

The Writing Self and the Psychiatric Patient

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Drawing from my experiences as a volunteer writing teacher for psychiatric patients on the locked wards of the Payne Whitney Clinic in New York City, I ask how in an age of “biological psychiatry,” writing might be framed as a therapeutic activity for people diagnosed with mental illness. I argue that many of the current models in psychiatry are too rigid and/or confused to adequately address the subtle and beneficial effects writing has for individual patients. The objectification of inner thoughts, stories, and emotions in texts can help organize a person’s view of his or her subjectivity in ways that enhance reflection.

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