is written in miniature letters. In a series of panels that character could then be shown moving closer by increasing the size of the figure as well as enlarging the lettering, suggesting his or her voice is getting louder. Lastly, how many panels the cartoonist uses to depict this event allows for a representation of time—more panels would draw out the sense of time passing, while fewer would suggest less time has passed. For these reasons Jacobs argues that comics make use of multimodal rhetoric—persuasive communication that takes place in and across various semiotic modes. Through multimodal rhetoric comics create "complex rhetorical environments in which persuasion occurs through a variety of means" (Jacobs 512).

What I want to suggest here is that these rhetorical environments are representations of sensory commonplaces. A sensory commonplace, it is worth recalling, is a collection of common

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sensory relationships from which the mind draws in enthymematically completing perception. Within our sensory commonplaces we discover poetic genera, common or familiar ways of making sense of our place in the world. Comics, as already noted, make use of sensory enthymemes through multimodal rhetoric such that the sensations, thoughts, and signs that they imply bring forth or construct a common sense of place or a sensory commonplace. Thus, from this perspective, comics can be thought to guide readers to various commonplaces and thus foster the discovery of knowledges and practices that are situated therein. Whitlock notes a similar process when she remarks that meaning in comics is "produced in an active process of imaginative production whereby the reader shuttles between words and images, and navigates across gutters and frames, being moved to see, feel, or think differently in the effort of producing narrative closure" (978). Viewed in this way, closure has the capacity to 'move us' to different situations or places, thereby encouraging us to "see, feel, or think differently." When a comic operates between different bodies, communities, and cultures, the closure of the mediation can offset the habitual closure enacted by common sense (*koine aisthesis*) which, to borrow McCloud's phrasing, sees us "mentally completing that which is incomplete based on past experience" (63). Instead, the experiences of the author mediated through the comic form can lead the reader to complete that which is incomplete based on the past and present experiences of the cartoonist. Put differently, comics supplement our own embodied experiences with enthymemes that are endemic to the experiences of others, such that they effectively function like commonplace comic books, allowing readers to invent or discover knowledges and practices situated in various sensory, social, and cultural places.

This is especially true of autobiographical comics where the multimodal rhetoric of the text can be thought of as an invitation to readers. By invitation here I mean to invoke Koss and

Griffin's *invitational rhetoric* which "constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (5). Commonplace comic books, I suggest, invite readers "to enter the [cartoonist's] world and to see it as the [cartoonist] does" (5). In entering these worlds and completing their sensory and semiotic arguments we learn the relationships and poetic genera of that place or situation. Thus, within graphic life writing closure is less a generic means by which humans engage with media (as McLuhan might suggest) and more specifically a heuristic for how particular individuals fill in or complete their own everyday experiences.

Within the broad range of commonplace comic books I focus specifically on those that relate to disability. Commonplace comic books written or informed by persons with disabilities have the potential to leverage the emancipatory capabilities of autographics. As G. Thomas Couser writes, "Autobiography…can be an especially powerful medium in which disabled people can demonstrate that they have lives, in defiance of others' common sense perceptions of them" (401). Similarly, Susan Squire writes that comics have the capacity to "move us beyond the damaging discourse of…normalcy into a genuine encounter with the experience of disability" (86). This is not to say that commonplace comic books are not without their complications. Indeed, as Dale Jacobs and Jay Dolmage observe, "Traditional memoirs of disability also bear the burden of challenging a normative culture as they confront (and sometimes embrace) the normative tendencies of narrative" (84). But commonplace comic books do offer some of the most compelling invitations to enter the world of a person with a disability and see it as they see it. In the following sections I look at two commonplace comic books and I examine how the cartoonists use the rhetorical affordances of the medium to tell 'true stories' and convey poetic genera.

El Deafo **& d/Deaf Rhetoric**

In the autobiographical comic *El Deafo,* Cece Bell recounts her childhood starting from the moment she partially lost her hearing. The comic is a blend of personal memories and instructional moments as Bell conveys to her readers the lessons she learned adjusting to her modified sense of hearing. What I will focus on here are the ways in which *El Deafo* embodies d/Deaf rhetoric to convey the poetic genera or ways of making sense that Bell discovered during her childhood. *El Deafo* begins by introducing us to Cece, a "regular little kid" (1) who watches TV with her siblings (1), rides a bike with her father (1), and who sings to herself (1). Cece, like all the characters in *El Deafo*, is drawn as an anthropomorphic rabbit. This gives the comic an aesthetic not unlike that of a children's cartoon. At the same time the elongated ears of the rabbit-like characters emphasize the impending focus on hearing, for within the first few pages Cece contracts meningitis and as a side effect partially loses her sense of sound. From this point onward Cece can only hear sounds through a hearing aid. The hearing aid, we are told, amplifies sounds but does not necessarily clarify them, meaning that she will need to learn to recognize other cues in order to interpret what she hears. *El Deafo* follows Cece as she becomes familiar with this new sensory relationship to the world. At the same time, we see her family, friends, teachers, and classmates becoming familiar with Cece.

Given how her hearing aid functions, Cece could be described as hard-of-hearing; that is to say, with the hearing aid she can hear sounds but those sounds require careful attention in order to be understood. Similarly, disability scholar Brenda Jo Brueggemann refers to herself as hard-of-hearing. She tells us that "As far as anyone knows, I have been deaf from birth; I have been a rhetorician about that long, too. Some days I do not call myself 'deaf'—some days I'm 'just hard-of-hearing,' the term I grew up with, and other days I'm quite 'hearing'" (1). This

situation—between deaf and hearing—leads Brueggemann to characterize herself as existing between places. In many respects, *El Deafo* illustrates Brueggemann's description of being in between places—between deaf and hearing and between personally familiar and culturally unfamiliar. In this way, the comic can be read as an account of Cece transitioning between commonplaces and her ensuing desire to have others understand her relatively novel place in the world. This is reflected in the content of *El Deafo* where various events in Bell's childhood are depicted as didactic situations that impart upon the reader what Bell wishes her friends and family understood about her way of being in the world. Put differently, *El Deafo* can be read as a commonplace comic book, one that utilizes the multimodality of the medium to represent the sensory commonplaces of its author.

At this point it is important to note that the commonplaces of the hearing are not reducible to those commonplaces of the deaf or hard-of-hearing. As we will see, Bell's comic demonstrates that these *topoi* are distinct from one another. That is to say, there is a dissensus here, and thus something uncommon. Brueggemann has characterized this uncommonness as incommensurateness: "Are the rhetorics between Deaf and Hearing—the arguments and therein the ways of knowing and being in the world—no more or less than those Khunian 'incommensurate paradigms'?" (*Lend Me Your Ear* 191). As these remarks indicate, rhetorics reflect the dissensus that exists between different bodies and senses—they indicate the incommensurate nature of embodied experience. But at the same time they offer a means of learning new ways of experiencing. The word incommensurate, after all, does not mean unknowable but rather a different way of knowing, evaluating, and measuring. It is the providence of rhetorics to help us translate these different ways of knowing and ultimately being.

With that in mind I want to explore how *El Deafo* participates in communicating d/Deaf rhetoric through its representation of think-eye. As noted last chapter, think-eye is Brueggemann's way of describing the unique visual and personal relationships that d/Deaf persons tend to possess. Think-eye appears throughout *El Deafo* in the way that sight is used tactically to foster comprehension.[25] For Cece, as someone hard-of-hearing, this involves various means of correlating visual cues with sounds. In this respect, Bell uses the medium to great effect. Throughout the comic sounds are depicted differently depending on who's speaking, whether or not Cece can see the speaker, and whether or not she is wearing her hearing aid. Without the hearing aid, the text within speech balloons appears either faded or nonexistent. The faded text indicates that the speaker is difficult to hear, whereas the empty balloons demonstrate that Cece hasn't heard the speaker at all.

In one particular panel both techniques are employed as Cece tries on the hearing aid for the first time and the words fade in to the page (Fig. 2). In this panel Bell also employs a second technique—ambiguous phonetic groupings, which represent that Cece can hear the sounds but they are not resolving into distinct and recognizable words. Taken together, the panel uses visual illegibility (through faded text) to demonstrate acoustic clarity, while simultaneously deploying ambiguous phonemes to demonstrate verbal comprehension. Through the first technique readers can appreciate the relationship between sight and sound that resides at the core of the comic as the visual legibility of the text stands in for the acoustic perception. It is within this relationship—between sight and sound—that Brueggemann arrives at the concept of think-eye: "I arrive doubly hyphenated (hard-of-hearing), with a lot going on in those multiple hyphenated between spaces. I come, I suppose, thinking between—thinking in another kind of between space

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[25] Think-eye also gives new meaning to what Whitlock calls the 'seeing I' of autobiographical comics, "Autographics: The Seeing 'I' of Comics."

between think-deaf and think-hearing: think-eye" (24). Cece finds herself in a similar position—between, one might say, a hearing commonplace (and that of her past) and a hard-of-hearing commonplace (that of her present). In the aforementioned panel we witness this transition between places as the text transitions from transparent to opaque.
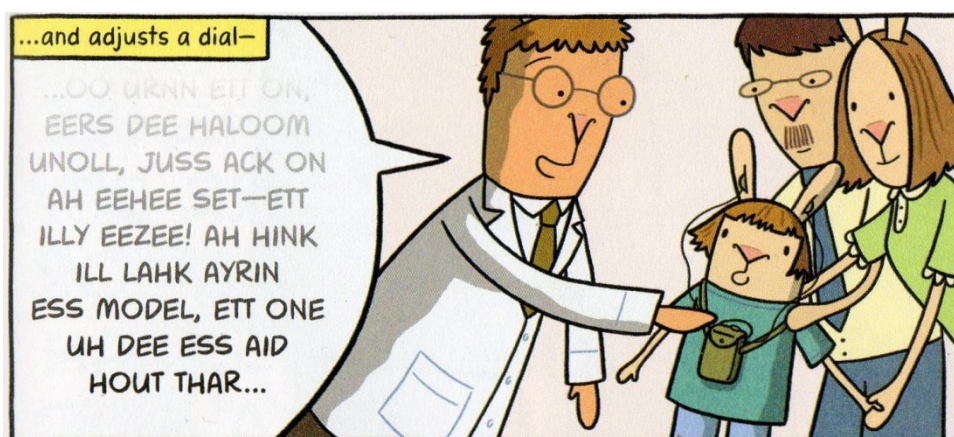

Fig. 2. Cece uses a hearing aid for the first time. In this panel unintelligible words fade into view as the doctor (left) adjusts the hearing aid for Cece (middle-right) as her parents reassure her (right). (*El Deafo* 19).

Indeed, from this scene onwards we see Cece coming to terms with her in-betweenness, a process that entails learning how to think with her eyes. This is reflected in the second technique mentioned above—the ambiguous phonemes. On the next page we see Cece thinking to herself, "I can hear! But what are they saying?" (20). Meanwhile, behind her row upon row of letters stack up, an apparent but illegible transcript of the conversation currently taking place between the doctor and her parents. Here the sounds are, quite literally, background noise as they do not resolve into intelligible words. In the following panel we see Cece looking at the doctor as he deliberately addresses her with the words, "Can. You. Hear. Me?" To which she responds by thinking to herself, "I understood that! Wow!" (21).

From this point onward sight takes on a new role in her life. As readers we accompany

Cece as she attends a school with other children who also wear hearing aids. There she learns

basic scholastic skills, but also the art of understanding speech through sight. While this is

typically referred to as lip-reading, Bell utilizes the multimodality of the medium to emphasize

that this art entails a more expansive sense of space than simply staring intently at the speaker's

lips. In a series of panels we see Cece dressed up as a detective as her teacher walks her through

the various sensory tactics she will want to employ in understanding speech with the hearing aid.

Here we see three tactics:

- Visual clues—"what do you see when a person talks to you?" (30).

- Context clues—"where are you while a person talks to you? What is going on around you during the conversation?" (30).

- Gestural clues—"What does a person do with her hands and body while she talks to you? What kinds of faces does she make?" (30).

Each clue is accompanied by a drawing that illustrates the strategy it refers to. For instance, next

to the gestural cues we see her teacher saying "A pear" while rubbing her stomach and licking

her lips. In the next panel we see her saying "A bear," mouth agape, arm outstretched, pointing

and shaking. This series of panels can be read as a set of introductory instructions to think-eye—

i.e. to developing that eye-space that is at one and the same time an I-space, a blending of the

visual and the personal that is distinct from the kind of sensory awareness that is commonplace

for hearing individuals. For those readers unfamiliar with this type of sensory awareness, *El

Deafo* provides the kind of sensory and imaginative instruction needed for invention to occur

between subjects and places.

It is worth pointing out that the sensory tactics depicted in *El Deafo* could be said to address sensations and perceptions that are common for both hearing and deaf subjects. The illustrations, however, demonstrate that the process of recognizing and retaining those sensations varies between hearing and deaf subjects. The movement of someone's lips or the gestures made with their hands, despite both being seen, may nevertheless bring forth different meanings. This brings to mind Brueggemann's remarks that,

> In sign language and Deaf culture, facial expressions are often referred to as the 'grammar' of the language. Much as deaf people (and other ESL users) tend to struggle with the grammatical nuances of standard English, hearing people who learn sign language reportedly often do not 'get' the intricacies of sign language grammar, expressed on the face. 'They have stone faces,' one Gallaudet student and sign language instructor told me. (*Lend Me Your Ear* 235)

At the same time, although hearing people may not perceive the expressive potential of facial expressions, they can still learn to appreciate how such signs can be considered useful and persuasive, especially when such tactics are drawn out for them. In this regard, *El Deafo* is a very inviting comic for hearing readers, as Bell's artfully drawn illustrations invite "the audience to enter [her] world and to *see* it as the [she] does" (Koss and Griffin 5, emphasis added).

Immediately following the clues given to Cece by her teacher we learn several more that she has developed through her own commonplace experience. She presents these personal lessons as written on large cards that she holds before a scene illustrating what they convey. She mentions that, "Must see person's face at all times!" (31), "Exaggerated mouth movements are confusing!" (32), "Shouting is *not* good!" (32), "Mustaches and beards are bad news! (Sorry, Dad.)" (33), "Hands in front of mouths are also bad news!" (33), "When it gets dark, give up!"

(33), and "Group discussions are impossible to understand" (33). Here the multimodal

affordances of comics comes into play as the medium facilitates demonstrating the visual,

contextual, and gestural aspects of Cece's new commonplace. [26] For instance, readers are able to

see how various everyday events—speakers who talk to people with their backs turned (31) or

the way that some people who are upset speak with a hand over their mouth (32) or what kind of

television shows and actors are easy to lip-read (74-8)—bring forth or supply distinct meanings,

depending on one's embodied situation. In one chapter we see Cece happily playing with other

children at a sleepover. For her friends it is commonplace to end a sleepover by turning off the

lights and talking before going to sleep. Here we see how the lesson "When it gets dark, give

up!" plays out in a regular, everyday event in Cece's childhood, where sleepovers are important

moments for forming friendships. With the lights out she can no longer think and hear with her

eyes. She can, however, make out the laughter of her friends as they talk amongst themselves.

Feeling excluded, Cece slips out of the room and calls her mother for a ride home (97).

This incident, and others like them throughout *El Deafo*, demonstrates that the challenges

Cece faces often have less to do with her own perception and more to do with the misperception

of her experience. Classmates who upon learning she is deaf are shown talking down to Cece

(67, 89, 104) or speaking too loudly (32, 64) and in these instances she is at her most anxious and

troubled. Often in these moments she retreats into her thoughts, taking on her titular alter-ego—

El Deafo. Cece created El Deafo after realizing that her hearing aid, with its accompanying

wireless microphone, gave her the 'superpower' to listen in on conversations and events

whenever her teachers would forget to switch off the mic. More broadly, though, El Deafo

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[26] This didactic approach is also used by Matt and Kay Daigle in the webcomic series, *That Deaf Guy*. Matt Daigle is deaf, while his partner, Kay, is a sign language interpreter. The webcomic is semi-autobiographical and covers a broad range of topics, some of which include entries under the headings of "Do's & Don'ts suggested by That Deaf Guy – Be Deaf Wise!" and "Deaf Culture 101."

represents the confident, empowered, and assertive version of Cece; whenever she encounters especially trying situations she imagines what her alter-ego would do. In two imaginary sequences it is El Deafo who stands up to those at the slumber party who excluded her (99) and it is El Deafo who stands up to her friend who talks down to her (69-70). In many ways, El Deafo reflects Cece's desire for those closest to her to understand her experience, a desire she has trouble communicating herself because her friends and family are all well-meaning, good intentioned people who nevertheless rely on assumptions rooted in their own perceptions. In a manner of speaking, *El Deafo*—the book—becomes a means of addressing those assumptions that trouble communication across and between different ways of perceiving and thinking. While this reinforces the notion that *El Deafo* can be treated as a commonplace comic book—in that it functions as a didactic text providing multi-modal instructions on common topics—it also exemplifies how autographics themselves "free us to think and imagine differently" (Whitlock 967). There is, for instance, a world of difference between the experiences represented in comics like *El Deafo* and those that can be derived solely from a hearing perspective. To take the latter approach, as one scholar observes, risks creating and perpetuating biases and stereotypes:

> It is not hard to see how a disinterested observer…might arrive at the stereotypes with which we stigmatise Deaf people, and the conclusion that their plight is therefore desperate. It comes from an extrapolative leap: to imagine what deafness is like, I will imagine my world without sound. A terrifying prospect, and one that conforms quite well with the stereotype we project onto those in the Deaf community. I would be isolated, disoriented, uncommunicative and unreceptive to communication. (481).

Disability scholar Tobin Siebers has described this distinction as the difference between a personal, subjective imagination and a cultural, intersubjective imagination ("Disability and the

Theory of Complex Embodiment"). As Siebers notes in regards to disability simulators, they fail to convey "embodied knowledge contained in disability identities" (292) because users "experience their body relative to their usual embodiment" (292). As a consequence they communicate "emotions of loss, shock, and pity at how dreadful it is to be disabled" (292). In contrast, commonplace comic books like *El Deafo* utilize artistic representation and multimodal rhetoric to foster the reader's capacity to translate embodied knowledges rather than to (misguidedly) seek to embody them directly through one's own experience.

Rhetoric and Imagination

Before moving on to a second commonplace comic book, I want to briefly unpack this relationship between rhetoric and imagination as I see these two concepts working in concert in embodied invention. Another way of describing embodied invention is to refer to it as rhetorical empathy, where empathy is defined as "[the] imaginative reconstruction of another's experience, without any particular evaluation of that experience" (Nussbaum *Upheavals of Thought* 302). Within this empathetic process poetic rhetoric is that which guides imagination such that it brings forth particular perspectives, positions, or places. In learning various forms of rhetoric we gain various instructions for bringing forth sensations, thoughts, ideas, images, sounds, etc. in accordance with the lived experiences of others. For instance, knowing the important relationships between sight and thought captured in the concept of think-eye and represented in comics such as *El Deafo* allows hearing persons to better imagine how their own practices might be perceived by persons who are Deaf. In face-to-face interactions, for example, d/Deaf rhetoric conveys that effective communication means ensuring that one's lips can be read and that one's face is expressive. It's easier for hearing persons to imagine why these practices are necessary

when they understand how d/Deaf persons use such practices to make sense of their own experience. Such an understanding can only come about by engaging with d/Deaf rhetoric. Embodied invention seeks to apply this same principle to all inter-cultural forms of communication.

The notion that rhetoric can work in concert with imagination also brings together the philosophies of two central figures in this dissertation, Vico and Peirce. For instance, imagination plays a prominent role in Vico's theory of sensory invention. As a synonym for poetic genera, Vico used the phrase *imaginative universals*, common ways of imagining our place in the world. But here it is important to note that his usage of the term imagination or *fantasia* is distinct from the contemporary understanding of a fanciful or whimsical creation. Rather, as Verene notes, imagination "is not simply picturing something to oneself as though one could see it; it is the creation or bringing into being of something" (Verene 92). That is to say, in Vico's usage, imagination is not a means of deviating from reality but is in fact an integral process through which reality is constructed. Again, as Verene notes, "The fundamental work of *fantasia* is the active formation of reality" (Verene *Speculative Philosophy* 94). This understanding of imagination can be thought of in relation to common sense (*koine aisthesis*) and its rhetorical capacity to bring forth or imagine sensations that while not immediately perceived nevertheless fill in or complete our perception of the world. If we recognize that different bodies and senses make for distinct sensory enthymemes, then we can see how reality is imaginatively constructed in various ways while nevertheless remaining true or objective for those imagining it as such.

As with Vico, imagination serves a crucial purpose in Peirce's philosophy as well. As John Kaag observes, "the most puzzling concepts of Peirce's system can be best understood as

dependent on the creative imagination" (Kaag *Thinking Through the Imagination* 14). In Kaag's characterization, "Peirce develops an imaginative epistemology and ontology" (15); that is to say, his is a method of discovering knowledge and being through imagination. This can be seen in Peirce's semiotics where imagination plays a central role in discovering the relationships between signs. Except here imagination is subsumed under another concept—as one scholar notes, "Vico's theory of fantasia and Peirce's conception of the function of signs could…be understood in their true context: rhetoric" ("Vico's and Peirce's 'Sensus Communis'" 71). Thus, that process by which reality is constructed is itself an imaginative and rhetorical one, suggesting that in sharing rhetorics we facilitate our capacity to imaginatively reconstruct the experiences of other persons and thus empathize with them.

However, this also suggests that the inverse is true; that the absence of poetic rhetorics limits our capacity to imagine how the world appears to others and as such curtails our capacity to empathize with one another. What I want to suggest here is that this is the case in a normate culture. Consider, for instance, one of the central arguments made by Lennard Davis in *Enforcing Normalcy*. There he describes how disability emerges through the "construction of the normal world" (Davis 22). That is to say, disability arises by positioning all persons within that place that is brought forth or imagined by able-bodied subjects, an act that dis-places those marginalized by what is 'common' or 'normal' from the practical realities in which they live. In this way the normate is often guilty of positioning deaf persons within an originarily audile world, or the blind within an originarily visual world, or autists within an originarily neurotypical world. In a normate culture, reality begins and ends in the imagination of the normate. And thus the normate attempts to understand others through his own imaginative universals, i.e. his own ways of making sense of the world. As Davis notes, "disability [to the normate] seems so

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obvious—a missing limb, blindness, deafness. What could be simpler to understand? One simply has to imagine the loss of the limb, the absent sense, and one is half-way there" (xvi).

This distinction—between what the normate imagines and what the person with disability actually experiences—was noted above in Siebers distinction between personal and cultural imagination. Siebers highlights this difference by looking at the contentious use of disability simulations as tools to "raise the consciousness" (292)—i.e. develop the capacity to empathize—of those in the field of occupational therapy and rehabilitation science. These simulations have students use a wheelchair for a day or walk around with a blindfold on. "The idea," Siebers writes, "is that students may stand for a time in the places occupied by disabled people and come to grasp their perspectives" (292).[27] Here we can recognize the logic of *sensus communis* and its transcendental *sensus* that was noted last chapter. From the perspective of dissensus, one cannot simply "stand for a time in the places occupied by [others]" because the variances in our bodies and senses always-already constitute unique places, distinct sensory *topoi* in which we find our own sense-making techniques. Siebers makes a similar observation when he notes that such simulations

> fail to give the student pretenders a sense of the embodied knowledge contained in
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> disability identities. Disability simulations of this kind fail because they place students in
>
> a time-one position of disability, before knowledge about disability is acquired, usually
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> resulting in emotions of loss, shock, and pity at how dreadful it is to be disabled. Students
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> experience their body relative to their usual embodiment, and they become so
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> preoccupied with sensations of bodily inadequacy that they cannot perceive the extent to
>
> which their "disability" results from social rather than physical causes. (292).

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[27] Here we can recognize the presence of common sense and its transcendental sensus, noted above, which substantiates the belief that "Human beings can enter into the potential standpoints of others" (Visker 2).

Siebers concludes that such simulations constitute "an act of individual imagination" rather than "an act of cultural imagination" (292).

This distinction between individual and cultural imagination gestures towards a fundamental difference between sensory *topoi*, imaginative universals, and rhetorics. When we engage in cultural imagination we are borrowing the rhetorics of that culture to assist in our capacity to imagine how the world appears from that position or place. For this reason empathy can be thought of as a rhetorical phenomenon insofar as we rely on rhetorics to imaginatively reconstruct the real, lived experiences of other people. We learn these rhetorics, and foster empathy, by engaging with the representations of other people, by listening to their 'true stories.' In these instances we can almost 'hear' the rhetoric that guides how they construct such representations.

In this way embodied invention makes use of what Krista Ratcliffe calls *rhetorical listening*. Rhetorical listening describes how we 'hear'[28] differences across communities and cultures. Ratcliffe defines the concept as a "code of cross-cultural contact…[it] signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in cross-cultural exchanges" (1) . Within embodied invention rhetorical listening is that which asks us to 'listen' to the rhetoric of the 'speaker' so that we may 'hear' their poetic genera, their ways of bringing forth knowledge of their place in the world. Rhetorical listening encourages us to allow the thoughts, ideas, sensations, feelings, words, etc. of other subjects to bring forth one another in accordance with how they have experienced the world and thus to refrain from judging or evaluating such associations insofar as they relate to our own experiences. It also requires that we are open and willing to defer to the rhetorics of those around us. To borrow a phrase from Gemma Corradi

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[28] I have placed single quotes around those words that relate to the senses to emphasize that I do not mean specifically hearing as a sensory phenomenon but the general idea of listening as being open and receptive to what others are communicating.

Fiumara, rhetorical listening asks us to become "apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse" (*The Other Side of Language* 57). Thus, it is important when 'listening' to other people that we 'hear' those enthymematic relationships in language that can and do bring forth sensations and thoughts that are potentially uncommon to our own experiences. And we must acknowledge the persuasive character of our own perspectives, which encourages us to omit differences in favour of similarities. This process of rhetorical listening and cultural imagination can be seen at work in the following memoir comic, *The Ride Together*.

The Ride Together & Autistic Rhetoric

With *El Deafo* commonplace comic books can be seen to train readers to recognize potentially distinct poetic genera. What is less clear so far is how people use such sensory tactics in their daily lives to locate other subjects. One genre that offers some guidance here are those memoirs written from the perspective of family members of persons with disabilities. These texts have the capacity to reflect how tactics and rhetorics are shared through observation and attention. Such an exchange of rhetorics can be seen in *The Ride Together: A Brother and Sister's Memoir of Autism in the Family,* an award-winning memoir[29] by Paul Karasik and Judy Karasik about their experience growing up with David, their autistic brother. The text blends chapters of prose, written by Judy, with chapters of comics, drawn by Paul. Together they co-construct what might be thought of as the Karasik commonplace—that is, they represent various,

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[29] Best Literary Work of the Year, Autism Society of America. Despite the critical and scholarly praise directed at this text, I'd like to note that it is not without its complications. For instance, the book prefaces its representation of autism with a medical account, playing into troubling narratives in which disability is pathologized through medical discourse. We are shown drawings of neurons and told that, according to the prevailing medical theory, autism is related to drug and alcohol use during pregnancy, prompting the footnote from the authors: "So don't drink or use drugs while pregnant!" This erroneous and outmoded theory is at odds with the award conferred upon the text by the Autism Society of America, which could be seen as an endorsement of that medical theory. At the very least it hopefully serves as a cautionary lesson against incorporating pathologizing discourse founded upon prevailing medical knowledge.

everyday experiences within the Karasik family. What I'd like to do here is focus on the ways in which *The Ride Together* show Judy and Paul learning David's autistic tactics or ways of making sense. This occurs through representations of what is referred to as "David's world" (33).[30]

The Ride Together first introduces readers to David's world through a general account of autism as a neurological and multisensory condition. In one panel we see an anonymous autistic child sitting before a television, a clock in hand which has captured the boy's attention. Behind the child his mother gently touches his shoulder as she has a plate of food she wishes to share (Fig. 3). In the following panel the scene is redrawn in a style intended to reflect the child's unique sensory experience, and it ideally exhibits the multimodal affordances of the medium (Fig. 4). Here much of the background is absent while various environmental factors are exaggerated. For instance, the mother's body is replaced by a large speaking mouth, emphasizing the sound of her voice and the visual source of that sound. The finger touching his shoulder is exaggerated in size, emphasizing its tactile affect. The sun, which in the previous panel was a distant object, is now enlarged, its long, wavy rays an apparent source of warmth. As Sarah Birge writes of this panel, "By presenting this scene in a single frame with no internal borders, the author conveys the flood of sensations that bombard the boy: depictions of a blazing sun, smells, and voices from both television and someone in the room compete for attention and fill the scene, held at bay only by the boy's attention to his clock" (Birge 8-9). The caption on the panel reads: "Because information goes through their brains via non-standard pathways, the world can appear confusing" (15).

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[30] While the focus here will be on the relationship between neurotypical family members with their autistic sibling, it's worth noting the work of autistic cartoonists such as Dustin Nunn (*Dustin and Darling*) and Tim Sharp (*Laser Beak Man*).

Fig. 3 A panel from the opening preface to the The Ride Together (14). Here a boy sits on the floor before a television, his gaze fixed on a clock. His mother, with a plate of food in hand, taps him on the shoulder and says, 'Honey?' to get the boy's attention.
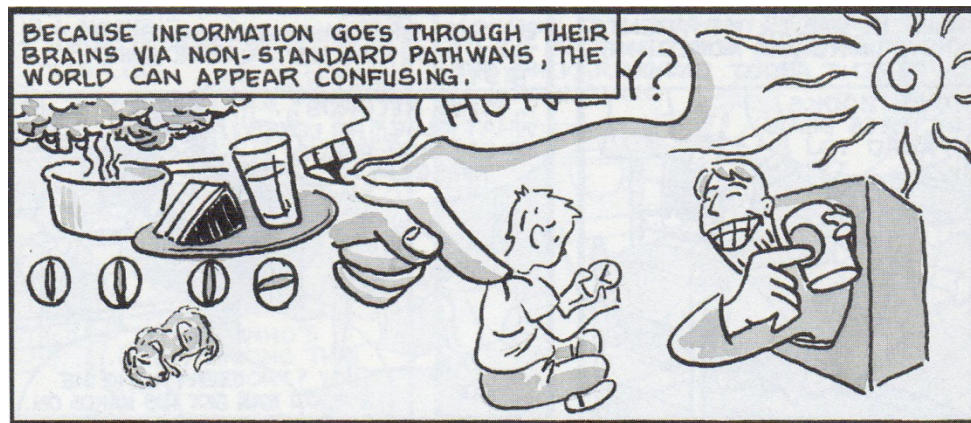

Fig. 4. This panel immediately follows the one above, emphasizing the sensory differences between the two. Here we see the same boy from before, clock in hand, but aspects of his surroundings are more prominent. The sun is larger, the figure on the television is enlarged, while other sounds and sights are enlarged and made more immediately present (*The Ride Together* 15).

What I'm interested in here, however, is not how to represent the 'confusing world' of David and other autists, but rather I want to treat David's world as his sensory commonplace in which resides various strategies that he uses to situate himself in the world. Indeed, on the following panel we are told that, "What appears as compulsively repetitive behavior can be the autistic approach to putting the world in a more comfortable and understandable order" (15). How David approaches 'putting the world in a comfortable and understandable order,' I would argue, is commensurate with his own personal poetic genera or ways of making sense. And here it is important to note that while the normative and neurotypical order of the world is rather well known and represented in Western culture, how autists organize sensations and thoughts into something familiar or common is not. As Judy Karasik remarks further on in the text, "[David] had hundreds of tricks that we didn't understand to organize the world" (140). Some of those tricks relate to the autistic tactics identified last chapter—local coherence, fixity of focus, and private meanings. Only now we see them depicted through the multi-modality of the comic medium, facilitating our capacity to understand, to a certain degree, how David organizes his world. For instance, in the above panels we see both local coherence and fixity of focus represented. In terms of the former, we see that the child can recall the exact position of the dials on the stove as opposed to the more abstract recollection of a stove in general. At the same time we see fixity of focus as he is engaged with a clock that has clearly commanded much of his attention.

In approaching David's world as his sensory commonplace I am building off of Yergeau and Heilker's emphasis on approaching autism itself from the perspective of rhetoric. The authors observe that, "If we can come to see our autistic students through the lens of rhetoric more than through a stock and overdetermined lens of autism, we might come to better

appreciate what they do have to offer instead of fixating on what they do not. Indeed, if we give them the opportunity, we might get a chance to learn how they see themselves" (496). Rhetoric, in a manner of speaking, is a means of looking past abstract generalizations and seeing practical, situated subjects as they orient themselves in the world. In *The Ride Together* we see David's brother Paul learning his rhetoric, which then gets depicted through Paul's imaginative (and graphic) construction of David's world.

For instance, in the chapter "The Stooges" Paul and David embark on an outing together to the movies. How Paul—the cartoonist—represents his experience in this chapter and how he represents that of his brother is instructive. At the opening of the chapter we learn that Paul—at this point a young adult—has planned a solo outing to the movies. But at the behest of his mother she persuades him to take David along with him. In the ensuing series of panels we see that neither Paul nor David is particularly enthused about the idea of going to the movies with each other. For Paul, this is because "[he's] never gone out alone with [David] before" (122), an observation we are privy to through Paul's inner monologue, as depicted as a thought balloon. Repeatedly these thought balloons make clear Paul's apprehension at being seen in public with David. In contrast, we are not privy to David's thoughts, and so his apprehension is depicted in a more sensory fashion. Upon being invited to the movies, we learn that David would rather stay home to perform his regular re-enactments of television shows. He tells his mother, "Now, now…I'm doing 'Superman' at 4:30 and 'Face the Nation' at 5" (122). When his mother insists, the absence of an inner monologue leaves us as readers to deduce his frustration as implied visually, through gestures, and audibly, through sounds. When it becomes clear that he should go with Paul, David begins tapping his fingers on his head, with the capitalized words, "CLAP-

CLAP-CLAP" hovering over him, while his expression and posture indicate frustration and annoyance.

In these panels we can recognize Susan Squier's observation that "Rather than leaving the disabled person unable to narrate or represent his full experience…comics make that narrative most fully possible because they include its pre-verbal components: the gestural, embodied physicality of disabled alterity in its precise and valuable specificity" (86). Because Paul is representing both experiences—his own and that of his brother—there is a risk of seeing David as simply an entity in Paul's world. But the medium allows for distinct styles and modes of representation that can accentuate aspects of lived experiences depending on the subject. Thus, without presuming to know his brother's thoughts, Pau allows David to speak for himself through gestures. And we, as readers, are encouraged to 'listen' to these gestures. This 'listening' is distinct from how we 'listen' to Paul simply because the inner monologue tells us what he is thinking and feeling in various situations. When it comes to Paul, we as readers are less engaged in that enthymematic process by which we supply that which is implied to the senses—in this case, that he is apprehensive and even embarrassed. In contrast, the absence of an inner monologue for David encourages us as readers to attend more fully to his actions in order to derive from them the emotional state they imply, emphasizing the role of the body in interpreting David's experience.

That said, David is often vocal, though not always in conventional ways. Throughout *The Ride Together* he is shown engaging in *echolalia*—the repetition of particular words and phrases. For David this most often involves recalling the names of the various barbers at a shop used by the Karasik family. As Yergeau and Heilker observe, *echolalia* is not unlike the recitation encouraged by rhetors in the studying of commonplace texts:

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Let us consider, for instance, *echolalia*, a characteristic kind of language use among

autistics, in which they repeat stock words and phrases verbatim that they have heard

other speakers use. Typically, this behavior is seen as an impairment, a deficiency that

needs to be alleviated. But if we listen rhetorically, this repeated use of stock material

starts sounding more like a traditional and valued kind of invention. In the middle ages

and early Renaissance, students were trained to keep what were known as

"commonplace" books, large journals in which they meticulously copied down, verbatim,

words, phrases, sentences, and even entire dialogues and passages from other speakers

that they thought noteworthy. And they were likewise trained to deploy this stock

material regularly as they composed. (491)

But David doesn't simply recite the words himself. Rather, he frequently begins a list or phrase,

only to pause and ask those around him for the next word in the sequence. If rhetoric is thought

of in the enthymematic sense of one word bringing forth another, then these moments in which

David invites those nearby to supply the next word in a series could be interpreted as moments of

sharing enthymemes, of inviting others into a common place.

How *echolalia* is depicted in the comic reinforces this interpretation. In fact, comics, as

an explicitly enthymematic medium, are ideally suited to representing the ways in which

echolalia bring forth more than just words. In this case, seeing David engage in *echolalia* in a

visual, verbal, and gestural medium allows us, as readers, to perceive the various senses involved

in this situating practice. What's more, Paul illustrates this bringing forth in such a way that it

realizes a distinct commonplace for David than it does for Paul. This can be seen when David

and Paul first enter the movie theatre, at which point David prompts Paul to finish the sentence,

"Today, on 'Face the Nation' I'm going to do secretary of state Henry M…who?" (123).

Through Paul's inner-monologue we know that he's embarrassed by this, and as such he's slouched, collar propped up so as to conceal his face from the nearby ticket attendant. But when the attendant replies, "Kissinger?" we see David gleefully repeating the word, "KISSINGER!!" He once again drums his fingers on his head but this time he's smiling, his posture indicating excitement. In these panels we, as readers, clearly see how sharing in enthymemes makes David more at ease and comfortable with where he is. Paul, caught up in his emotional state, is less aware of this.

But as the film starts and David moves on to a new set of stock words—this time a phrase he derives from the movie—Paul begins to accept that he's projected his embarrassment beyond his own experience. As David gleefully exclaims, "Moe…Larry…CHEESE!!", Paul shushes him emphatically, only to be rebuked by another movie goer who sternly says, "Ahem, perhaps you should be quiet, young man…"(126). Paul reacts in his inner-monologue, "Geez, what a grump…But he's right…Nobody cares about David's outbursts…Nobody but me!" (126). As Paul comes to accept that his experience is not one shared by others the actions between the panels begin to influence one another. A pie thrown on screen by one of the stooges strikes the audience. Soon the stooges themselves emerge from the screen, causing comedic mayhem. In this moment we are encouraged to see this as David's world—indeed, his commonplace, in which films and television shows are far more engaging, immersive, and compelling.

This scene recalls Paul Heilker's interpretation of his son's commonplaces:

When he returns to his obsessive topics of interest… understanding autism as a rhetoric lets me see that he is returning to his favorite inventive universes, that he wants to share *topoi* in those universes which he continues to find valuable over long stretches of time, that bear repeated usage. When he recites long strings of stock discourse—reciting the

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entire script of the movie *Toy Story*, as he did once on a long vacation car ride—I

understand that he is choosing to repeat—to inhabit for a short time, in a world that is

endlessly in flux—a very familiar and comforting rhetorical structure. (488)

Paul Karasik seems to have arrived at a similar observation. On the ride home from the movies,

David recites the words, "Moe…Larry…" and before he can finish Paul chimes in, "…Cheese!"

Then altogether they both happily recite the entire phrase.

In these and various other ways *The Ride Together* shows us, as readers, how David

constructs his world as understood by his brother and sister. This construction exhibits numerous

rhetorical strategies—in this case relating to an autistic rhetoric—that work to situate David in a

commonplace. By demonstrating that rhetoric through the multimodal process of reading a

comic, the authors train their audience to recognize those strategies. The audience can, in turn,

deploy that rhetoric to guide their own constructions of autistic experience. That rhetoric is at

once necessary in that it makes empathetic imagination accountable to the lived experience of the

subject but it is also fallible, always subject to revision in regards to individual instances and new

information.

Ultimately, what *El Deafo* and *The Ride Together* demonstrate is a novel kind of

commonplace book, one that leverages the multimodal affordances to convey the various and

diverse ways in which people make sense of their place in the world. In the next chapter I look at

a different kind of multimodal commonplace text, the commonplace videogame.

Chapter 3: Commonplace Videogames

In the first chapter I argued that our bodies and senses produce a common sense of place or a sensory commonplace. Within our sensory commonplaces we discover poetic genera, various ways of making sense. Since our bodies and senses differ so too do our poetic genera. These differences are reflected in our 'true stories,' autobiographical accounts of our commonplaces. In light of this I put forward the notion of commonplace texts—multi-modal texts that collate the 'true stories' by a subject on various topics. Commonplace texts allow us to represent our commonplaces and thus to share the means of discovering poetic genera. Last chapter this gave rise to the notion of a commonplace comic book, a didactic text that provides instruction through the multi-modal rhetoric of the comics medium.

In this chapter I posit the notion of a *commonplace videogame*. What distinguishes commonplace videogames from other media is that they are procedural and participatory. In terms of the former, I argue that whereas stories convey poetic genera, games are a means of procedurally generating stories. That is to say, I conceive of games as representing various sensory, social, and/or cultural places; in playing games we generate accounts of these places. These accounts, in turn, teach players the poetic genera that are inherent to those places. Working in concert with the procedural aspects of games is that they are also participatory and interactive in that they invite players to use the poetic genera inherent to a particular place in producing an account of that place. This reading is reinforced by noting that games function through *procedural enthymemes* (Bogost), arguments completed through interaction. By enacting the procedural enthymemes in a commonplace videogame, players bring forth an account of that place that makes sense. In this way commonplace videogames are a novel instance of didactic

new media in the way that they train players to understand that knowledge of the world is situated through various places or positions in the world.

In what follows I define commonplace videogames and provide an overview of their common features. I then describe how these games function rhetorically through procedural and participatory arguments that involve various senses. I go on to note how games are particularly suited to creating a common sense of place through their unique blend of play, place, and poiesis. Videogames are, I suggest, *topoietic* media—they bring forth (*poiesis*) a sense of place (*topos*) and in doing so they foster the exchange of poietic genera that are inherent to those places.

Commonplace Videogames

By putting forward the notion of a commonplace videogame I mean to both build upon the conventional understanding of the commonplace book and, in some sense, demonstrate how digital media surpasses print in its capacity to represent the commonplaces. To review, a commonplace book contains various phrases, expressions, fables, and allegories on a particular topic. Students were instructed to study these commonplace books so as to develop their capacity to invent or discover various arguments and argumentative techniques. In this sense they can be thought of as an "information retrieval system" (Moss 53). But while this suffices for training in conventional discursive forms of invention, I want to develop a sensory and embodied invention, and thus the notion of an explicitly multimodal commonplace text is more appropriate. That said, I want to retain the notion that the topics depicted in commonplace books "represent the 'forms and rules of things deep-seated in nature'" (Moss 54). These forms and rules are indeed deep-seated but not so much within nature (whatever that might be) but within the body, the mind, society, and culture. Games are ideally suited to convey differences between topics or places in

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that they are explicitly concerned with variations in forms and rules. But games do more than just play with rules, for in playing different games we produce different accounts or stories that have been shaped by those forms and rules. [31]

In describing videogames as a means of generating accounts I'm following Michel de Certeau when he suggests that cultural and social rules become embodied "in the specific games of each society" (22). He goes on to note that, "in replaying the games, in telling about them, these accounts record the rules and the moves simultaneously. To be memorized as well as memorable, they are repertories of schemas of action between partners…[and] these mementos teach the tactics possible within a given (social) system" (23).[32] As seen last chapter, autobiographies and memoirs can be thought of as accounts of various commonplaces in which authors record their poetic genera through the multi-modality of the comics medium. Commonplace videogames extend this process in that they allow players to procedurally generate accounts of various places—be them sensory, social, or cultural. These accounts are themselves narratives of particular places, stories produced by performing the poetic genera inherent to that place. Such a relationship between player and game, it is worth noting, is not unlike the relationship between reader and text described by post-structuralist theorists such as Jacques Derrida[33] and Roland Barthes. For instance, Barthes observes that "'playing' must be understood…in all its polysemy: the text itself plays…and the reader plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which re-produces it…" (Barthes 162).

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[31] It is worth noting that the relationship between games and stories is a recurrent topic in the field of game studies, with some scholars believing that games are inherently narratological while others argue that the ludic aspect of games are obscured by adherence to stories and texts (see *First-Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*). My approach is to take a very broad understanding of narrative as a description or account of the world.

[32] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman provide a similar observation when they write that, "*games are social contexts for cultural learning*. This means that games are one place where the values of a society are embodied and passed on" (Salen and Zimmerman).

[33] See, for instance, "Structure, Sign, and Play."

When the text is about the ordinary, quotidian, or commonplace then the practice which re-produces it is an everyday practice, a tactic or commonplace technique. Thus, it was argued last chapter that in sharing stories we are relating far more than mundane descriptions of the world; instead we are relating how we come to situate ourselves in the world through particular sensory practices or poetic genera. Games have their players enact these practices, producing knowledge of that situation or place in the form of a narrative account.

By narrative I mean a very broad sense of the term. Narratives are the result of us making sense, a process which, as Vico noted, gives rise to 'true poetic allegories' or 'true stories.' These 'true stories' begin as prelinguistic sensory metaphors, a kind of sensory story that helps us explain the world and our place in it. Here it might be helpful to recall Donald Phillip Verne's description of the poetic genera as a means of "regarding sensibility, feeling, or expression as a form of thought" (92). In this way the poetic genera tell stories through an embodied and sensory language. Media, in turn, allow us to reproduce these stories through signs and rhetoric. The argument in this chapter is that the multi-modal affordances of videogames allow us to tell these stories in a language more commensurate with the originary language of the body and the senses.

In fact, it is worth noting that when de Certeau suggested that games record the various rules and tactics of a society he was writing at a time when card games and boardgames were virtually the only kinds of games. That is to say, he was writing before the emergence of videogames as a cultural phenomenon and so it is important to recognize the sheer number of digital games that have emerged over the past thirty years. Such games span across cultures and platforms, including mobile phones, webpages, game consoles, tablets, and computers. Within this outpouring of videogames there is a specific genre which is ideally captures de Certeau's interest on everyday practices, what I call commonplace videogames. The following table (Table

1) contains several notable commonplace videogames. The list isn't meant to be comprehensive; rather it shows the breadth of topics being addressed by a diverse range of game designers.

Title	Description
Alz	A game that uses a glitch aesthetic—flickering, shifting images and sounds—to represent the impact of Alzheimer's disease on memory and cognition.
Auti-Sim	Play from the perspective of an autistic child at a playground who experiences auditory hypersensitivity.
Beyond Eyes	Players take on the role of a recently blinded child as she sets out in search of her missing cat.
Depression Quest	An interactive narrative informed by the game designers' experiences with depression.
Dys4ia	A series of interactive game sequences intended to reflect the designer's experience of gender dysphoria.
Mainichi	A representation of the day-to-day life the designer, Mattie Brice, and her experience as a trans woman.
Papers, Please	As a border guard of a fictitious country, you are tasked with balancing the draconian immigration laws you are paid to enforce with the well-being of your family that depends on your gainful employment.
Stasis	A simulation of verbal harassment directed at women on city streets, inspired by the game designer's own experiences with street harassment.
That Dragon, Cancer	Parents Ryan and Amy Green depict their experience raising a child diagnosed with a terminal form of cancer at the age of twelve months.
The Oldest Game	A game intended to raise awareness of the lived experiences of sex workers in Canada, specifically in relation to new legislation that could adversely affect such individuals.

Table 2. Commonplace games.

Despite the broad range of topics there are a number of recurrent themes throughout commonplace videogames. Here I've outlined five by noting that commonplace games are uncommon, practical, personal, invitational, and accustomary. First, each game—implicitly or explicitly—addresses a topic in Western culture that is socially or culturally uncommon, by which I mean prone to being misunderstood, misrepresented, and/or under-represented. For instance, the makers of *Depression Quest* state that the game is intended to "illustrate as clearly as possible what depression is like, so that it may be better understood by people without

depression" (*Depression Quest*). The designers behind *The Oldest Game* intend it to inform

Canadians about the practical impact that recently introduced legislation will have on sex

workers—individuals who are frequently misrepresented in popular media as destitute, depraved,

and/or helpless people who are at the same time somehow less deserving of respect, compassion,

and understanding. In *Mainichi* Mattie Brice puts forward a representation of her everyday

experiences as a transgender woman. She describes the game as, among other things, "a tool for

a trans* person to share with their friends if they have the same trouble explaining like I did"

("Postpartum: Mainichi – How Personal Experience Became a Game").

Another recurrent theme throughout these games is their focus on the practical, mundane,

and personal. In this way commonplace games are similar to what Alexander Galloway calls

realist games, which he defines as "those games that reflect critically on the minutiae of

everyday life" (75). *Papers, Please*, for instance, has you operating a border patrol booth—

stamping passports, verifying identification papers, scanning individuals for contraband, etc.

Shifts in the booth are interspersed with moments in which you spend your wage to pay rent,

heat your home, purchase medicine, and support your family. Since the game ties your wages to

your performance and willingness to enforce discriminatory laws, simple mistakes like

overlooking a typo or moral decisions like allowing individuals to (illegally) reunite with their

spouses all exist within a practical, everyday context. In *Mainichi*—Japanese for 'everyday'—

Brice set out to convey her quotidian experiences, describing the game as "an experiment in

sharing a personal experience through a game system. It helps communicate daily occurances

[sic] that happen in my life, exploring the difficulty in expressing these feelings in words. As

well, it stands as a commentary of how we currently use game design for broad strokes of

universal experiences instead of the hyper-personal, and often exclude minority voices" ("Mainichi").

A third theme here is that many commonplace games are autobiographical (*Dys4ia*, *Mainichi*), based on personal experiences (*Depression Quest, Stasis,*), or created in consultation with those they represent (*The Oldest Game*). Such personal games carry with them unique representative characteristics where the rules, conditions, and mechanics of the game provide an additional means of representing experience. In *Dys4ia* game designer Anna Anthropy presents a series of mini-games—some novel in design, others repurposed versions of classics—that reflect her experience undergoing hormone replacement therapy. Each mini-game has its own style of representation, controls, and mechanics that are meant to reinforce a particular portion of the autobiographical narrative. For instance, the game opens with an oblong object next to a barrier with a narrow passage (Fig. 1). As indicated by an upward arrow on the other side of the barrier, players are led to believe that the object can be navigated through the passage. But in attempting to do so they find that its shape does not allow for this. As players discover this, the following message appears on the screen: "I feel weird about my body." And with that a new mini-game begins. These simple interactions provide the player with just enough freedom of control to realize the underlying argument—in this case, the act of navigating an object through a discoherent space parallels the sense of gender dysphoria and its effect on the perception of one's body experienced by the game's author.
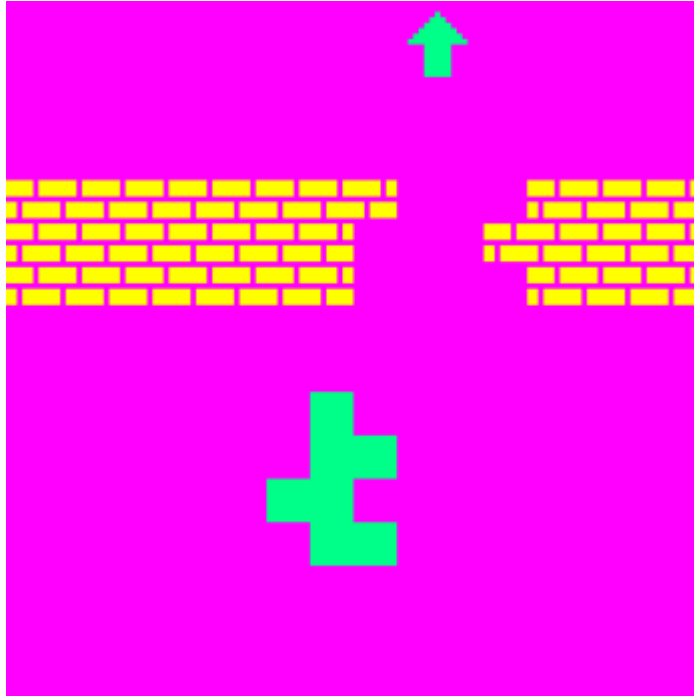
Fig. 5 *Dys4ia*. In one of the opening gameplay scenes the player is tasked with guiding a geometric shape (bottom) through a somewhat analogous gap in a wall (top).

The fourth theme here is that commonplace games—like all games—begin by accepting an invitation to play. While this could be understood simply as an offer to engage in gameplay, invitation here can also be interpreted in the rhetorical sense given to it by Koss and Griffin. Invitational rhetoric "constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (5). By accepting the invitation to play, players also accept the invitation to 'see' what is brought forth from a particular position in the (game) world. The game designers behind *Depression Quest* describe the game as "an amalgamation of the experiences of the developers and several people close to them" (*Depression Quest*); it is an invitation to enter a very personal and at times uncomfortable place. They go on to state that, "This game is not meant to be a fun or lighthearted experience." Thus, unlike most conventional invitations to play for fun, leisure, or escape, commonplace games are invitations to play for a heightened sense of

awareness, understanding, and, ultimately, empathy. This is aided by the fact that invitations to play are voluntary, such that they foster an openness to difference on the part of the player—i.e. an openness to a different set of rules and relationships.

A fifth commonality of commonplace games is that they establish a vicarious familiarity with lived-experiences through gameplay. *Stasis* is a game developed by Swetha Kannan to represent the toll everyday street harassment can take on women. The game starts with a woman missing her bus home. As she begins walking she passes various men, some of whom begin to verbally harass her (Fig. 2). Their words appear in comic book-style speech balloons, with phrases like "Great legs, sweetheart!" and "Don't be rude, it was a compliment!" But while these messages might appear in a comic as static phrases, in *Stasis* they are given weight and lasting influence by actually preventing the player character from advancing. Gameplay involves 'deflecting' the comments by dragging them out of the character's way. Fail to do so and the balloons slow and eventually stop her progress. Kannan has stated that, "I wanted players to feel the growing sense of tedium, annoyance, and discomfort that women feel when facing street harassment" (qtd. in Joho). The repetitive and iterative nature of play within a predefined set of rules lends itself to communicating those aspects of street harassment that are otherwise imperceptible in other media—namely, the growing sense of frustration in which the weight of disrespectful, insulting, and aggressive comments influence the sense of space and time, which is to say one's sense of place.

Fig. 6. *Stasis*. Here we see speech balloons containing various phrases that men have uttered to the player-character. During gameplay the balloons prevent the player-character from advancing.

Procedurally Generated Accounts

What I want to turn to now is an examination of how these characteristics combine such that commonplace games can be thought to procedurally generate "accounts [that] record the rules and the moves" (23) of various sensory, social, and/or cultural situations. Since these games represent the commonplaces I want to think of these accounts as 'true poetic allegories' or 'true stories.' Following Vico, sensory experience leads us to invent or create stories that make sense of our experience. Since our bodies and senses differ from one another, we necessarily tell different but nevertheless true stories. These stories are true not in a universal, unconditional sense, but in the localized and situated sense of feminist objectivity. It follows that in playing these games players become situated in various common places and their actions lead them to produce accounts of those places. In this way commonplace games teach players how to situate knowledges in various places.

In making this argument I am conceiving of games, and especially videogames, as a means of representing sensory *topoi*. That is to say, games create a sense of place in which one finds common relationships or enthymemes that are inherent to that place. But whereas written and graphic representations tend to *imply* enthymematic relationships, games ask players to *perform* or *enact* such relationships. Ian Bogost emphasizes this distinction in his concept of the *procedural enthymeme*: "Good games often use what I've called procedural enthymeme: the player literally fills in the missing portion of an argument by interacting with the game, through actions constrained by its rules" ("The Metaphysics Videogame - Part 1: Why a Videogame?"). For instance, in *Super Mario World* players encounter gaps that cannot be crossed using the normal jump function. But since *Super Mario World* is a linear, side-scrolling game where moving from left to right is the only means of progression, it's implied that there is indeed a way to cross (See Fig 3). The gap, in other words, is a kind of argument that the player completes by using the available means of interaction to fill in the implied action. In this case, players interact with the game world until they discover the run-and-jump tactic.
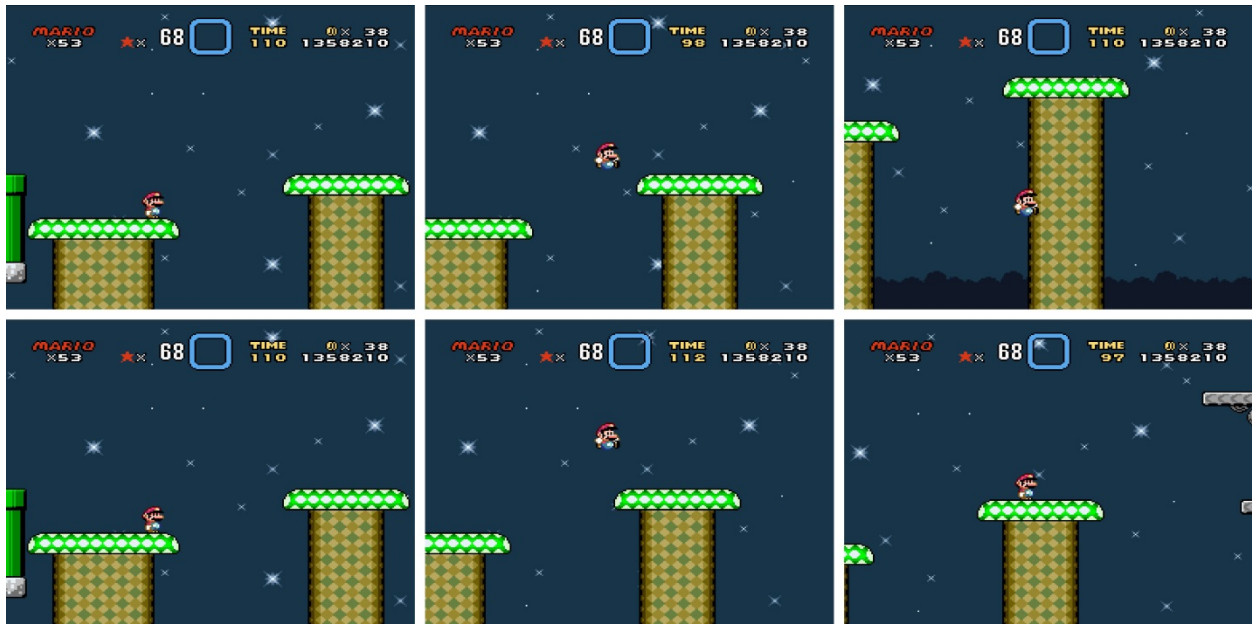
Fig. 7. In the first set of screenshots the player tries to jump without holding down the run button. In the second set the player has discovered that the context calls for the run button to be pressed in order to make the jump. As readers we fill in the gaps between these images as we would fill in the space between comic book panels. As a player, however, the gap—in this case literally a gap between platforms—is filled in through an action that is also the discovery of a specific tactic. (*Super Mario World*)

What this example illustrates is that games create interactive *topoi*, commonplaces in which players discover various enthymematic relationships through actions. A commonplace, as noted in the first chapter, is a collection of enthymemes or common relationships. By studying the commonplaces rhetors held that one could discover various techniques for making arguments based on those common relationships. Similarly, a game, as Bogost argues, is a series of "nested enthymemes" (*Persuasive Games* 43). This can be seen in the way that games are often composed of various levels, configurations, or scenarios in which players discover tactics based on the relationships inherent to those situations. In the case of *Super Mario World*, the rules

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governing Mario's movement, run speed, and momentum create a common set of relationships between avatar and world. The various levels then constitute numerous situations that draw on those common relationships in such a way that they foster the discovery of tactics or the poetic genera inherent to the game world. However, it can be added here that each act of discovery is an account of the game, a story that once read makes sense of the game world. For instance, the player's attempts to cross the gap, and his/her eventual realization of the means of doing so, tells the story in which the run-and-jump tactic was first discovered or invented. In reciting this story as they play, players bring forth knowledge of the game world such that they no longer perceive untraversable gaps/incomplete arguments but instead they are persuaded to see a common set of procedures and actions that make the game world navigable and the argument complete. In fact, this story gets repeated throughout the game as the design of the levels prompt the player to recite the story at various points and in various ways, much like variations of allegories and fables tell the same story in different ways. In this manner it could be said that the player is "playing the Text…looking for a practice which re-produces it…" (Barthes 162). The practice of running and jumping reproduces a larger portion of the game's narrative, its *vera narration* or 'true story.'

In commonplace games, however, the practice that re-produces the narrative takes on new meaning. Consider *The Oldest Game*, for instance, in which players engage in the various everyday activities of a sex worker, such as finding clients, evaluating risks, and managing one's finances. While these same everyday practices are conveyed through the personal narratives of sex workers, *The Oldest Game* creates a place or situation in which players can invent or discover such tactics for themselves. For instance, it is one thing to hear from a sex worker who's had to balance the potential risks some clients present against the potential fiduciary

compensation of engaging with such clients, but it is another to encounter such a scenario within a larger context in which the immediate value that money would provide is appreciable. *The Oldest Game* provides that larger, practical context, such that in playing a player can account for his or her actions. That account, whether it is vocalized or not, is a kind of poetic allegory, a way of making sense of one's practical situation or place.

That said, I am not suggesting that commonplace games are providing players with the actual experience being depicted; rather, the game is teaching its players the tactics needed to make sense of that experience. For instance, players of *The Oldest Game* can better understand or make sense of the rationale behind taking on potentially dangerous clients without undergoing the experience themselves. Another example here is the difference between the game *Stasis* and the personal narrative that inspired its creation. *Stasis* creator Swetha Kannan related one such account of harassment to a journalist, Jess Joho, who provides the following summary:

> The real-life event that inspired *Stasis* was a particularly frightening experience Swetha had as she waited for the bus in a crowd of people. A man stood uncomfortably close to her while repeatedly asking obscene questions about her sexual history. But since that's not uncommon, what actually stood out to Swetha was how "he kept saying things like 'don't be scared, and 'I'm not gonna do anything,' and laughing about it.

The article goes on to relate that Kannan eventually paid the man to stop harassing and humiliating her in public, a decision situated in the knowledge that if she took a more assertive approach the man may have become more aggressive and potentially violent. This narrative account captures a commonplace occurrence, but when presented as an isolated incident it risks being misconstrued as though it were not part of a larger cultural pattern. For instance, the journalist goes on to write that,

Swetha's experience…reveals a prevalent misconception about street harassment: more

times than not, it actually has little to do with sex or desire. It's about male power. Street

harassment is about men taking pleasure in exercising their privilege over women, and

their assumed rights over their bodies. It's about men inflicting patriarchal authority over

us, because they can, and because they like to remind us that they can. (Soho)

By presenting street harassment as something iterative rather than isolated, *Stasis* makes its point

within the context of a larger pattern, the systemic sense of patriarchal authority men exercise

over women in public. Indeed, Nivetha Kannan, Swetha's sister who consulted on the game's

concept, remarked that "when we were developing the system, we wanted to really focus on that

repetition. When the speech bubbles block your path once or twice, it's mildly annoying. The

third and fourth time, it's aggravating. But by the end, when the woman cannot walk very fast or

far at all, it's absolutely enraging" (qtd. in Joho). Street harassment might seem like an unnerving

experience when presented as a single incident, but situated within a larger cultural context,

players learn to make sense of the broader patterns at play.

　These larger patterns at work in individual, practical situations can also be seen in

everyday labour. In *Papers, Please* players take on the role of a border guard who must enforce

the harsh immigration laws of a fictitious communist regime. The player character earns money

for the number of persons processed in a day, payment that's needed to provide food and shelter

for his family. But the work is monotonous as it involves examining minute details of various

documents, as well as scrutinizing the appearance, gender, and behaviour of applicants.

Eventually, players realize that if they are to succeed they will need to invent or discover various

tactics to facilitate processing applicants. These tactics are not readily apparent until after play

has begun; rather the situation gives rise to them, creating a context in which they make sense as

reasonable courses of action. For myself, I developed various ways of organizing the documents to expedite the process, I learned to quickly skim for keywords and phrases in their rationales for traveling/immigrating, and I omitted details from my consideration that didn't pertain to the immigration criteria. In short, I learned to dehumanize people, not because of a strategy I brought into the game but because the rules of *Papers, Please* (i.e. immigration laws, in conjunction with the practical consideration for my character and his family) created a situation in which I rationalized or made sense of this course of action. While we may decry such tactics for being unethical or immoral, I would suggest that in order to properly critique them, and their origins, we must first locate them in those rules, laws, and systems that bring them forth.

Fig. 8. *Papers, Please.* On the top we see the immigration queue. Bottom left is the current applicant and on the bottom right are the various documents the player must review.

What I want to look to now are the ways in which commonplace videogames can be thought to share tactics or poetic genera through rhetorics. Commonplace videogames, it will be

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shown, participate in that aspect of embodied invention where we discover rhetorics and deploy them to facilitate empathy in the form of inter-cultural imagination.

Games and Rhetoric

In *Rules of Play* Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman provide a comprehensive analysis of games, including various approaches to game design. One of these approaches is to treat games as cultural rhetoric: "Games…help to instill or fortify a culture's value system. Seeing games as social contexts for cultural learning acknowledges how games replicate, reproduce, and sometimes transform cultural beliefs and principles. This way of looking at games as ideological systems forms the basis of…Games as Cultural Rhetoric" (516). In making this claim the authors take as their inspiration the work of Brian Sutton-Smith who proposed various rhetorics of play. Sutton-Smith was interested in how play is depicted in culture and he identified seven prominent rhetorics: play as progress, fate, power, identity, the imaginary, the self, and frivolity. He remarks that: "The larger play rhetorics are part of the multiple broad symbolic systems— political, religious, social, and educational—through which we construct the meaning of the cultures in which we live" (*The Ambiguity of Play* 9).

In contrast to Sutton-Smith there is the concept of procedural rhetoric put forward by Ian Bogost, which he bases on the aforementioned concept of procedural enthymemes. As Bogost notes, whereas Sutton-Smith is "focused on the cultural role of play" Bogost seeks to explore "the culturally embodied practice of playing specific games" (*Persuasive Games* 52). In highlighting the distinction between the two approaches Bogost looks to Salen and Zimmerman and their discussion of games as cultural rhetoric. Therein the authors describe two games—*The Landlord's Game* and *Monopoly*. Both are board games, but whereas the former sets out to

depict the exploitative relationship between private landowners and renters, the latter celebrates the accumulation of wealth and the exploitation of tenants. For Salen and Zimmerman these games exemplify the distinction Sutton-Smith makes between the play rhetorics of (social) progress and (private) power. But for Bogost the differences in rhetorics "refer not to Sutton-Smith's cultural rhetorics, but to the procedural rhetorics of the two specific games…" (53). He goes on to write that "the more useful intersection between rhetoric and play is one that unpacks the particular rules of a particular game in a particular context, not the more general intersection between modes of play in general" (54).

In talking about commonplace games and rhetoric I want to explore the relationship between these two approaches. And so I draw from Bogost's theory of procedural rhetoric, especially insofar as it posits games as a series of procedural enthymemes, but I also want to explore the ways in which games embody and contest cultural rhetorics and therefore foster inter-cultural communication. Commonplace games serve as an interesting case study here as they frequently interrogate the incongruity between personal rhetorics and dominant cultural norms. For instance, the procedural rhetoric of a game like *Stasis* is perhaps best understood in relation to the rhetoric of play as power. For while the procedures of the game persuade players of the exhausting and demeaning effects of street harassment, it is important to situate this within patriarchal culture that normalizes and legitimizes the actions of men who are themselves playing a game. Take, for example, the specific account of harassment that prompted the game's creation in which we are told that the man "kept saying things like 'don't be scared, and 'I'm not gonna do anything,' and laughing about it" (Kannan qtd. in Soho)—he was, in a manner of speaking, 'just playing.' Sutton-Smith defines the rhetoric of play as power as "the use of play as the representation of conflict and as a way to fortify the status of those who control the play or

are its heroes. The rhetoric is as ancient as warfare and patriarchy" (10). Understanding the

relationship between personal and cultural rhetorics helps us come to terms with the ways in

which culture invites certain players to enact particular kinds of play.

As another example, one could also look at the rhetoric surrounding disability and the

procedural rhetoric of commonplace games such as *Beyond Eyes* and *Auti-Sim*. In *Disability*

Rhetoric Jay Dolmage outlines a number of disability myths in popular culture, such as disability

as object of pity and/or charity. A game such as *Beyond Eyes*, where players take on the role of a

recently blinded child as she sets out in search of her missing cat, risks playing into this rhetoric

surrounding disability. This is because in an ableist culture people are encouraged to interpret

such experiences of persons with disabilities as a diminutive variation of a more originary, able-

bodied mode of experience. For instance, reviewers have remarked how the player character in

Beyond Eyes moves too slowly and that the game elicits frustration when objects reveal

themselves to be something other than what they first appeared to be (Justin McElroy & Griffin

McElroy). In other words, their expectations, which have been shaped by games featuring fast-

moving adult able-bodies and visually complex objects, precondition how they interpret the

experience being represented, inhibiting a deeper recognition of the actual lived experience of

being blind. Such games could be said to use the rhetoric of play as ableism where play is used to

fortify the status of the able-bodied subject.[34]

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[34] Much more could be said about this topic. Indeed, scholars working in both disability studies and game studies have produced numerous works that delve into these topics more fully. See for instance, Carr 2014; Powers, Nguyen, & Frieden 2015; Gibbons 2015. It is also worth pointing out that commercial producers of videogames have, historically, considered the able-bodied subject as their primary and perhaps only player. The design of videogame controllers, the use of fixed colour schemes, the recurrent disclaimer regarding epileptic seizures, and diminutive font sizes are just some of the ways in which console producers and game developers make videogames inaccessible. That said, some companies have made progress in this area, such as allowing controller buttons to be remapped across games and interfaces that can be re-coloured.

Ultimately, the problem with eliding cultural rhetorics in favour of "the culturally embodied practice of playing specific games" (52) is that it inhibits the intercultural and intercorporeal affordances of play. But, conversely, focusing exclusively on cultural rhetorics to the exclusion of personal, bodily and sensory rhetorics risks overlooking the agency individuals have in constructing their own representations of the world. For instance, while Salen and Zimmerman observe that "the formal and experiential structures of games echo and reinforce external cultural rhetorics" (517), it important to note that the inverse is also true; games can also introduce various rhetorics into and across cultures. *Mainichi* and *Dys4ia*, for instance, convey rhetorics keyed to the experiences of their authors. The former seeks to convey how one sign or thought brings forth another in the experience of Mattie Brice, the designer, but the game also seeks to share the relationships common to the experience of transgender women in general. Similarly, *Dys4ia* reflects Anna Anthropy's personal experience of gender dysphoria. She describes it as "an autobiographical game about the period in my life when i [sic] started hormone replacement therapy" (Anthropy). But it also puts forward relationships that others undergoing such therapy might identify with, and in this way the procedural enthymemes of the game parallel a rhetoric that is common to those who have undergone such an experience. For those who are not themselves personally familiar with such experiences gameplay becomes a means of echoing and reinforcing personal, intercultural rhetorics.[35]

Play and Place

Rhetorics, as already noted, are inherent to particular places; they assist in making or bringing forth (*poiesis*) knowledge of a particular situation. But play, it should be noted, has a

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[35] Samantha Allen has detailed how these games can be used from a teaching perspective in "Video Games as Feminist Pedagogy."

unique relationship to both *poiesis* and place. This could be meant simply as "[t]he design of a game…is a representation of ideas and values of a particular time and place" (Salen & Zimmerman 517) but I want to suggest that games, and especially commonplace videogames, convey something more deeply phenomenological and ontological. To begin, play theorist Johan Huizinga has argued that *poiesis* is equivalent to play (*Homo Ludens* 119) and play always occurs in a particular place (10). If we accept that *poiesis*—as a bringing forth—is similar to rhetoric—as the way that one thought or sign brings forth another—then Huizinga's description of play offers a topical and rhetorical approach to theorizing gameplay. This takes on new meaning when it comes to videogames as technologies of play. Martin Heidegger, for example, has discussed technology itself as a form of *poiesis*—it is the art of bringing forth into presence (10). Concurrently, Heidegger conceives of being as a means of bringing forth a place in the world.[36] If *poiesis* is at the same time rhetorical and ludic, then technologies of play—i.e. videogames—are a means of bringing forth a persuasive sense of place. Taken together, Huizinga and Heidegger provide grounds for thinking of videogames as *topoietic* technologies. The word *poiesis*, as already noted, refers to the act of making, creating, or bringing-forth. The word *topos* means 'place.' To think of videogames as *topoietic* is to suggest that they bring forth a sense of place. Embodied invention takes place through a particular kind of *topoiesis,* where that which is brought forth is a sense of place that is common or familiar to a particular person, community, or culture. In order to unpack this claim, it is worth delving into the relationships between poiesis, place, and technologies of play.

As Huizinga writes, "Poiesis…is a play-function. It proceeds within the play-ground of the mind, in a world of its own which the mind creates for it" (119). Understanding why Huzinga's applies *poiesis* to play, however, involves understanding the relationship between play

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[36] See Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*.

and imagination. In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture,* Huizinga remarks that "The most we can say of the function that is operative in the process of image-making or imagination is that it is a poetic function; and we define it best of all by calling it a function of play—the ludic function, in fact" (25). In speaking of imagination as poetic Huizinga is referring specifically to *poiesis* as an act of making—hence imagination as image-*making*. He goes on to write that, "Nobody has grasped, or expressed, the primordial nature of poetry and its relation to pure play more clearly than Vico, more than two hundred years ago" (119). As we saw last chapter, imagination plays a crucial role in Vico's theory of invention, but so does the concept of poiesis in that it introduces a praxical component to imaginative discovery. As one scholar puts it, "Vico's *poiesis* was…a way of seeing" (Gavin 32), a kind of imaginative, inventive vision. Poiesis as a kind of making should be understood alongside Vico's belief that 'the true and the made are interchangeable' (*verum et factum convertuntur*). As another scholar observes, "Vico's notion here is quite simple: humans can only know what humans make. We make our own truth…" (Price 66). This applies to the senses in that knowing is a means of sense making; Vico's imaginative and sensory invention refers to this process by which we discover knowledge through making sense. In this context, videogames appear to have considerable heuristic potential in that they use various modalities (e.g. visual, audile, haptic, and proprioceptive) in conjunction with a set of rules to establish common relationships (i.e. enthymemes) between the senses. In this way videogames represent various sensory places, groups of sensory enthymemes collected under a common heading. Given that the rules by which enthymemes are create are bodily and sensory as well as social and cultural, such places can be thought of as embodied. Hence the notion of embodied invention.

The relationship between play and place, it is worth noting, has long captivated play theorists. A common concept in play theory is the notion of the *magic circle*: that circumscribed play space in which players are asked to adopt a novel set of rules and practices while at the same time suspending some of the rules and practices of their own ordinary or commonplace lives. Thus, Huizinga describes place as one of the 'main characteristics of play' (7) for play is something that is "'played out' within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning" (9). He goes on to write that,

> All play moves and has its being within a playground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course. Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the 'consecrated spot' cannot be formally distinguished from the play-ground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. (10)

Gameplay, in other words, is fundamentally topical in nature in that play is always grounded in a place or *topos*. In fact, it could be said that our bodies, situated as they are phenomenologically, socially, and culturally, set before us a ground in which we play out our lives. From this process we derive a sense of being in the world.

However, I'd like to introduce a distinction here between being (i.e. existing as a being) and 'being-in-place' (i.e. being in a particular location in the world). In separating these two concepts I'm drawing on Heidegger's understanding of *poiesis*. In defining *poiesis* Heidegger looks to Plato who refers to it as a bringing-forth of "what passes over and goes forward into

presencing from that which is not presencing" (*Symposium*; Heidegger's translation 10). For Heidegger, being and *poiesis* share this bringing-forth into presence in that being is a realization of one's place in the world. As Jeff Malpas writes in "Heidegger's Topology of Being," Heidegger's conception of being can be understood as the "'place-ing of being'" (131). Malpas describes this as a kind of "topoi-esis—a gathering/opening of/into place" (131). He goes on to note that,

> although the place at issue here is not the idea of some abstract generality—we are always brought to place here/there, in this very spot—still there is no one place that can be given primacy here, no one place that is privileged in respect of being, no one place that alone allows us properly to dwell. The happening of place, as a gathering of world, and so as an opening and presencecing, does not distinguish between the Black Forest or a Greek island, between Times Square or the Australian outback. There may well be differences in the exact manner of the gathering and happening of place in these cases, but in each there is a placing, a gathering, an *Ereignis*. Aside from attentiveness to the different character of each such placing, the difficulty is to keep sight of the way in which the happening of being is always such a coming to place, and so is always concretely placed in this way and yet not exclusive to any one such place. Yet inevitably, of course, one will find oneself calling upon one's own place, one's vocabulary of place, in the attempt to talk about the happening, the place-ing, that is at issue here, and Heidegger is certainly no exception here. (131-2)

What is of interest here is how we communicate those "differences in the exact manner of the gathering and happening of place" (131) but not merely between social, cultural, and/or geographical places—as Malpas suggests—but between bodies and senses as well. For instance,

it is worth noting that Malpas speaks of differences that arise from the same subject being located or situated in different spaces (Greek island, Times Square, etc.). But what of those differences that arise between different subjects that are located in the same space but nevertheless experience a distinct sense of place? Consider, for instance, Sinclair's assertion that "Autism is a way of being. It is *pervasive*; it colours every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter, every aspect of existence" (Sinclair, emphasis in original). Sinclair's remarks suggest that when an autist calls upon his or her own sense of place that this situation is distinct from that of the neurotypical—both phenomenologically ("it colours…every sensation, perception…") and ontologically ("it colours…every aspect of existence"). The result is that even when two subjects are thought to occupy the same space they may in fact be situated in distinct places. Rhetorics, I submit, are our means of communicating between places. When Heilker and Yergeau speak of an autistic rhetoric they are acknowledging a "vocabulary of place"—that is to say, that our language is shaped by our situation in the world.

Take, for instance, *Auti-Sim,* a commonplace videogame where players explore a playground from the perspective of an autistic child with auditory hypersensitivity. According to the game's description, "Proximity to loud children causes sensory overload for the player, impacting cognitive functions. This impact is represented as visual noise and blur, as well as audio distortion. Participants described the experience as visceral, insightful and compelling" ("Aut-Sim"). The game begins on the outskirts of a playground where a group of children are playing in and amongst typical schoolyard equipment. At the outset their cheerful voices can faintly be heard in the background. As the player moves closer, the sound increases dramatically. Standing in the center of the crowd means the user is being bombarded with excited screaming

and the screen quickly fills with static, reflecting the overwhelming and multi-sensory nature of auditory hypersensitivity (See Fig 5).

Fig. 9. *Auti-Sim*. The static on the screen is meant to reflect the impact of loud noises as we see abstract models of children obscured by white dots.

Where *Auti-Sim* appears most rhetorical and *topoietic* is in its capacity to evoke a sense of place through play. This begins when the game positions the player within a culturally common space for play—a children's playground—but with the simulated relationship between sound, sights, and space that accompanies hypersensitivity. In moving the player-character throughout the game space the player embarks on a process of discovering potentially novel enthymemes—that is relationships between signs such that they come to bring forth or supply one another. This occurs through the game's use of different modal rhetorics to forge a relationship between sounds (as emitted by the exuberant children) and discomfort (as exhibited by the painful loudness of the sounds and the visual distortion of the screen). The result is that in

playing *Auti-Sim* players learn to supplement, incidentally, what they perceive with sensations, thoughts, feelings, and ideas that correspond with a particular situation in the (game) world. The game, in other words, teaches players to bring forth a sense of place shaped by auditory hypersensitivity.

How effective *Auti-Sim* is in this task is reflected in the comments that players have posted on the game:

I have Aspergers and this is exactly what it's like for me visiting a supermarket on a bad day.

The use of the narrow depth of field and general busyness of the audio are a wonderful way of suggesting the overloaded feeling to someone more neurotypical. (steve_parkes)

As a 30 year old with Asperger's Syndrome and sensory hypersensitivtiy, I would like to congratulate and thank you for this. It perfectly encapsulates what it is like.

I would also say that while I know you included the visual distortion as a reflection of the cognitive breakdown that can occur due to overstimulation, it is in itself a pretty accurate rendition of visual hypersensitivity - everything gets incredibly distorted, fuzzy and "static-y" the more I am exposed to certain disruptive colours, lights, brightness levels, etc.

Thank you so much for this, I very often get asked what it is like by people who find it an incredibly difficulty experience to understand. (darkmorgado)

This is Great!! A whole lifetime of being unable to explain what it is like. This is a decent "simulation" for me, and for my wife for us to send to family and friends.

I think some people might get too caught up in the exactness of the simulation, but I think

it is hard to simulate something like this realistically. For us, this game isn't about what

the world looks like to us, but rather what it feels like.

Overall, nicely done, love the idea, and I can see it being very useful in the future!!

(Hamsterism)

These positive comments from those self-identifying as autistic reflect two important aspects of

Auti-Sim, and commonplace games in general. First, they uphold the mimetic outcome of

commonplace games, where mimesis refers to the "imitation of the sensory experience of life on

earth" (Auerbach 191). As one commenter noted above, the game succeeds in that it "isn't what

the world looks like to us, but rather what it *feels* like" (Hamsterism, emphasis added). The

phrasing here brings to mind Verene's characterization of the sensory commonplaces as "felt

unities, felt places, or *loci*" (171). But whereas Vico and Verene emphasize that "Our ability to

feel in common through our senses brings into being commonplaces of the human world"

(Verene 171), the commenter's remarks on *Auti-Sim* reflect a sense of place— a 'felt unity'—

that is irreducible to our capacity to feel in common. Thus, our ability to feel uncommon—our

dissensus—brings into being commonplaces that are, at the same time, uncommon places. That

this distinct sense of place can be conveyed through a distinct form of play speaks to the capacity

for play to bring forth a place or situation.

The second point worth noting in these comments is the repeated emphasis on *Auti-Sim*

as a means of communicating hypersensitivity to neurotypicals. It's described as being a "useful"

(steve_parkes) tool for people to "send to friends and family" (Hamsterism), one that could aid

"people who find [autism] an incredibly difficulty experience to understand" (darkmorgado).

These remarks speak to the capacity for the game to foster embodied invention—the means of

discovering knowledges located in various sensory places. Such knowledges are situated through rhetorics and in this respect *Auti-Sim* can be seen to capture some aspects of what Yergeau and Heilker have defined as autistic rhetoric. For instance, Heilker writes that understanding autism as rhetoric enabled him to better understand his son's commonplaces and how they relate to his sense of self (488). Compare that with the following comment on *Auti-Sim*: "Definately [sic] gives me a better idea of why my son does some of what he does now..[sic] Need more like this to show from a [sic] autistic view" (kittykatandretti). In both instances there is an understanding of the relationship between a self and a sense of place in the world that brings about a heightened understanding and empathy.

At the same time not every player had such a positive experience with the game. One wrote that, "I am Autistic and I think this is a terrible stereotyping. Since when did we have voices knocking in our heads like that? It has nothing to do with loud noises but with picking up very quiet noises very well and not sifting them in to the background." (andrewkilroy5). Another commenter posted: "Terrible, as someone with moderate autism, this is bogus. No ones [sic] vision goes all static like this, and what is the point of all the children screaming. This is more likely simulator for brain tumor rather than autism." (DKMan). Such comments from those identifying as autistic contradict some of the testimonies given above and together they reflect that autism is a spectrum in which a range of autists locate themselves; no one representation is going to capture the breadth of that spectrum. In this respect calling the game *Auti-Sim* (a portmanteau of autism and simulation) deservedly engenders criticism. And then there are comments from presumably neurotypical players that have played the game. These players report their experiences as being 'scary' and 'horrifying.' One player wrote, "the most creepy thing on gamejolt [where the game is hosted], also sooo sad. Nice" (Retsamuga). These comments from

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presumably neurotypical players reflect the challenges and politics of simulating one aspect of a commonplace—namely autism as hypersensitivity that can lead to "sensory overload"—while leaving out others. Unlike masculine, able-bodied, neurotypical experiences, which are fairly widely represented, the varied experiences of autists are at best uncommon and at worst misrepresented. Thus, neurotypical players often lack the knowledge needed to properly contextualize such a simulation of autistic hypersensitivity such that a game like *Auti-Sim* risks portraying autism as a 'scary' variation of a more familiar neurotypical experience.

A game like *Auti-Sim* also brings to mind Siebers' remarks on disability simulators mentioned earlier. Here Siebers is not speaking of videogames but the kinds of simulations in occupational and rehabilitative therapy courses where students use a wheelchair for a day or walk around blindfolded. That said, the lessons hold true for games like *Auti-Sim*. As Siebers writes

> Disability simulations of this kind fail because they place students in a time-one position of disability, before knowledge about disability is acquired, usually resulting in emotions of loss, shock, and pity at how dreadful it is to be disabled. Students experience their body relative to their usual embodiment, and they become so preoccupied with sensations of bodily inadequacy that they cannot perceive the extent to which their "disability" results from social rather than physical causes. Notice that such games focus almost entirely on the phenomenology of the individual body. The pretender asks how his or her body would be changed, how his or her personhood would be changed, by disability. It is an act of individual imagination, then, not an act of cultural imagination. ("Disability and the Theory of Complex Embodiment" 292)

Such simulators are based on the notion of a transcendental *sensus* such that we can simply imagine the experiences of others directly through our own bodies and senses. While videogames are frequently designed under the same misconception, they also have the capacity to represent a particular sense of place and convey a particular rhetoric inherent to that place, and as such they have the potential to convey the "usual embodiment" of various persons, communities, and cultures in a way that unmediated experience cannot. Videogames, in other words, have the potential to teach us how to imagine the actual, practical lived situations that persons, including those with disabilities, experience. What they need, though, is the recognition that there are already norms and cultural conventions at play in videogames and in culture more broadly. What aspects of our sensory commonplaces games choose to depict need to be able to account for those norms and biases.

Ultimately, what many commonplace games seek to achieve is convey various ways of making sense across bodies and cultures. *Depression Quest*, *Auti-Sim*, and *Mainichi* all overtly state their ambitions to make players more familiar with and empathetic towards particular ways of being in and seeing the world. One gets the sense that the ideal outcome is for players to engage with these games in such a way that they can then articulate a true or accurate account of the experience represented. The idea is not to have players undergo such experiences directly, but to provide them with the necessary means to make sense of such experiences when they see or hear about them. That said, while the aforementioned commonplace videogames may exemplify embodied invention, I want to demonstrate how the concepts here can contribute to a design philosophy. And so in the final chapter I look at *Allergies & Allegories*, a commonplace videogame designed to foster embodied invention.

Chapter 4: *Allergies & Allegories*

In this final chapter I want to demonstrate how embodied invention can inform the creation of knowledge translation tools. Embodied invention seeks to foster the exchange of knowledges situated in bodies, communities, and cultures, and it conceive of media as tools capable of sharing the methods by which knowledges are situated. While I have looked at media that incidentally function in this way—such as comic books and videogames—I want to explore what a text founded explicitly on the ideals of embodied invention might look like. I designed such a text in the form of *Allergies & Allegories*, a commonplace videogame that seeks to raise awareness of life with a serious food allergy. In the game players work with Mia, a young girl with a peanut allergy, to navigate various social situations related to her allergy. Players meet Mia when she is on the verge of transferring to a new school where she will be the first student with a food allergy. Players help Mia build a sense of safety, community, and support at her new school so that she can make decisions with a sense of confidence and security. In what follows I situate *Allergies & Allegories* in relation to other types of knowledge translation games. I go on to describe how the game came together, its design and mechanics, what it is like to play, and my overall objectives in producing such a text.

Following the preceding chapter, I define *Allergies & Allegories* as a commonplace videogame in that it seeks to represent a sensory, social, and/or cultural situation or place such that in playing the game one generates an account of that place. However, *Allergies & Allegories* is related to several other emergent genres of videogames. For instance, the terms serious games or persuasive/purposeful games have emerged lately to describe those games that seek to engage

players on more serious topics such as environmental, social, political, and/or cultural issues.[37] The distinction here is that whereas most commercial games are driven to entertain players and build a strong consumer base in the process, serious games leverage the affordances of games to educate players and raise awareness of particular issues in the public's interest.[38] In this regard, serious games tend to confront players with particular social, cultural, or political exigencies that players come to understand more deeply through the intricacies of ludic engagement. *California Water Crisis*, for instance, is a board game that provides both a contemporary and historical representation of the current drought in the state of California. The game helps players appreciate that the drought, far from being a natural ecological phenomenon, is related to a host of interacting systems, such as land ownership, environmental laws, taxes, civic responsibility, and the distribution of resources for public, private, and agricultural use. But serious games is a broad heading under which many different types of games might fall, such as Games for Health. These games seek to mobilize health research through games and game-like interfaces. For example, there are games that remind individuals to take their medication on time (*Mango Health App*), or those that offer physical or cognitive therapy (*Circus Challenge*). Again, these games are distinct from those strictly focused on developing a commercially successful game.

  Allergies & Allegories is both a serious game and a game related to health. It is a serious game in the sense that it seeks to raise awareness of a particular issue, in this case life with a potentially fatal food allergy. And it is a health game in that food allergies are related to the health and well-being of numerous persons. But I want to distance *Allergies & Allegories* from

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[37] See, for instance, Bogost, *Persuasive Games*, Bogost, Ferrari, & Schweizer, *Newsgames*, and McGonigal *Reality is Broken*.

[38] Another genre that comes to mind here is edutainment, which seeks to both educate and entertain players. Edutainment has its proponents and its critics. Serious games can be seen to emerge from the latter group who might see edutainment as missing one of the key aspects of games as tools for knowledge mobilization—namely, the capacity for games to represent complex issues or systems rather than to serve merely as a reward mechanism in a rote learning exercise.

many of the existing games for health, which tend to reinforce the paternalistic doctor-patient dynamic that those in the medical humanities have criticized. In fact, when it comes to food allergies, children and adults alike tend to be very cognizant of the health implications of their allergies. And so even though *Allergies & Allegories* is a game related to health, it is not the medical discourse that needs to be mobilized here but rather the research that clearly indicates the adverse role non-food-allergic persons play in creating risk, anxiety, and stress for persons with food allergies. Such an objective became apparent through my partnership with GET-FACTS (Genetics, Environment and Therapies: Food Allergy Clinical Tolerance Studies), a Canadian Institutes of Health Research funded project that seeks to investigate food allergies in Canada. One of the main objectives of GET-FACTS is to translate scholarship—new and existing—on food allergies such that it becomes actionable information for various stakeholders, including the general public. *Allergies & Allegories* is a game that works in concert with the knowledge translation goals of GET-FACTS to engage with the Canadian public.

The game itself is based on interviews conducted with food-allergic children, as relayed in the paper "Illustrating Risk: Anaphylaxis Through the Eyes of the Food-Allergic Child" by Nancy Fenton et al.[39] The researchers were interested in the experiences of food-allergic children, especially in regards to their social and psychological well-being. During the study children drew illustrations of their experiences related to their allergies and these supplemented the interviews, selections of which were published in the paper. This makes "Illustrating Risk" particularly useful in light of the preceding conversations on the capacity for autographics—illustrations of one's own personal history conveyed through the medium of comics—to communicate aspects of lived experience. In fact, several of the illustrations in the study relied

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[39] Many of the authors of this paper are principal investigators on the GET-FACTS project, although the paper was published prior to the formation of GET-FACTS.

on comic book-like techniques to depict various moments in which food-allergies played a role

in creating stress and anxiety for food-allergic children, most of which took place at school.

These illustrations factored into the design of *Allergies & Allegories*, which takes place primarily

in the classroom or cafeteria of a Canadian elementary school. I also drew inspiration from Joe

Ollman's "Otherwise, Arachis Hypogaea," a fictional comic depicting the everyday experiences

of an Indian-Canadian teen with a peanut allergy (See Fig. 1). Ollmann's comic happens to

represent a number of the anecdotes reported by those children in the "Illustrating Risk" paper.

He also constructs a character that is neither defined by nor reducible to her food allergy; it is an

important part of her identity but this is due in part to those around her who do not understand

the logistics of having a food-allergy.

Fig. 10. A fellow student (left) taunts the main character (right) with an allergen in the form of a

peanut butter sandwich. This is a common experience for children with food allergies who are

often interrogated about their allergies by fellow classmates. (*Happy Stories About Well-Adjusted*

People 223).

What I want to turn to now is some specifics surrounding *Allergies & Allegories*, including its name, how it was created, and how it operates. The name *Allergies & Allegories* is, first and foremost, a play upon *Dungeons & Dragons*, a fantasy role-playing game that popularized the blending of dice and decision making to tell stories based on chances and likelihoods. But there is another meaning behind *Allergies & Allegories* and this has to do with the etymology of the word 'allegory.' As noted earlier, I want to think of media in their capacity to represent various commonplaces, for within them we discover various poetic genera or ways of making sense. Following the work of Giambattista Vico, the poetic genera give rise to 'true stories' or 'true poetic allegories.' These allegories express the relationship between an individual and his or her place in the world. They are stories that through our particular bodies and senses help us make sense of our embodied experience. In this regard the word allegory is particular fitting given its etymology. Allegory combines '*allos*' meaning 'other' with *agoreuein* meaning 'to speak publicly in the agora.' The agora refers to a marketplace, a meeting place, or simply a commonplace. When we speak of allegories they are other (*allos*) tales, stories, or accounts from the commonplaces (*agoreuein*). Thus, I use the word allegory here, and the notion of 'true stories' in general, to refer to the way that stories enter the commonplaces of public discourse. Allegories are the means by which that which is socially or culturally uncommon or unfamiliar becomes common or familiar. What Vico adds to this understanding of allegory is that stories are originally sensory and bodily. Thus, when scholars remark that "the word [allegory]…preserves and entertains references to the public arena of discourse making; to a communal, myth-making kind of epistemology" (Bello "Etymology and Allegory" 39), we can

recognize not discourse-making *per se* but *sense-making*; allegories are a way for people to share how they make sense of the world. Sensory media, especially the new media of comics, video, web pages, and videogames, all of which are rather easily created and disseminated through computers, present an immense potential for communicating ways of making sense that have historically been marginalized from public discourse and thus they present an opportunity to radically expedite the process of diversifying social knowledge and public opinion. In calling the game *Allergies & Allegories*, then, I mean to discuss the ways in which food allergies, and the poetic genera of food allergic persons, can be made a part of public discourse and common social knowledge. This isn't to suggest that players will recognize the rather archaic etymologies at work, but it does indicate an underlying design philosophy.

Such a design philosophy can be seen operating in other aspects of the game as well, such as its web-based format, its comic book aesthetic, and its straight-forward interface. The game was programmed using a combination of HTML, Javascript, and jQuery. HTML is the basic design or infrastructure language of the internet, while Javascript is the common programming language that controls how web pages function. The former is concerned with displaying information while the latter performs functions and actions. jQuery is a Javascript library—a collection of various process and procedures that enable websites to perform more advanced operations. *Allergies & Allegories* was designed using these languages to ensure compatibility across platforms (e.g. Windows, Mac, mobile, etc.) and over time (i.e. since they are the basic elements of the web, they will likely be more stable and less likely to become obsolete). The comic book aesthetic was adopted for numerous reasons, including my interest in the capacity for comics to communicate persuasively through numerous modalities. In terms of the actual art assets (the characters, icons, decorations etc.) I adopted a bricolage approach, blending

commercial clipart (the characters), with free iconography (icons, and decorations), as well as

my own designs (typically the buildings and furniture).[40] I also made numerous modifications,

primarily to the character designs to offset gender norms and to increase the ethnic diversity of

the cast of the game. The need for this came about because clipart tends to emphasize tropes and

stereotypes in an effort to maximize the relatively small workspace. Putting all of the schoolgirls

in skirts, for instance, allows for a quick way to differentiate between them and schoolboys.

However, this would have been counter-intuitive to the project and so a number of changes were

made (See Fi.g 2). I also embraced a rather simple interface of point-and-click interaction, pre-

set dialogue prompts, and dice rolls. I wanted the game to be accessible by a wide audience, as

well as support a touch-friendly interface.

Fig. 11. The title screen for *Allergies & Allegories* showing the cast of the game.

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[40] The variances in authorship mentioned here are clearly reflected in the credits of the game.

Rhetorically speaking, the game envisions a non-food-allergic audience. This follows from the fact that the exigence identified by the research is directly related to non-food-allergic persons and their understanding, or lack thereof, of food allergies. Food allergies are estimated to affect up to 6% of children (Branum AM, Lukacs SL.; Sampson HA.), and food allergies are the cause of an estimated 150-200 deaths per year in the United States (Sampson HA.; Bock SA et. al.) and 15-20 deaths per year in Canada (Hawaleshka D.). While risk mitigation is largely the responsibility of parents and food-allergic children, non-food-allergic persons, including teachers, classmates, parents, child caretakers, restaurant staff, and others, all influence the quality of life of persons with food allergies. I speak of quality of life because the potentially fatal consequences of food allergies necessitate a heightened sense of environmental awareness for persons with food allergies, and this sense of awareness is often accompanied by feelings of anxiety, stress, and sometimes fear. These negative feelings are exacerbated by those who are unfamiliar or indifferent towards food-allergies, such that children have reported feelings of exclusion and isolation due to their allergy, and even outright teasing and bullying (Fenton et. al.). The theory developed in this dissertation suggests that embodied invention may provide assistance in mitigating these negative social and cultural interactions. More specifically, by helping non-food-allergic children and adults become more familiar with the day-to-day experiences of life with a food allergy, including the various tactics and techniques developed by those with food allergies, individuals will be better able to recall the context in which their actions have meaning for various persons.

As for the game itself, *Allergies & Allegories* centres around Mia, a composite character of those children interviewed in the "Illustrating Risk" paper. Mia is a young child with a peanut allergy who has just transferred schools. Players work with Mia to help build friendships,

strengthen support networks, and establish safe and supportive spaces; in doing so players recreate those commonplaces that have a particular significance for food-allergic children (e.g. the school cafeteria, birthday parties, restaurants, etc.). By demonstrating how Mia needs to navigate these socio-cultural spaces by balancing her safety with her desire to be socially accepted, players learn to perceive how these familiar spaces constitute distinct places for food-allergic persons. Like other types of commonplace videogames, the goal of *Allergies & Allegories* is to raise awareness of the food allergic commonplace. While many children and adults recognize their role in helping to mitigate risk (e.g. checking food labels, knowing the signs of anaphylaxis, etc.), through *Allergies & Allegories* they learn that they can help mitigate feelings of stress, anxiety, fear, and exclusion. In other words, there is no need for risk mitigation to come at the expense of the larger well-being of a food-allergic person.

In order to accurately reflect the commonplaces of food-allergic children I drew not only from the testimonies that appear in "Illustrating Risk" but I also incorporated the analysis of the researchers as well. The authors themselves were interested in understanding how risk perception influences the personal and emotional well-being of food allergic children. What the authors refer to as risk perception can be thought of here as part of as the commonplace rhetoric that accompanies a food allergy. For instance, the authors note that "bringing [a practical] context" to the "institutional, personal, and emotional" domains "provided a means to interpret the array of information that influenced the construction of risk" (181). This construction of risk is essential in understanding how food-allergic persons construct their view of the world.

Here it is useful to think of the construction of risk in rhetorical terms, such that the food allergy influences that which is brought forth by perception into a distinct, and potentially risky, situation. This coincides with the characterization of rhetoric here as a sensory and semiotic

process for locating oneself in the world. Fenton et al. note a similar process in describing the construction of risk:

> Weick argues that individuals make sense of situations based on how they notice and select information from their environments. Moreover, individuals actively interact with their environment, which relocates risk to health within the self, creating the risky self. These results demonstrate the crucial nature of understanding the specific conditions that shape perceptions of risk, which are embedded within different social environments. (181)

Embedded and, one might add, embodied. In this way embodied invention is an ideal means of approaching the task of translating the "understanding [of] the specific conditions that shape perceptions" (181) between food-allergic and non-food-allergic persons. This is because embodied invention, as described thus far, is concerned with those conditions that shape perceptions, namely those set forth by the body, culture, and society. Furthermore, games are suited to this task as they allow us to explore various conditions as established by their rules. As with all forms of embodied invention, the goal here is not to convey the experience itself, but rather to facilitate an understanding of the strategies and techniques (i.e. the rhetoric) that emerge from various conditions, conditions that have shaped perceptions, as well as thoughts, ideas, feelings, etc.

The first step in designing a food-allergy game, then, is to simulate those conditions, so as to create a facsimile of a commonplace in which food-induced anaphylaxis is a possibility. In this endeavour testimonies, including personal anecdotes and illustrated events. prove instrumental. By talking directly to food-allergic children, the authors of "Illustrating Risk" were able to "illuminate the commonalities and diversities of childhood as one phenomenon and

anaphylaxis as another and how they relate and interact in different contexts and at different stages of life" (181). Just as childhood in the North American context plays a factor in one's commonplace, anaphylaxis constitutes another factor. Indeed, research indicates that income, age, sex, and cultural background also play a role in establishing risk (Minaker et. al.; Ben-Shoshan et. al.). In choosing Mia—a young, white girl—as the central character in which to represent the commonplaces of food-allergic children, *Allergies & Allegories* is at the same time striving to portray a specific and intersectional commonplace.

Another aspect drawn from the paper is the treatment of the emotional burden of responsibility: "The emotional burden of responsibility emerged when children and adolescents felt at risk when negotiating situations in their environments that had potential for exposure to allergenic substances, bringing to light the relational nature of emotion that moves in-between people and places rather than the objective view of emotion as statically residing within a person" (178). This interrelation between people and places is a key component of embodied invention, the outcome of which is to foster the exchange of practices and techniques that have emerged from various people navigating various places. Representing how these techniques develop is integral to perceiving how they bring forth a sense of place. In order for *Allergies & Allegories* to function in this way, it was necessary to first identify those techniques that emerged from food-allergic children situating themselves—emotionally, phenomenologically, socially, culturally, physically—within various spaces.

Consider, for instance, the testimony of one adolescent who stated that, due to the numerous occurrences of food fights in his cafeteria, he chose to sit and eat his lunch next to the door (176). Fenton et. al. refer to this as a "coping strategy" (176) in relation to the perception of a "risky place" (176). What is particularly noteworthy here is how the food-allergic adolescent's

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perception of the cafeteria has yielded a distinct sense of place, one in which those tables and seats farthest from the exit are also farthest from consideration when it comes to choosing where to position himself.

In *Allergies & Allegories* this example, and its related strategy, falls under the category of safety, one of three categories that I derived from the study. Each category—the other two being community and support—includes its own set of techniques and they are the cornerstones of gameplay in *Allergies & Allegories*. The game itself is broken into various commonplaces for a child—the school cafeteria, a birthday party, a camping trip, a pizzeria, and so on. In each commonplace Mia will be called on to make various decisions, each of which relates to one or more of the categories (described below). In order to perform a particular action—such as accepting an invitation to join a fellow student for lunch or to correct someone from ordering a group meal with an allergen in it—the player must roll a die or dice that corresponds to the category or categories involved. Accepting an invitation from a classmate relies on a sense of safety and community, for instance, and so the player would roll a die for each (See Fig. 3). Each decision also includes a minimum number required to make the decision. These minimums reflect the difficulty of the situation. For instance, there is a difference between being invited to join a trusted friend for lunch versus that of a complete stranger. To reflect these differences the former decision might have a very low minimum requirement, whereas the latter might have a very high requirement. Players can modify the difficulty of each situation by performing simple tasks that would be commonplace to food allergic children. For example, at any point players can open Mia's backpack and check to see if her epinephrine auto-injector is there. This rather simple tactic provides a safety bonus point, indicating Mia's increased sense of security, thereby allowing her to feel more confident in making decisions related to her safety.
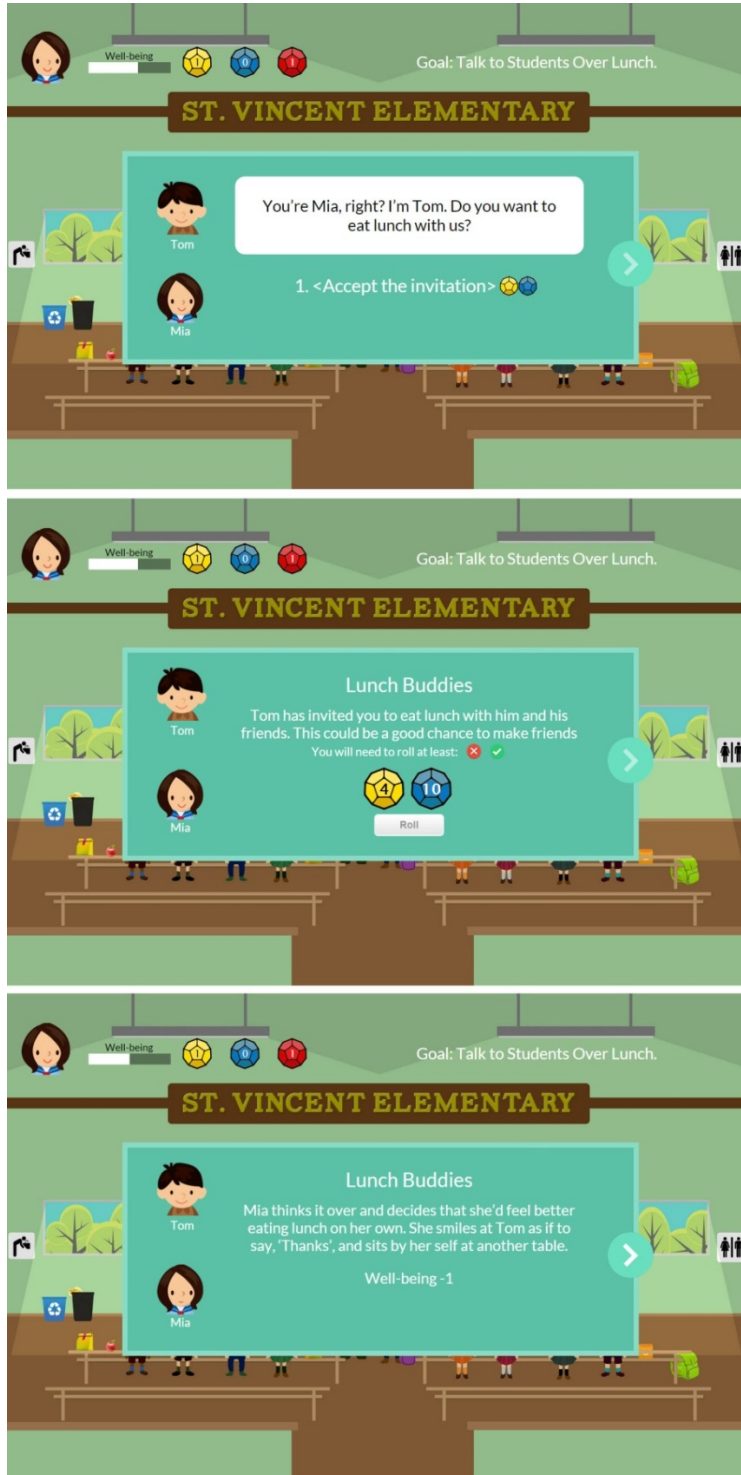
Fig. 12. Top: Mia is being asked a question by a fellow student. Middle: The roll was not successful for both dice. Bottom: The outcome is reflected as a sense of insecurity.

Throughout the course of the game Mia's status is reflected by her well-being. All of the decisions presented to her (and thus the player) have a potentially positive outcome. In deciding to accept an invitation to a birthday party or in confidently declining a snack Mia affirms her sense of self, improving her well-being, as represented by the meter in the corner of the screen. When she feels unsafe or a lack of support her confidence to make a decision that could make her happy also declines. In these instances her lack of confidence leads her to act out of insecurity and self-doubt, resulting in a decrease in her well-being. By using this concept of well-being the aim is to represent Mia more holistically. While risk mitigation is crucial, it should be taken into consideration alongside other social and psychological factors that affect the quality of life of an individual. Thus, by tying Mia's well-being to various decisions that are themselves based on her sense of safety, community, and support, *Allergies & Allegories* demonstrates the convergence of a number of factors that will be familiar to those with food allergies but perhaps unfamiliar to those without them.

Safety

Safety is related to the perception of risks in one's environment, including one's capacity to adapt to the environment. Fenton et al. noted that in regards to "unsafe situations" that "Adolescents expressed such feelings as fear, anxiety, and frustration, which were in contrast to younger children who described sadness, annoyance, and unhappiness" (180). In terms of strategies and techniques, one child described her experience thusly: "You are out on the safari by yourself. You go down to the cafeteria. You listen. That is the biggest thing. You look and listen" (180).[41] Those decisions in *Allergies & Allegories* based on a sense of safety help players

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[41] This description brings to mind the notion of think-eye (Brueggemann) that was associated with d/Deaf rhetoric last chapter in which the attention to visual detail on the part of the deaf subject realizes a sense of place that is

recognize the way that food allergic persons 'look and listen' differently. Testimonies such as "I am constantly on the look-out for something" (179) and "I am to the point now; this is a box of cookies. I won't put it in the cart, before I read through the whole thing, because it is just a train of thought" (180) attest to a kind of relationship between subject and environment that is perhaps uncommon for non-food-allergic persons. Whereas some might see a box of cookies and think of their taste or their effect on one's diet, the first thing brought forth into the mind of a person perceiving the risk of food-allergies is likely to be, 'what are the allergenic contents, if any?' Similarly, the aforementioned adolescent who perceived the topography of the cafeteria differently based on his allergy attests to a distinct physical sense of space. In-game decisions based on safety are intended to evoke these perceptual habits that realize a sense of place characterized by risk assessment.

Community

Community refers to participating in group activities, building friendships, and generally feeling welcome and accepted. In looking at the psychological and emotional well-being of food-allergic children, a lack of acceptance and understanding was often reported. As Fenton et al. observed, "All children (both age groups) identified various environmental and social barriers that left them feeling isolated, excluded, or teased. Social exclusion meant missing out on school activities, being deprived of time with friends, or being singled out" (177). This can be seen in various testimonies given by the children. One remarked that, "Like what I said about the parties, they won't invite me, or they won't hang around me, because they have something, but they are kind of like protecting me, because I won't go near it. I kind of got a bit more anxiety and stuff

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both an eye-space and an I-space. Through the comic, *El Deafo*, think-eye was seen as a rhetorical strategy that yields a distinct sense of place from that of a hearing person.

and I was more careful with everything that I did" (179). Of another participant, Fenton et al. noted that "kids were scared of her allergy and bugged her about it, which made her feel 'not so good'" (175).

In having players meet the main character of *Allergies & Allegories* as she attends a new school for the first time the game accentuates the emphasis on establishing friendships and a sense of community. While many children would find such a transition challenging, the lack of awareness surrounding food allergies exacerbates this. In making in-game decisions based on a sense of community players learn that what others know—and don't know—about food allergies can limit the choices of food allergic children in terms of developing friendships, participating in social events, and feeling accepted. In other words, these decisions make it clear that food allergies are not an individual but a communal issue.

Support

Support is characterized here as a network of understanding and mutual trust from students, teachers, friends, & family. While similar to a sense of community and safety, support is used here to refer to a sense of security that arises from knowing that an environment, including those people in it, is accommodating of food-allergic persons. Those persons who understand and are cognizant of food allergies, and their risks, can have a positive influence on the sense of well-being of food allergic children. For instance, one participant noted that, "There are some (teachers) that I trust, and some (teachers) that I don't trust. I don't trust my Math teacher. I don't trust my French teacher. I trust my English teacher, and I am pretty sure I trust my Geography teacher, because her daughter has the exact same allergy" (178). In contrast to the sense of support brought about through understanding, other children reported negative

consequences brought about by misunderstandings. One child noted that a lack of awareness of her allergy made her feel " like a baby because it is like people didn't believe that [I] could handle something, so they would always try and get between me and the nuts—even though they maybe didn't have to because it might be impossible for me to get hurt" (175).

Thus, support here isn't the dependence of food-allergic children on others but rather a mutual understanding of the risks associated with a food allergy. When players make a decision based on support they are learning to appreciate this relationship between their own understanding of food allergies and the impact of that knowledge on the well-being of a food allergic person.

Rolling the Dice

To provide an indication of what gameplay in *Allergies & Allegories* looks like consider the following example taken from the game (See Fig. 3 above). Here we can see various aspects of the interface, including Mia's well-being and the number of bonus points to be added to each die (where yellow represents safety, blue community, and red support). In this particular scenario Mia has just entered the cafeteria at her new school for the first time. Her teacher has introduced her as their first peanut-allergic student. He then asked Mia if she had her epinephrine auto-injector within reach. The player has sorted through her backpack and found the epinephrine auto-injector, providing a bonus point to her sense of safety and impressing her teacher in the process, increasing her sense of support, as reflected by the bonus point in the yellow and red icons.

In the dialogue box pictured one of Mia's new classmates has asked her to join him for lunch. The two icons next to the dialogue option are dice; the first indicates that the decision

involves Mia's sense of safety (yellow) and the second refers to her sense of community (blue). Upon selecting the dialogue option a second prompt will appear indicating the minimum values the player will need to roll in order to accept the invitation. Since this is an unfamiliar and somewhat stressful occurrence—the first day at a new school as the first student with a peanut allergy—the minimums are quite high. If the roll is successful, Mia will join Tom, and feel an increased sense of community (adding a blue bonus point) and increasing her overall well-being as she is being accepted. If the roll isn't successful, she will decline the invitation as she doesn't feel safe and confident enough to accept, leading her to eat her lunch on her own, a choice that negatively affects her well-being.

However, in neither case is the outcome reducible to Mia's food allergy. While her allergy to peanuts is often the occasion for each commonplace setting, the decisions she makes are meant to reflect how she feels—as a child, a girl, a soccer player, a fan of Harry Potter books, and also as someone allergic to peanuts. This differentiates *Allergies & Allegories* from more straightforward attempts at gamifying experiences and scenarios for educational purposes, as typified in the genre of edutainment videogames. In these games decisions are often presented to players in a true/false binary with the objective of having players learn through trial and error what the "correct" answer is in any given scenario. This can be seen in Anaphylaxis Canada's own interactive food allergy training website—*Allergy Aware*. Like *Allergies & Allegories*, this website involves clicking on various images and making decisions, however the outcome is to reveal through the choices made whether the player has correctly identified each potentially dangerous scenario.

In contrast, the discussion here on commonplaces suggests that knowledge situated in various experiences is best recalled and deployed by perceiving such knowledge as a set of

strategies that has emerged within specific contexts. Mia's emotional state on the first day of

school is not ancillary to her allergy to peanuts. To separate the latter from the former such that

the player encounters a binary decision—to perform the safest ('right') or least safe ('wrong')

action—risks separating the choices food allergic persons have to make on a daily basis from the

practical situations in which those decisions arise. When viewed in this way life with a food

allergy appears simple enough: be ever vigilant, always be rational, and make the 'obvious'

choice. By eschewing 'right' and 'wrong' answers and by basing each decision on various

probabilities (via the dice rolls) that players can influence but ultimately not control, *Allergies &*

Allegories is able to retain the complexity of practical, everyday experience, while at the same

time demonstrating how various strategies emerge from a food allergic situation in such

experiences.

Conclusion

There are two outstanding issues that I want to address in this conclusion. The first has to

do with the limitations of embodied invention. Throughout the preceding chapters I've discussed

the emancipatory possibilities of engaging in embodied invention, especially in regards to the

lives of those marginalized by what our culture holds to be 'common' or 'normal.' There is a risk

here of over-simplifying complex and ingrained issues regarding sexism, racism, ableism, and

heteronormativity, among other systemic biases. In the first part of this conclusion I

contextualize embodied invention in light of these realities by describing invention as one of

many components by which social and cultural change is enacted. The second issue I wish to

address here has to do with the practical applications of embodied invention, by which I mean,

the impact this theory might have on design and pedagogy. After all, I've described embodied

invention as a design philosophy, a claim I'd like to unpack further by demonstrating how the

theory might influence graphic and ludic designs. Meanwhile, the pedagogical applications of

embodied invention have been largely implied but infrequently discussed in this dissertation.

And so I will end by addressing how embodied invention figures into the modern classroom.

Limitations of Embodied Invention

In *Art as Experience* John Dewey outlines, among other things, the emancipatory

potential of art. For Dewey, "The moral function of art is to remove prejudice, do away with the

scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, perfect the

power to perceive" (325). This is because art expands experience (325), training aesthetic

imagination to perceive various possibilities (345) and how they might make for a better future

(346). In describing the emancipatory function of art Dewey isn't predicting an end to social injustices and systemic inequality through artistic intervention, but rather he is noting the role that art can and often does serve alongside public discourse in changing values and mores over time. From this perspective, art and artists are often part of a collection of agents and actors including community activists, journalists, educators, policy makers, and socially progressive politicians, among others, who work towards changing the values and knowledges of society so as to better establish and uphold the rights of all peoples.

Changing values and knowledges is not a simple, straightforward process, especially given the often divergent views on what the future should look like and how best to safeguard the rights of various individuals as we move towards those futures. Gillian Whitlock touches on this issue in her essay "The Seeing 'I' of Comics" cited throughout this dissertation. There she looks at the inter-cultural affordances of comics to foster communication, empathy, and understanding across borders and cultulres. In the essay she cites Salam Pax who, upon reading Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, feels "the urge to start translating [the comic] and throwing copies of it on the streets of Baghdad" (qtd. In Whitlock 969). As Whitlock goes on to write, "Translating comics and 'throwing copies on the streets of Baghdad' (as Pax enthusiastically suggests) is a euphoric gesture of cross-cultural communication that forgets the complex transits that must occur for comics to engage readers in very different contexts" (970). Similarly, reading comics like *El Deafo* and *The Ride Together* should not be considered as a means of eliminating systemic ableist biases. In fact, given how *The Ride Together* frames autism through discredited scientific theories there is a risk that these texts can and do uphold and perpetuate some of those very same biases. Thus, it is important to recognize autographics by and about persons with disabilities as texts that contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding disability in our culture,

a discourse in which multiple stakeholders are participating for various and perhaps

contradictory reasons.

The same goes for *Allergies & Allegories* and its aim of addressing biases surrounding

food allergies. Here the risk of over-emphasizing the emancipatory potential of the medium is

exacerbated by the techno-utopian rhetoric that surrounds digital technologies. For instance,

much has been said about the assistive, rehabilitative, and empathetic potential of videogames,

including my own comments in this very document. But as games like *Auti-Sim* prove, the goal

of fostering empathy through representing a sensory experience comes up against the pluralistic

nature of said experiences—autism is a broad spectrum, after all—as well as a larger

neurotypical culture that often lacks the knowledge needed to contextualize such representations.

Certainly those commenters who characterized *Auti-Sim* as a 'horror game' have either

incorporated *Auti-Sim* into existing cultural narratives in which autism is a pitiable existence or

the game itself has created such a narrative. In the case of *Allergies & Allegories* the goal of

interrogating and dismantling biases regarding food allergies comes up against ingrained

normative behaviours that treat virtually any difference from the normate identity as a curiosity,

a concern, or even a cause for ridicule. Given that the primary audience of the game is

adolescents the actual gains *Allergies & Allegories* makes regarding food allergy awareness will

be tempered by these existing ableist dispositions. The game, then, needs to be part of larger

conversations which not only address adolescents but those authority figures—parents, teachers,

guardians, etc.—who are themselves involved in perpetuating ableist biases. Furthermore, these

same authority figures need to be mindful not to speak for and over those with food allergies;

such *able-splaining*, in which able-bodied individuals act as both authors of and authorities on

the experiences of those with disabilities, risks placing the interpretations of parents and teachers above and beyond those experiencing the practical realities of life with a food allergy.[42]

All of this is to say there are very real risks of oversimplifying the various discourses on social and political change regarding disability. To suggest that anyone, myself included, has the correct or objective vantage on these issues would be disingenuous. Similarly, to believe that art, in this case autobiographical comics and videogames, operates outside of this network and can, in some sense, transcend the complexity of that network, would be disingenuous as well. Rather, I want to think of comics like *El Deafo* and games like *Allergies & Allegories* as part of that complex on-going process whereby common sense—meaning here common social knowledge—changes over time to reflect the underlying dissensus of various individuals, communities, and cultures. As the title of Dewey's aforementioned text suggests, art can function as experience. When this is paired with C. S. Peirce's observation that, "common sense beliefs are subject to revision, but they are held firm until experience prompts that revision" (CP 5.444), then art can be seen as that necessary component of culture that challenges entrenched beliefs and values by providing experiences that call those beliefs and values into question.

Thus, I read Dewey's remarks that art has the capacity to "perfect the power to perceive" (325) alongside those of Lennard Davis when he writes that, "In theorizing disability…we must develop a different way of conceptualizing the visual field, of thinking about seeing, of perceiving thinking" (*Enforcing Normalcy* 15). A comic like *El Deafo* participates in this process, allowing Hearing readers to rethink the visual and thus to rethink deafness and disability in the process. Here the experience of reading the comic has the capacity to prompt readers to revise their common sense beliefs regarding deafness and Deaf culture, such that art can help

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[42] The paper that informs *Allergies & Allegories*—"Illustrating Risk: Anaphylaxis Through the Eyes of the Food Allergic Child" by Fenton et al—makes note of several instances where this occurs and ties that back to heightened feelings of stress and anxiety.

root out ableist biases that are entrenched in social knowledge. I say help as this process needs to

be met with shifts in pedagogy, design, policy, and public discourse. As Dewey outlines, art

plays a pivotal role in this process but it is one of many components by which change comes

about over long periods of time.

Design & Pedagogy

The second issue I want to address in this conclusion is the practical applications of

embodied invention in the contexts of design and pedagogy. Throughout the dissertation I refer

to embodied invention as a design philosophy and the accompanying game was meant to

exemplify this. But embodied invention as a design philosophy can also be articulated more fully

here by connecting it with the New London Group and their work on multiliteracies. As noted

earlier, the New London Group argues that the prevalence of multimedia in contemporary life

requires new literacies that would facilitate interpreting and authoring meaning in this new media

ecology. They make note of "the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of

meaning-making" (64), such that the notion of literacy needs to expand beyond that of the

printed word. Embodied invention reinforces this argument insofar as it is based in the

recognition that embodied experience produces enthymemes in and across various senses. These

sensory and semiotic enthymemes—where an enthymeme is as a form of communication that

relies on probable and familiar relationships between sensations, thoughts, ideas, etc.—can be

thought of as important components of what the New London Group calls Available Design—

those diverse resources that we rely on for making meaning. In a manner of speaking, emergent

forms of multimodal media open the range of multisensory enthymemes that authors can

represent and that audiences can interpret. Being able to tap into these previously

unrepresentable enthymemes provides the basis for an inventive design philosophy that

encourages designers to explore the range of sensory arguments at their disposal in portraying

the embodied experiences of various subjects. In graphic arts this could involve emphasizing

implied but absent relationships that operate between cultures.

For example, consider the following webcomic from Matt and Kay Daigle's *That Deaf Guy* series:
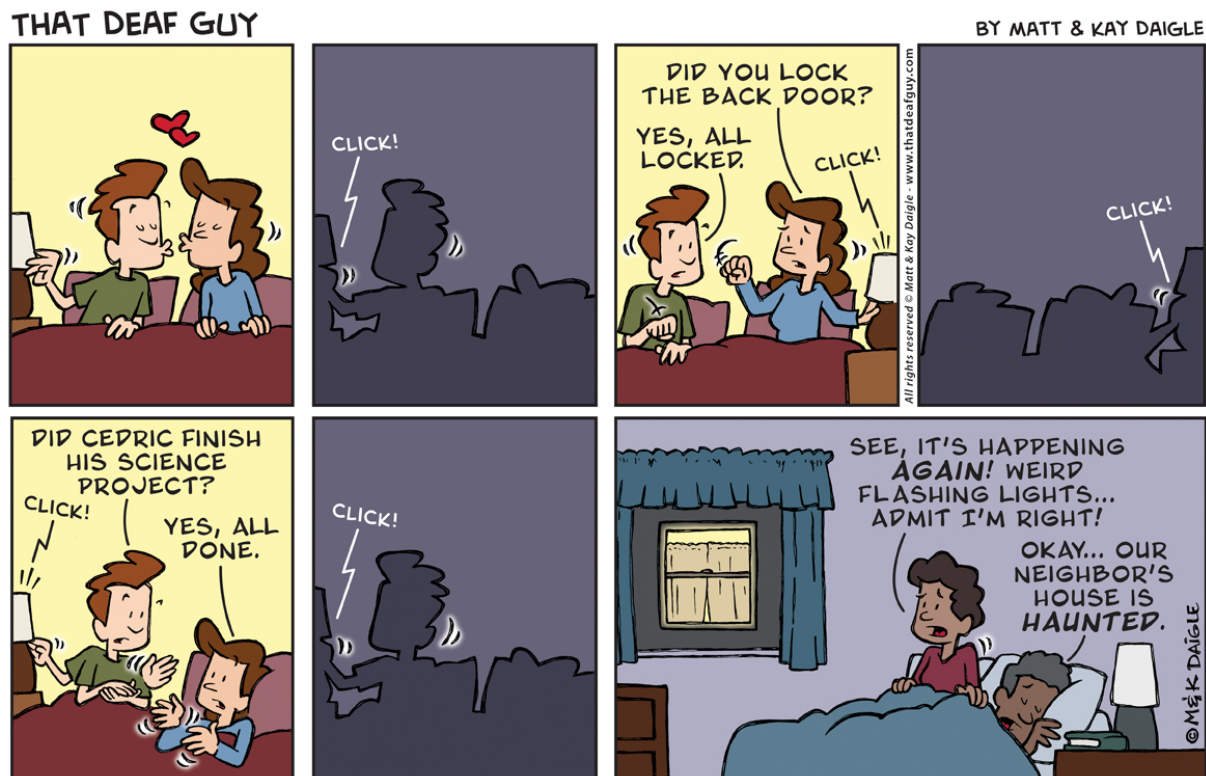

Fig. 13. In this seven panel comic we see the main characters—one who is Deaf, the other

Hearing—preparing to go to sleep. Each time they want to converse they turn the lights on so

they can see each other signing. The final panel shows their neighbours, confused by the

flickering lights. (*That Deaf Guy*)

In the above comic the joke relies on readers discovering the relationship between sight and

Sign. The humour here is implied in this sensory relationship endemic to Deaf culture and it is

supplied through understanding that relationship. In fact, moments like the above comic arise out of an explicit aim on the part of the cartoonists to engage in inter-cultural exchanges rooted in their everyday experiences—*That Deaf Guy* is a semi-autobiographical webcomic where Matt, the artist, is d/Deaf, and Kay, the writer, is hearing. As Matt Daigle states in an interview, "We knew that in order to go more mainstream, we needed to incorporate humor and language that crossed two cultures, so it is a hearing/deaf collaboration. We both come up with ideas and aim to find a happy medium. If the humor is too deaf, hearing people will not understand it and vice versa!" (Matt Daigle). This is not to suggest that all artists should be concerned with making inter-cultural art—there are tangible and intangible advantages to intra-cultural exchanges as well—but in those instances where broad and diverse audiences are envisioned, the artful use of multimodal enthymemes can serve as a useful heuristic for making arguments—broadly understood—be them social, political, humorous, or otherwise.

Similarly, game designers can look to those procedural enthymemes that pervade their everyday lives or the lives of the persons they are seeking to represent. A procedural enthymeme is an argument where the implied but absent premise is supplied through interaction and praxis. In chapter three I suggested that game designers create places or situations in which players are encouraged to discover those implied but absent relationships through play. An embodied invention approach to game design would encourage game designers to 1) explore the procedural enthymemes that are endemic to the sensory, social, and cultural situation of various subjects and 2) encode those enthymemes within the processes and procedures of their games.

Indeed, designers are already engaged in this practice to varying degrees. Anna Anthropy's *Dys4ia*, for instance, takes a very directed approach in its deployment of procedural enthymemes, using various mini-games where the potential actions are rather constrained,

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making it relatively easy to discover the implied relationships. What could prove fruitful is the use of such personal procedural enthymemes within more open-world games, a genre which often embraces de-personalized, generic (read: normative) protagonists. For example, while role-playing videogames often allow players to create a character with varying characteristics related to gender, race, and/or sexual orientation, the effect those decisions have on the player-character's experience of the game-world are frequently negligible. For instance, in *Fallout 4*, a post-apocalyptic role-playing game, players can choose from an array of races and sexual orientations but these serve more of an extra-ludic function, providing the player with the freedom to create a wide range of identities while simultaneously treating the differences between those identities as inconsequential. For example, the game itself never recognizes the race of the player-character, despite the fact that the overarching narrative of the game is an allegory for slavery.[43] This post-apocalyptic world—a narrative premise that sees the game adopt the aesthetics of middle-class American culture circa the 1950s when the nuclear bombs first started to fall—is also, paradoxically, a post-racist society.

Game designers could look to the various personal enthymemes that are often endemic to the processes and procedures used by various individuals and communities in order to create more dynamic, responsive, and mimetic game worlds. In *Fallout 4*, for example, the game could dynamically adjust procedural enthymemes based on the player-character's identity such that for different characters the implied but absent process, procedure, or action varies in relation to who they are in that world. Perhaps the designers wished to acknowledge gender-based wage discrimination, for instance. Here the various quest givers—those who assign tasks to the player-

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[43] In the fictitious world of *Fallout 4* synthetic beings or synths have been created—animatronic creatures, some of whom exhibited signs of sentience. The player can choose to help liberate these synths from the creators and masters by working with The Railroad—a reference to the 'underground railroad,' a network that worked clandestinely to move enslaved Africans to safety.

character in exchange for compensation—could by default offer less compensation to those with female avatars than those with male avatars. This, in turn, would create a situation in which players with female avatars are persuaded to invest more heavily in the game's speech and barter skills, which would come at the expense of leveling up other skills, such as those related to science or combat. In this way the game would capture meaningful differences between socio-economic situations, highlighting the current injustice of wage disparity in a procedural manner, rather than contending itself with merely addressing discrimination through allegory and metaphor alone. More generally speaking, embodied invention encourages the designer to view the game world less like a universal sensory *topos*, as Vico suggested, and more like a space for creating numerous personalized *topoi*, places in which various enthymematic relationships pervade the sensory, social, and cultural spaces of the game in accordance with the player-character's identity.

At this point I'd like to shift from talking about embodied invention in relation to design to addressing how the concept relates to literacy and pedagogy. As the New London Group notes, the relationship between design and literacy is quite strong; for them, multiliteracies are intrinsically about the multimodality of meaning-making. Embodied invention draws on this relationship in that both commonplace comic books and commonplace videogames emphasize the value of multimodality in the process of learning how to 'make sense' of a variety of embodied, social, and cultural situations. In terms of commonplace comic books, Dale Jacobs has written about the pedagogical affordances of multiliteracies in relation to comics (see "Beyond Visual Rhetoric" and *Graphic Encounters*). But one topic not explicitly covered in the multiliteracies manifesto is the subject of game literacy.

Just as the New London Group asserts the necessity for multiliteracies as we progress into the 21st century, game scholar Eric Zimmerman has provocatively dubbed the next hundred years the Ludic Century in which game literacy will be an instrumental aspect of work, play, and politics. In his "Manifesto for a Ludic Century" Zimmerman assert that "Games are a literacy" such that, while "New literacies, such as visual and technological literacy, have…been identified in recent decades…to be truly literate in the Ludic Century also requires gaming literacy. The rise of games in our culture is both cause and effect of gaming literacy in the Ludic Century." He goes on to assert that

> The problems the world faces today requires the kinds of thinking that gaming literacy engenders. How does the price of gas in California affect the politics of the Middle East affect the Amazon ecosystem? These problems force us to understand how the parts of a system fit together to create a complex whole with emergent effects. They require playful, innovative, trans-disciplinary thinking in which systems can be analyzed, redesigned, and transformed into something new. ("Manifesto for a Ludic Century").

However, as Heather Chaplin—a collaborator on the Ludic Century project—notes, gaming literacy and systems thinking could come at the expense of empathy and compassionate understanding:

> If it's true that we're moving into a Ludic Century…what happens to emotional intelligence and empathy? Does too much focus on the whole create a danger of neglecting the human parts? Are we moving into a future in which plenty of people are logical, good at recognizing patterns, and analyzing the way things work, but in which fewer and fewer of us are able to empathize? ("The Ludic Century: Exploring The Manifesto")

Here embodied invention could be seen to bridge the gap between these two positions in that it approaches embodied experience as a kind of system itself, one composed of various sensory and procedural enthymemes. Thus, while Zimmerman sees the potential for games to represent the behaviour of global systems in which humans are one of many agents, there is equal potential for games to represent the sensory, cognitive, social, and cultural systems of various subjects; play, then, becomes a means of realizing how and why such individuals behave the way they do. Not only does this feed back into gaming literacy by suggesting games can help us become 'literate' in different human experiences, but it also indicates the pedagogical affordances of embodied invention.

For instance, teaching students the situated nature of knowledges (Haraway) and practices (Haraway; New London Group) can be quite challenging. Games, and especially those that represent various sensory, social, and cultural commonplaces, can address this pedagogical challenge by clearly demonstrating the relationship between knowledge and praxis. As noted in chapter three, the act of playing a game can be seen as a process of using practices endemic to the player's situation in the game world in order to reveal knowledge situated in that world. Even a game as abstract as *Super Mario Bros.* reveals the situated character of knowledge in that the various strategies and tactics players devise through playing the game are all routed through Mario's avatar and his various capabilities. Commonplace games, such as those mentioned in chapter three, offer less-abstract, more concrete worlds or places in which knowledges and practices inhere.

Embodied invention as a pedagogy also relates to much broader conversations regarding knowledge and instruction. This follows from the relationship between embodied invention and the pedagogy of Giambattista Vico. In his oration *On the Study Methods of Our Time* (*De nostri*

temporis studiorum), Vico addresses the value of an education that fosters engagement with the public and the arts. Scholars generally regard the text as a polemic against the Cartesian method that was quickly becoming a pedagogical standard in Italian schools at the time. Vico saw the implications of this method—which downplayed the role of the public and the arts in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge—as "distinctly harmful" (13) in part because it cut students off from the larger community, leading to "odd and arrogant behaviour" (13) as the students lacked the skills to communicate with those not familiar with their methods. Instead, Vico espouses the *ars topica*, the art of thinking, knowing, and speaking topically.

More recently Ernesto Grassi (*Vico and Humanism: Essays on Vico, Heidegger, and Rhetoric*) has referred to these distinct pedagogies as critical versus topical philosophy. Critical philosophy, typified by Descartes, follows from the logico-rational tradition that seeks to produce knowledge of the world using a set of incontrovertible premises; from such a perspective the identity of the inquirer is negligible, the discourse is anonymous, and the truths universal ("Critical Philosophy or Topical Philosophy: Meditations on the *De nostri temporis studiorum*" 2). Topical philosophy, in contrast, follows from the rhetorical-pathetic tradition in which inquiry is primarily concerned with the discovery of premises themselves. These premises or 'starting places' (*topoi*) reflect the topical nature of this epistemology which treats the identity of the inquirer as discrete, the discourse as relative (i.e. to a particular time and place), and truths as probabilities (3).

Now, it could be said that the *mode d'emploi* of critical philosophy is *bon sens*, that supposedly shared rational faculty that allows for an equivocation between inquirers despite differences in bodies and situations—hence, in critical philosophy differences between inquirers are treated as negligible and knowledge itself is considered anonymous and ahistorical. Topical

philosophy, on the other hand, is fundamentally based on invention, that process by which

knowledge is discovered through a plurality of premises or starting places. Critical philosophy,

as I have argued elsewhere,[44] is best suited to intra-cultural inquiry as it relies on shared logico-

rational methods and practices amongst a community of inquirers. In our increasingly connected,

inter-cultural world this philosophy leaves students ill-prepared to communicate with others

when methods and practices are not common or shared.[45] The pedagogy that accompanies

critical philosophy, then, fails today's students in that it cannot convey the value of being open to

alternative methods and practices, a necessity as global communication networks increasingly

put us in contact with people, ideas, and values that are situated in various geographical, social,

cultural, and bodily situations.

Thus, I see embodied invention as a means of extending and enhancing the pedagogical

aims of topical philosophy at an opportune time—both in light of the increasingly interconnected

nature of everyday life and the technological affordances of the media that undergird that

interconnectedness. As Grassi notes of the rhetorical-pathetic method, it begins by recognizing

that "…the passions, the pathetic element in the human mind, cannot be reached by reason, for

only sensible schemata, visual or auditory schemata, have influence over them. Hence the

importance of images, gestures, the rhythm of the discourse, which have no rational value

whatsoever" (3). Contemporary technologies allow for the creation and distribution of various

and diverse 'sensible schemata' across a broad range of modalities. Crucially, by mediating these

sensible schemata we "facilitate the acceptance of rational truths" (3). Thus, it is beneficial to

teach students the value of commonplace media—that is to say, the value of representing,

sharing, and engaging with various depictions of social, cultural, and bodily places. Unlike the

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[44] Wilcox, Steve. "On the Publishing Methods of Our Time: Mobilizing Knowledge in Game Studies." *Scholarly and Research Communication*, 6.3 (2015): n. pag. Web. 15 Apr. 2016.
[45] On social media, for instance, belief in universal truths and privileging of anonymous criticism is prevalent.

abstract, disembodied discourse of logico-rational philosophy, embodied invention follows from that recognition that multimodal media are indispensable in exchanging knowledges between bodies and places.

And it is on this point that I will bring things to a close as these issues in particular emphasize the overall aim of this project; namely, to foster understanding between bodies and across cultures through sharing stories about our lives with one another. Our capacity to tell and share these stories in a variety of ways will prove instrumental in creating more inclusive, compassionate, and understanding cultures. At the same time we must not only become literate in the various modalities that allow us to author these stories in new ways, but we must also learn to listen to these stories, to be persuaded of them and the truths that they contain.

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