

Write What You Don't Know
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We open the door of the unknown together.
We invite each other to experience the miracle of being.
—Guillermo Cuella

Whatever inspiration is, it's born from a continuous "I don't know."
—Wisława Szymborska

Not knowing isn't ignorance. (Fear springs from ignorance.)
Not knowing is a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust,
leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result,
regarding as possible all manner of response.
—artist, Ann Hamilton, "Making Not Knowing" adapted from 2005 commencement
address to The School of the Art Institute in Chicago

Ways to not know:

ask questions
write from the point of view of something else
write a "truth," then write its opposite truth
wait
lean into metaphor
write multiple endings
write about something you know nothing about, do research, and let that drive the poem
write I don't know
add words such as perhaps, maybe, it could be, I wonder, sometimes
lean into the absurd

Brotherhood

—Octavio Paz (1914-1998)
Homage to Claudius Ptolemy

I am a man: little do I last
and the night is enormous.
But I look up:
the stars write.
Unknowing I understand:
I too am written,
and at this very moment
someone spells me out.

from *Octavio Paz: Collected Poems, 1957-1987*, trans. Eliot Weinberger (New Directions, 1991)

The Ragged and the Beautiful

—Safiya Sinclair

Doubt is a storming bull, crashing through
the blue-wide windows of myself. Here in the heart
of my heart where it never stops raining,

I am an outsider looking in. But in the garden
of my good days, no body is wrong. Here every
flower grows ragged and sideways and always

beautiful. We bloom with the outcasts,
our soon-to-be sunlit, we dreamers. We are strange
and unbelonging. Yes. We are just enough

of ourselves to catch the wind in our feathers,
and fly so perfectly away.

from American Life in Poetry (April 5, 2021)

Sometimes

—Hermann Hesse, translated by Anne E. G. Nydam (1877-1962, German)

Sometimes, when a bird calls,
Or a wind moves through the brush,
Or a dog barks in a distant farmyard,
I must listen a long time, and hush.

My soul flies back to where,
Before a thousand forgotten years begin,
The bird and the waving wind
Were like me, and were my kin.

My soul becomes a tree, an animal,
A cloud woven across the sky.
Changed and unfamiliar it turns back
And questions me. How shall I reply?

from nydamprintsblackandwhite.blogspot.com