

Academic Writing as a Bodily Experience

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Allowing Yourself to Feel — A Check-List

So, how are you doing?

Are you okay?

- Yes, why wouldn't I be?
- You mean, am I okay with my writing or in general, like in my life?
- I don't know.
- No, I don't feel so good today.

Did you write?

- Well, we had to, right? So yes, I wrote *something*.
 - But it feels hard/wrong for me to actually answer "yes".
 - Do you feel that in order for you to be able to say "I wrote", it would need to be...
 - more?
 - more substantial?
 - more structured?
- No, I didn't.
 - I didn't write anything *at all*.
 - Well, I did write a few things, but this is not *really* writing, so...

Did you notice it when I put music on?

- Oh my God, there was music?!
- Yes, I noticed it...
 - and it totally distracted me
 - and I really enjoyed it
 - and _____ [describe it in your own words]

Do you feel that these questions are irrelevant to your writing?

- Yes ("Academic writing is/should be (addressed as) a purely intellectual matter")
- Mmh, I'm not sure ("I want to know more but I'm not super convinced")
- Oh, no, these questions definitely resonate with me ("Tell me more!")

And yet... there could be a lot more, such as:

- How did you sleep this night?
- How does it feel to be in a room with other people?
- Do you like that chair?
- Did you arrive just on time, too early, too late?
- Did you drink enough/too much coffee/tea/water/juice this morning?
- What language(s) did you speak, hear, read prior to the workshop?
- _____

Finally, let's get a grasp at what how you could have interpreted the question—what writing means to you:

- How do you feel about writing?
- How do you describe the process of writing?
- What is your relationship to writing?
- _____

Partner exercise

(in speaking, not in writing, but I mean, feel free to write if you want to):

What *counts as* writing to you?

The materiality of writing

Before going through *what* you wrote, ask yourself **how you wrote**:

- on a piece of paper, and if so
 - on a notebook that is special to you or that you're using specifically for your research
 - on a random piece of paper that you might throw away right after the workshop
 - with a pen, or even several pens from different colors that you really like
 - with the first pen that you could find
 - with a pen that someone lent you (because you never carry a pen with you)
- on your laptop, and if so
 - in a new document that you opened for the workshop
 - this document already has a name
 - with a specific font, which is the one you feel comfortable with
 - with the font that was automatically inserted
- on your tablet or your smartphone

And then, *what* did you write, not in terms of content, but...

- were there words?
- sentences?
- paragraphs?

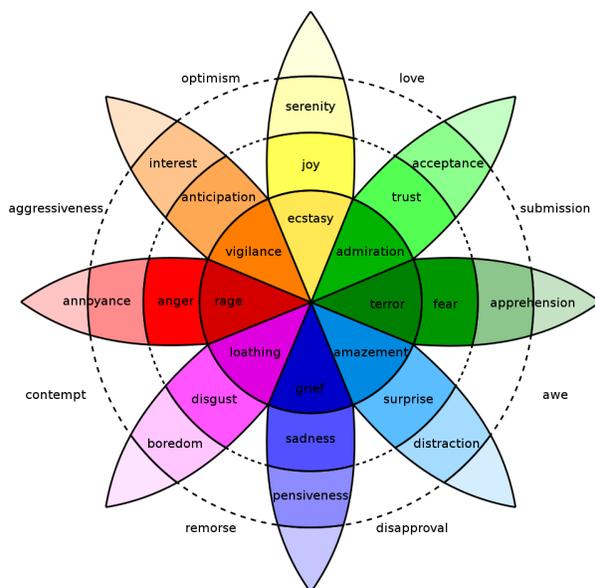
And **how does it look like** on your page?

- did you capitalize anything?
- did you underline anything?
- did you italicize anything?
- did you draw anything?
- did you make connections, for instance with arrows?
- did you delete a lot (on a laptop), or made any words look unrecognizable (on paper)?

Writing with your body, writing as a body

During that process, you *felt*...

- impatient
- energized
- stressed
- happy
- bored
- lost
- hungry
- tired
- ... or anything on this figure?
- or anything else?



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Delving further, whether you could write or not...

- you found the exercise way **too unspecific**, “I mean, how can we say anything about what X *means* if we have not *defined* what X *is* before?!”
- you found the exercise way **too personal**, “I mean, why should I be saying what writing means to *me*, aren’t there any (great, senior) academics who have already said it (better)?!”
- you found the exercise way **too quick**, “I’m happy to give it a try, but ten minutes?!”

