



WRITING FROM THE UNKNOWN

KATELYN PETERS

I love to think about writing. I love to talk about writing. I linger here, vacillating in the abyss between intention and attempt, because there is no risk. Thoughts are private, speech can be forgotten, but I shy away from the materiality of written language. My ideas, once they become tangible in word form, are more permanent than I am. This is part of my fear: I am writing something lasting, a representation of myself, and its credibility lies in the eyes of an unknown audience. When I write, I wonder about my own thoughts, but I also wonder what others think of my thoughts.

The value of my writing is that I am a human expressing the unique experience of what it is like to be inside my body. I am making myself—something intimate, vulnerable, and sacred—known. The stakes are high for all of my writing. I want my writing to represent who I am, because the way I think *is* who I am. The writing *is* me.

If I save up and polish words before I write them, I evade the vulnerability of sending an idea out into the world in its infant stage, and the subsequent feeling that it is myself—not fully formed, inadequate, imperfect—that I am extending. I feel like my ideas have to be perfect, to accurately express what I want to say, before I write them down.

My reaction to this is to avoid writing.

I overcome this faltering by writing into insight. Writing into insight is admitting that I can never know exactly what I am going to say before I begin writing. When I practice writing into insight, I begin before I am ready, before I know whether what I want to say is novel or important. This process inverts thesis-based essay writing. When a writer begins with a thesis statement in mind, they establish that their thinking is done before the writing starts.

Writing into insight is a practice in trust; I learn to trust the writing process when I start with a question and write toward its resolution. This exercise demonstrates a reverence for writing as an active procedure. I can write my way into things I could not think myself into. Composition is the act of interrogating thinking: I begin to write and then I begin to know. My writing reveals that I am capable of more than I believed I was.

What are you failing to learn, and what are you neglecting to share about your form of divination, when you suspend writing? Write about what you want to learn. Write about who you are becoming and become that person. You are a body of language like you are a body of knowledge. It is necessary that even the smallest act of adding a voice and sharing a body is honored. So I type slowly when I write, hoping to unearth something in the pauses between words that I have never thought before.