

ABOLISH THE PSYCH WARD: RE-READING HISTORIES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

by

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**APPROVAL**

ABOLISH THE PSYCH WARD: RE-READING HISTORIES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

by

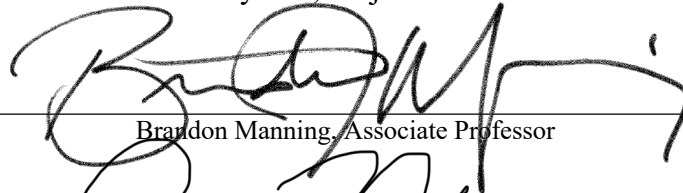
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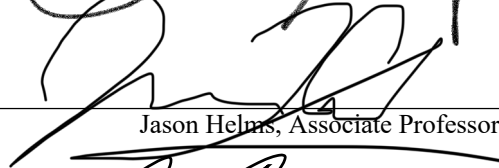
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For the AddRan College of Liberal Arts

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2025

**DEDICATION**

*For Grandma*

Phyllis Louise Garrett-Jackson  
February 3, 1953 – February 5, 2023

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Composition is always collaborative, and I am indebted to a network of great human beings - even (especially?) some of whom I have not even "met" physically/in-person/"face-to-face".

These are not written in any particular order, outside of the first four who graciously and generously served on my dissertation committee, starting with my incredible Chair and mentor.

There are a number on this list who I've not met, or who may not even know me, but whose work, whose writing, has had profound impacts on my life and work.

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## ABSTRACT

ABOLISH THE PSYCH WARD: RE-READING HISTORIES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

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**Cody A. Jackson**

Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric and Composition  
2025  
Department of English

Advisor: Dr. Carmen Kynard, Professor and Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition

This project both *is* and is *not* a dissertation. It will have very little neat or linear trajectories or previews. Instead, it is a wandering, an intentional compositional practice of mad composition's rhetorical disobedience that refuses the linearity and continuity of colonial and white abled Reason. This project is unfinished, but it attempts to perform several interrogations, including the relationship between the psych ward and the prison through the context of abolitionist trajectories, an articulation of mad composition as a praxis, and the possibility for altogether otherwise forms of graduate education assessment beyond the dissertation. Just as I do in the project itself, so too will I ask here: *why must the dissertation exist at all?*

## PROJECT OVERVIEW OF THE DIGITAL DISSERTATION

The structure and non-linear flow of this project is heavily inspired by Alexis Pauline Gumbs' essay, "17th Floor: A Pedagogical Oracle from/with Audre Lorde." The essay, or what Gumbs refers to as an "abstract riff," taught me that my writing, thinking, and feeling does not have to be linearly composed, that our writing does not have to maintain the linearity and continuity of Reason<sup>1</sup>. The methodology or "anti-methodology" of this project can be thought of as a mode of what I refer to as mad composition.

When I think and feel for a (necessarily slippery) (mis)understanding<sup>2</sup> of *mad composition*, a number of core tenets come *to mind*<sup>3</sup> in relation (always in relation) with other scholar-teacher-thinkers. These are written in no particular order and are in some ways intended<sup>4</sup> to be broken:

There is no such thing as a mad compositionist<sup>5</sup>. *Mad composition* isn't a definitional or categorical imperative about *who we are*; rather, *mad composition* is a practice. Mad composition is what we *do*. See: Bruce 2021, 9; Kynard 2013, 125-26; [Schalk 2017](#).

The practice of *mad composition* reflects upon and *acts* in defiance to the sanist foundations that consists in-part of the imperative to publish, to compose a dissertation, to be "good little graduate students" in the face of oppression and disaster, and to follow the colonial white abled supremacist procedural mandates of our field(s) in order to be granted access to a job that pays (some) of the bills<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. "17th Floor: A Pedagogical Oracle from/with Audre Lorde." *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp. 375-390.

<sup>2</sup> Does mad composition, as a practice, *understand* at all? As Margaret Price asks, "If you are crazy, can you still be of sound mind" (2011, 1)?

<sup>3</sup> Or is it *away* from my mind? *Is it my mind?* *Is it my mind?*

<sup>4</sup> Can madness *be* practiced intentionally?

<sup>5</sup> The myth of the mad genius must be done away with...

<sup>6</sup> In the words of Theri A. Pickens, "I would add that it is definitely an oppressive scholastic practice if we choose not to reflect on how our intellectual enterprise is upheld by sanist notions of mind" ([2019, 8](#)).

The practice of *mad composition* understands that madness is not biologically or medically essentialized or essentialize-able but, rather, is culturally and rhetorically elaborated in specific contexts that are not universalizable (Wynter, ALL).

*Mad composition*, as a practice, is contextual, flexible, and malleable – swerving in and out of definitional imperatives and categorical limits (Price 2013, 298).

*Mad composition* refutes and refuses the imperative of the recuperative gesture (Arondekar 2009). As a practice, it embodies a composition *not* made whole and not always present in the linguistic sense. Mad composition refuses the linguistic imperative to be coherent, rational, linear, continuous, and logical – all of these terms are and must be contested (Price 2011, 5). In fact, even the most beautiful and important books published to date on madness, many of which are cited in this dissertation, still follow the linguistic imperative laid out by publishers and reinforced by *us* – yes, us (Wynter *via* Piercy 1988, 9). Mad composition interrupts and disrupts the naturalization and purportedly neutral existence of these imperatives. Which leads me to the next point...

*Mad composition*, as a practice, understands that composition, that humans, that *we*, have always been multimodal ([Cedillo 2017, 2](#)).

*Mad composition*, as a practice, *practices* an intentional politics of citation.

*Mad composition*, as a practice, is profoundly story-centered and understands that consent is central to the stories we tell, publish, circulate, and listen to. In other words, mad composition does not compel stories to be told; rather, mad composition understands that there are stories told and “untold” that inform and imbue all textual composition.

*Mad composition*, as a practice, understands that anti-Black and anti-Indigenous violence is at the root of state-sanctioned and medicalized modes of madness that still govern the “West” today. Sylvia Wynter taught/teaches us this, even before “contemporary” articulations of our understandings of “madness.” In a 1988 interview with Van Piercy, Wynter says the following, right after questioning the publication imperative of the academic industry<sup>7</sup>:

“And as you see in my *Boundary 2* article I argue that the founding internments even before the asylums in Europe took place on the Caribbean islands with the *encomienda* system, in which the original peoples of the islands were interned as a new form of serf labor and their lands expropriated by the Spanish settlers. Now once we see that the internment of the asylums belong to the same genealogy of thought and action as first, the *encomienda* system, then, as the *Arawaks* were decimated, the internment of enslaved Africans in the plantation systems, we can begin to see how the first secularizing form of our present system of knowledge had begun to erect itself on the basis of the confinement of two new categories of humans – *indios* and *negros*.” (9-10)

*Mad composition*, as a practice, understands madness as inextricably connected to disabled identity and disabled embodiment.

*Mad composition*, as a practice, mobilizes and interrogates genre’s materiality ([Miller 2016](#); [Cedillo 2018](#)). In other words, *mad composition* interrupts conversations about genre that do not interrogate how *we*, and the gatekeepers of the field, prop up sanist genres of human being through the very publication genres we deem as natural or “just the way things are.” Even, for example, the format of the traditional<sup>8</sup> book or “traditional” thesis reinstates the normative boundaries that *mad composition*, I argue, is fundamentally opposed to.

*Mad composition*, as a practice, articulates a vision and concrete mode of accessibility that necessarily extends beyond the individual and toward the collective; this is in addition to embracing accessibility as the start, not the finish line ([Hubrig 2021](#); Hubrig 2023).

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<sup>7</sup> It’s almost as if there is a connection here...

<sup>8</sup> Even the use of “traditional” reinstates the normative boundary of genre *as such*.

The trouble with what I am referring to as “mad composition” and “mad archival praxis” is that these sets of embodied practices are constantly evading capture. These practices are trained and untrained to avoid perception out of necessity and out of survival. I will work alongside this trouble without trying to tame madness as a practice<sup>9</sup> or madness as an enmeshed network of political, cultural, and material realities.

Researching, writing, and storying alongside the vexing and vexed histories of the psych ward and the insane asylum forces my bodymind – our bodyminds – to unfold as our collective and individual stories unfold. This is troubling work – it is both affected by troubling realities and histories, and it is troubling. Troubling as an active verb that upsets institutional and disciplinary protocols of research and writing style – institutional and disciplinary protocols like the comprehensive examinations, the dissertation prospectus, and other artificial obstacles created by traditions of colonization, white supremacy, and ableism that further render the rhetoric and composition Ph.D. as an inaccessible process of red-tape and bureaucratic paperwork.

In a sense, this project is itself an anti- or non-structure. Each keyword of the project will serve as the basis of micro- or keyword entry chapters. The “chapters” will not be organized in either an ascending or descending alphabetical order; rather, there will be no systematic Reasoning behind their (dis)order. This project will have no conclusion, only gestures toward a world – or new worlds – in which the psych ward could be and must be abolished as part of the ongoing struggle for abolitionist revolution.

More specifically, however, this project entails an anti-ableist archival practices that consists – at least in part – of an intentional approach to the pre-non/discursive (re)constructions of “ability,”

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<sup>9</sup> Bruce, La Marr Jurelle. *How to Go Mad without Losing Your Mind: Madness and Black Radical Creativity*. Duke University Press, 2021.

normative thought-practice-feeling, and – ultimately – what Sylvia Wynter refers to as genres of human being. These kinds of praxis also entail a rebellious archival methodology that simultaneously makes use of colonial, state-sanctioned, and “popular” media source materials while also remaining fundamentally opposed to the singularity of such materials.

To put this otherwise (always otherwise), an anti-ableist and mad practice of archival disorientation emphasizes both the exposure/critique of archival fictions and the creation/generation of new worlds and new archival spacetime configurations.

Is abolition an event? Is abolition a forward-dawning horizon of possibility? Does abolition have a future? Is there a future for and/or of abolition? Is abolition both a praxis of navigating the event and horizon?<sup>10</sup> Is abolition something that can be contained within discursive and symbolic dimensions like a dissertation or article? I want to question the very act of writing about abolition and, in several ways, consider and amplify other ways of doing archival research outside the confines of a white supremacist, white Christian nationalist, colonial, ableist, capitalist, and patriarchal chronopolitical world//order<sup>11</sup>. While I will attempt to grapple with the complexities of these questions, I must state directly, more succinctly, that the political, ethical, and moral objective of this project is not only the abolition of the psych ward and the complete and total abolition of police, prisons, and psych wards but, perhaps more importantly, to consider the

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<sup>10</sup> Chua, Charmaine. “Abolition Is A Constant Struggle: Five Lessons from Minneapolis.” *Theory & Event*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2020, pp. s127-147.

<sup>11</sup> Malaklou, M. Shadee. “‘Dilemmas’ of Coalition and the Chronopolitics of Man: Towards an Insurgent Black Feminine Otherwise.” *Theory & Event*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2018, pp. 215-258; Douglass, Patrice and Frank Wilderson. “The Violence of Presence: Metaphysics in a Blackened World.” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2013, pp. 117-123; Warren, Calvin. “Calling into Being: Tranifestation, Black Trans, and the Problem of Ontology.” *TSQ*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. 266-274; Fanon, Frantz. “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 2004, pp. 443-452; Ferreira Da Silva, Denise. “Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World.” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, pp. 81-97.

conditions of im/possibility that govern the very attempt to imagine abolition as a concrete praxis of being human<sup>12</sup>.

While I find that Michel Foucault's work provides us important entry points into the work of the insane asylum and psych ward, Foucault's work is profoundly limited in a number of ways, most importantly in its lack of an intentional focus on racialized constructions of the Human and his reliance on and perpetuation of a Eurocentric world and chronopolitical order. Alexander Weheliye discusses this specifically in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*:

“I am belaboring this point because Foucault's and Agamben's ideas are frequently invoked without scrutinizing the historical, philosophical, or political foundations upon which they are constructed, which bespeaks a broader tendency in which theoretical formulations by white European thinkers are granted a conceptual *carte blanche*, while those uttered from the purview of minority discourse that speak to the same questions are almost exclusively relegated to the jurisdiction of ethnographic locality.” (2014, 6)

Taking Weheliye's commentary seriously, I want to insist, as others have done, that the work of Black studies and disability studies is foundational to any possible analyses of madness, disability, and archival practice as they relate to the histories of disability and the psych ward.

In *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness*, Therí A. Pickens scrutinizes the relationship between disability studies and critical race studies, emphasizing the ways that Blackness is structuring to the production of madness and disability (7). Specifically, Pickens argues that “As long as whiteness remains the normative racial category, investigations of disability that do not address whiteness directly leave open crucial lacunae” (7). She points out that scholarship attempting to

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<sup>12</sup> Rodriguez, Dylan. “Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword.” *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 132, no. 6, 2019, pp. 1575-1612.

address the connections between “race and disability generally and madness and Blackness in particular...can be and has been easily severed for reasons of political expediency” (11).

“This is what happens,” Pickens importantly writes, “when Blackness is considered a problem for disability revolution. This is what happens when disability is considered a problem for Black revolution” (11). This portfolio attempts to engage Pickens’ critical points, both about whiteness as an oftentimes invisibilized normative gesture in disability studies and the co-constitutive revolutionary thought/practice/feeling in and between disability justice and Black revolution.

In addition to an insistence on centering Black studies in this conversations is the necessity to center the study of incarceration and an intersectional framework of disability that shifts away from what Chris Bell refers to as “White disability studies” (2006). In “Disabling Incarceration: Connecting Disability to Divergent Confinements in the USA,” Liat Ben-Moshe argues that “the history of disability is the history of incarceration” and that those of us who study various forms of incarceration (including the insane asylum) “would fare well with a more expansive view of both disability and incarceration” (2011 15).

Nirmale Erevelles cautions us to be “careful not to conflate the prison and the asylum together” (83). Erevelles argues that

“The prison, though punitive in nature, nevertheless has protections in place like due process and sentencing limits, however imperfect they may be...One the other hand, the asylum, although purportedly for rehabilitative care, is involved in the involuntary confinement of its inmates justified by a medical diagnosis that includes an indefinite time of confinement justified by a medical diagnosis.” (83)

While I agree that we cannot so easily analyze the two as identical, both in theory and practice, I believe that they are more closely aligned than Erevelles’ analysis suggests – though not identical. Relationships between time, place, race, and disability further complicate their separation.

Connecting madness, Black liberation and disability studies/disability justice, La Marr Jurelle Bruce writes that “If we are invested in black liberation, it may feel satisfying to condemn antiblackness as pathological and affirm black resistance as sane. However, such a move would reinforce the psychonormative binary that casts madness as patently bad and Reason as inherently good on opposite sides of the metaphysical wall” (29). Bruce continues, proposing “a more profound transformation: topple the wall and create liberated spaces where psychosocial variance and racial plurality (among infinite other modes of variance and plurality) can thrive in the care of radical compassion” (29).

In “The Ceremony Must be Found: After Humanism,” Sylvia Wynter puts forth a multifaceted rhetorical-neurological element of study, connecting the rhetoricity of the human with what she refers to as the “rhetorical/neurophysiological techne,” or being human as practice (1984 51). In addition to the many foundational arguments she puts forth in her works, I would suggest that Wynter provides us roadmaps for the study of madness, disability, place, and race. In her words,

“*The Studia* must be reinvented as a higher order of human knowledge, able to provide an ‘outer view’ which takes the human rather than any one of its variations as Subject; must be re-formulated as a science of human systems, which makes use of multiple frames of reference and of Valesio’s<sup>13</sup> proposed rhetorical techne – the techne, perhaps of a rhetor-neuroscience? – to attain the position of an external observer, at once inside/outside the figural domain of our order.” (56)

The study of the multiple histories of madness and disability must necessarily move in ways that simultaneously “inside/outside” the prescribed archival logics of the insane asylum and psych ward. I would also suggest that Wynter’s use of the slash (/) is significant in that it underscores the rupture of inside // outside. Notice also Therí A. Pickens’s grammatical technique in the title of her book, *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness*.

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<sup>13</sup> Valesio, Paolo. *Nova Antiqua: Rhetorics as a Contemporary Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.

In order to distill an understanding of the complexities of the archival logics governing the spacetime of the insane asylum, I would like to emphasize that the slash (/) and the creative use of colons (::) nudges us to wiggle ourselves in the middle-ground, in the slippage of archival method and the spaces and times governing the archives – spacetime.

For example, the archival record pertaining to the *Texas Penitentiary Board Monthly Reports: An Inventory of Penitentiary Board Monthly Reports at the Texas State Archives, 1881-1883* are only accessible in-person at the Texas State Archives. The documents have not been digitized and “cannot be photocopied because of its fragile condition<sup>14</sup>.” The organization of the digital archive itself is fairly inaccessible, with no interactive or integrated search feature, meaning that all records must be found by reading through thousands of individual box and file summaries.

On March 2, 2020, I requested the following materials from the Texas State Archives related to Rusk State Hospital:

- Box 1963/058-10 | Rusk State Hospital, 1947; Wichita Falls State Hospital, 1947
- Box 1991/016-89 | Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Institute for Colored Youths; Rusk State Hospital; Mental Hygiene Association
- 1991/016-84 | Confederate Woman’s Home, 1935, 1936, 1941 (three sets of rules); Rusk State Hospital, 1935; State Colored Orphan’s Home, 1938
- Box 2002/031-4 | Survey Report on Rusk State Hospital, Office of the State Auditor and Efficiency Expert, 1940
- Box 1991/016-84 | Report of an Examination of Sawmill Operations, Rusk State Hospital, State Board of Control, 11/1/1943 to 5/31/1944
- Box 1962/218-2 | Rusk State Hospital: Correspondence, 1937-1942; Statements of Accounts, 1932-1935
- Box 2002/031-2 | Rusk State Hospital, October 1, 1937; Rusk State Hospital, March 22, 1938; State Colored Orphan’s Home, September 2, 1936

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<sup>14</sup> Texas Archival Resources Online. [Texas Penitentiary Board Monthly Reports: An Inventory of Penitentiary Board Monthly Reports at the Texas State Archives, 1881-1883](#).

- Box 2002/035-8 | Correspondence: February-August 1940; June 1939-January 1940; September 1938-May 1939; November 1937-August 1938; January 1935-October 1937; January 1933-September 1934; February 1928-December 1932

The only box I was able to access records from was Box 1991/016-89, which are legislative files related to those institutions. The files themselves are handwritten and not digitized, and the remainder of my requests for access were denied because they are deemed confidential, many of which because they are deemed “medical records.” The only way to gain access to most of these files is to [request an exception](#) directly from the Texas Attorney General.

This illustrates not only the inaccessibility of archival information related to Rusk State Hospital in general but how the medicalization or medical transformation of Rusk State Penitentiary served/serves as an archival logic that governs access to transparent information related to the day-to-day and historical operation of the facility. The spacetime of the Rusk State Penitentiary and Rusk State Hospital is governed through a set of very restrictive archival logics that prevent access to information and, therefore, access to even the official records that document what happened within the walls of the facilities.

In fact, the shift in the naming of mental institutions – from insane asylum to state hospital was not only the development of an archival logic of control but one of public relations and public perception. P.L. Murphy, Superintendent of the Western North Carolina Insane Asylum, noted explicitly that “Some of the horrors will be done way with by telling the unfortunate that he or she will be taken to a hospital to be treated.”<sup>15</sup>

Pamela Takayoshi discusses this issue of naming and name changes as well, noting that “For example, in less than 40 years, one asylum had five different names: The Southern Ohio Lunatic

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<sup>15</sup> Qtd in C. Streeter. “Theatrical Entertainments and Kind Words: Nursing the Insane in Western North Carolina, 1882-1907.” *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, vol. 18, 2011, p. 906.

Asylum (1855), The Western Ohio Hospital for the Insane (1874), Dayton Hospital for the Insane (1877), Dayton Asylum for the Insane (1878), and Dayton State Hospital (1894).”[15] The point I would like to illustrate is that naming protocols were not just shifts in the context of public perception or public relations, though that is very important to note, but they work to restrict and distort the archival record – making it all the more difficult to locate archived materials. With each change in name, the archival record assumes a different category, a different index, and a different naming protocol that requires unique keyword searches to locate information.

I would suggest that La Marr Jurelle Bruce’s expansive notion of loitering can not only be understood through the physical act of movement but in the archival gesture itself. Bruce makes this point fairly explicitly:

“I propose a praxis of loitering: a willful, ethical, critical, radical inertia when the anti-black officer barks ‘keep it moving’; or the gentrifying sign reads ‘no loitering’; or the right-wing cable news pundit insists that you just ‘get over’ and ‘move past’ the still-unfurling devastation of chattel slavery and Jim Crow...Whereas fugitivity, wandering, waywardness, and derangement are modes of motion defying modern mandates for ‘proper’ movement, loitering is slowness and stillness that violates said mandates. The fugitive goes when told to stay, while the loiterer stays when told to go.” (2019, 352)

I am imagining moments in time when those within the asylum not only moved – or escaped – when told to stay put but stayed when told to move – an ambivalent spacetime between staying and going, going and staying, that I would suggest is that the center of what Bruce, Sami Schalk<sup>16</sup>, and others may refer to as madness or disability as methodology.

In “Agitation,” Mel Y. Chen asks us, “What acts, movements, gestures does an embodied archive of political agitation comprise” (2018, 551). Similar, but not identical, to Bruce’s notion

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<sup>16</sup> Schalk, Sami. “[Critical Disability Studies as Methodology](#).” *Lateral*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2017.

of loitering, Chen examines the connotation and possibilities of agitation in the presence of control, surveillance, and bodily restriction. Chen explains that “excessive motor activity” may not “immediately correlate to the incitement of revolutionary action” but that there is “within both a sense of a relationship between action and actional potential” (554).

Agitation, for Chen, takes on a both/and approach. It is both a bodily comportment and hold potential for political action:

“I want to take agitation seriously, in other words, not only as an ensemble of gestural cultures of nondisabled expression or choreographed resistance but also as the movement vocabularies of people living with diverse bodily experience, as well as with bodily intolerances – actively collapsing the apparently segregated domains that agitation has come to occupy, though not under the sign of any one of them.” (560)

Again, I emphasize that agitation, similar to loitering, is not just a physical or bodily movement but holds potential and immense possibility within the context of archival movement and archival agitation. How might we agitate the archival order of the insane asylum and the movement or restricted movement of information and knowledge?

### **Keywords as Autistic and Mad Composition Praxis**

In a sense, one could say that the field of rhetoric and composition has been preoccupied with the use of keywords, or keyword projects that attempt to provide glosses or introductions to various concepts. These projects include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Volume 48, Issue 3 of *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, a special issue on Keywords: A Glossary of the Pasts and Futures of the Rhetoric Society of America
- *Keywords in Writing Studies*. Paul Heilker and Peter Vandenberg, eds. Utah State University Press, 2015.
- *Keywords in Design Thinking: A Lexical Primer for Technical Communicators and Designers*. Jason Tham, ed. Utah State University Press, 2023.
- Bishop, Wendy and David Starkey. *Keywords in Creative Writing: An Insider’s Guide for New Composition Teachers*. Utah State University Press, 2006.

- *Keywords in Technical and Professional Communication*. Han Yu and Jonathan Buehl, eds. Utah State University Press, 2024.

While I could certainly cite more collections or projects whose methodological frameworks are built around the function of the keyword, what many of them have in common is strong citational connections with Raymond Williams’s *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*.

In “Keywords: A Prelude and an Appendix,” Michelle Ballif begins the introductory essay with reference to Williams:

“Raymond Williams’s *Keywords* was first born in the form of an appendage to his book manuscript *Culture and Society*, but – although it showed no signs of rupturing or of sepsis – the publisher snipped the appendix, having ‘jibbed at the length’ of it. This surgical intervention, this excision, reminded me of George Bataille, of the wound ‘through which communication becomes possible.’” (2018, 231)

Ballif also ends the piece with reference to Williams’s project:

“To stress the futural impulse of his project, Raymond Williams convinced his publishers to end the volume with a beginning, promised by the presence of ‘some blank pages, not only for the convenience of making notes, but also as a sign that the inquiry remains open.’” (233)

In the introduction of *Keywords in Design Thinking*, Jason Tham also points to the importance of Williams’s publication:

“This collection follows on the heels of cultural theorist Raymond Williams. In his landmark work *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), Williams demonstrated the value of a critical glossary in introducing established as well as emerging terms to readers of a particular field. Williams’ pioneering collection has become a model to many disciplines, including language and literacy (Carter, 1995), creative writing (Bishop & Starkey, 2006), news and journalism (Zelizer & Allan, 2010), sound studies (Novak & Sakakeeny, 2015), travel writing (Forsdick et al., 2019), and our very own—composition/writing studies (Heilker & Vandenberg, 1996; 2015) and technical communication practices (Gallon, 2016).” (2023, 11-12)

Tham points out the objective of the collection, writing that “The goal of this collection is to set the stage for design thinking within technical communication at a time when design thinking is

itself deemed a contested term by many. It does so by establishing definitions stable enough to allow readers to determine the value of design thinking and apply and examine its usefulness in the design of technical communication” (12).

In one way or another, these collections and projects seek to establish common definitions at a particular historical conjuncture, a specific space and time. Given the time frame for publication, many of these “keywords” and their meanings have already evolved between conception or ideation and publication. In other words, while many projects whose methodological framing rests upon the organization of keywords communicate meaning or common understanding, they still – whether intentionally or unintentionally – seek to provide concrete definitions for shifting terminology.

Personally, I find tremendous value in many of these publications, particularly from a pedagogical perspective; however, I do wish to emphasize this project’s departure from the use of “keywords” to provide common understanding or disciplinary cohesion<sup>17</sup>. Rather, this project utilizes keywords as methodologies of thinking-feeling-writing-doing. Put another way, I argue that keywords, or the utilization of keywords as composition praxis, are one – only one – possibility, out of a magical network of so many other possibilities, for what I, and others, refer to as mad, neurodivergent, and autistic writing praxis.

To echo Remi Yergeau, “I am invoking...the ways in which autistic people seek to queer these domains [for Yergeau, ethics, philosophy, cognition, and politics], to fuck up that which is already fucked up” (2018, 6). Yergeau also argues that “autistic conventions can be more

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<sup>17</sup> And it is disciplinary cohesion that these collections seek, whether intentionally or unintentionally, although even Ballif recognizes that the RSQ collection was an impossible task; however, it was one that she writes was “rendered possible” (232). I’m not quite sure I agree with Ballif, but I am also not sure I need to. There is possibility in impossibility.

capaciously read as a neuroqueer mode of engaging, resisting, claiming, and contrasting the interstices of sociality” (23). The keywords of this project are intentionally built to serve as my own interstices of sociality, my own interventions into the oftentimes constricting methodological frameworks provided for the construction of a dissertation.

Anxiety  
Lossy  
DEI  
Introduction  
Revolutionary  
Feeling  
Wynter  
Rusk & Rebellion  
Dancing  
Emergence  
Queer/Image/Archive  
Abolition  
Movement

*Figure 1 Screenshot of the keywords featured on the project's site.*

This project, and its keywords, will consist of historical analyses, personal essays, poetic interstices, rants, and attempts to tease the ruptures in spacetime that both connect and disconnect the complex histories of disability justice. While I intend for these keywords to loosely tie back to the objective of this project, that of analyzing the interconnections of the insane asylum/psych ward/state hospital with the plantation economy and rise of the prison industrial complex, this project will constantly swerve in and out of a specific objective. It will dance and move in unpredictable ways. I ask the reader to dance with me. I ask you to dance with me. We'll come back to dancing later.

**This project is nothing but a neuroqueer, mad, disabled, rhetorical dance.**

## THE DIGITAL PROJECT

This dissertation is a digital project that will be housed at <https://www.abolishthepsychward.com/>. In a sense, this project is itself an anti- or non-structure. Each word or set of words is hyperlinked to a keyword of the project. For the purposes of accessibility, links to each page is included in the menu at the top of this site. As can be implied by the (non)structure of this website, the project will have no conclusion, only gestures toward a world - or new worlds - in which the psych ward could and *must* be abolished as part of the ongoing struggle for abolitionist revolution. The project is technically publicly published, but as the author I reserve the right to protect the site with a password at any time. The purpose for the possible password protection would be to prepare a much more thorough text or manuscript for circulation.

When the reader comes across the swirly image below, they can click on it, and it will take them to a random page within the project.



*Figure 2 Image of a swirl to serve as an example of the hyperlinked image that can be found in the digital project.*

Each section of the project consists of images or other multimedia in addition to predominantly text-based content. There are also a considerable number of hyperlinks, which I address on the page titled “Lossy.”

### ***Instructions on How to Annotate the Digital Text***

The following information is for individuals who wish to annotate the text, particularly members of my dissertation committee.

1. Visit <https://hypothes.is>.

2. Sign up for a Hypothesis account

Go to the registration page. All you'll need to sign up for a Hypothesis account is an email address and a username. You should receive a confirmation email shortly—check your spam box if not.

While you will register at the Hypothesis site, you'll more typically be signing in through the annotation sidebar after activating Hypothesis using the Chrome extension or some other means.

3. Get the Chrome extension. Because Chrome is the optimal browser for using Hypothesis, Hypothesis recommends downloading Chrome on your personal computer if you haven't already and adding our Chrome extension. You can do so at the website or [through the Chrome store](#). Here's [a tutorial slideshow on how to install the Chrome extension](#).

4. Start annotating. Navigate to a webpage that you have been asked to annotate and activate the Chrome extension by pressing the greyed out button in the upper righthand corner of the browser.

5. [Click here](#) to access a guide provided by Hypothesis, from which this information was gathered. Direct URL: <https://web.hypothes.is/quick-start-guide-for-students/>.

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## VITA

A digital version of the author's vita is available at [codyjacksonsite.wordpress.com](http://codyjacksonsite.wordpress.com).