

WRITING TO FEEL / FEELING TO WRITE: UTILIZING EMOTION THEORY AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES IN CREATIVE WRITING PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

Although undergraduate creative writing courses routinely ask students to create “emotionally complex” characters, engage peers in the emotionally charged experience of workshopping, and scrutinize their personal investments in a story during its evaluation, very little attention has been paid to emotional schooling in creative writing instruction. When the role of emotion in creative writing is broached, it is typically presented in dualistic terms that preserve a binary opposition of feeling and thinking, even though the need to theorize emotions as a “tight braid of affect and judgment” has already been well-argued in feminist epistemology by Arlie Hochschild (1983) and Alison Jagger (1989), and in rhetoric and composition by Alice Brand (1989, 1994), Lynn Worsham (1998), and Megan Boler (1999). My dissertation argues that the core questions for emotion studies can be read as answers for the problems found in the scholarship of creative writing pedagogy, which currently seeks the “perfect combination of praxis and theory” and continues to argue for emotional investment in the writing process and emotional distancing in the workshop process (Blythe and Sweet 307).

Specifically, I demonstrate, through pedagogical trials in my own classrooms, how aspects of Boler’s “testimonial readings,” performance studies pedagogies, and recent translations of Stanislavski’s “emotion memory” can be used to engage craft criticism and emotion theory in workshop *and* allow creative writing students to recognize emotions as both personally felt and socially constructed.