

# Toward a Feminist Reading of the Disability Memoir: The Critical Necessity for Intertextuality in Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted and Madness*.

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## Toward a Feminist Reading of the Disability Memoir: The Critical Necessity for Intertextuality in Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted and Madness*

*Ally Day*

### Abstract

In this paper, I argue that, through an examination of Hornbacher's intentional rhetorical intertextuality, we can provide a feminist reading of disability life writing that resists essentializing assumptions about illness and leaves room for intersectional understandings of disability key for feminist analysis. I ask: How does the comorbidity of mental illness challenge our understandings of the self in disability life writing? What does disability life writing, when mental illness is

taken into account, do for Couser's understanding of Disability as Identity? Using feminist theorists Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook's recent identification of intertextuality as a methodological tool for deconstructing representation, my reading of Hornbacher's texts recognizes the moments where both *Madness* and *Wasted* present an incomplete rhetorical meaning, one that relies on the reader to draw on knowledge from both texts for a more complete symbolic recognition. A combination of trauma theory, disability theory, and feminist autobiographical theory all contribute to a feminist reading of disability life writing essential for expanding representations of mental illness.

## Keywords

mental illness; intertextuality; disability life writing; feminist autobiographical theory; feminist trauma theory

## Full Text:

[HTML](#)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v31i2.1591>

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ISSN: 2159-8371 (Online); 1041-5718 (Print)

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