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Kim Addonizio

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How I Write

Abstract

I write by osmosis. I write by divine decree. I write by heart, the heart shaking itself off like a dog that has nearly drowned in light. Or the heart dimly lit, sputtering and darkening, the heart shattering and held together again with duct tape and kindergarten paste. I write by memory, which is a beautiful liar. I write lies. I write in an alternate universe, in bed, hating the world and the word "I." I write at a desk and feel virtuous. I write without a thought in my head. I write groveling for love and attention, and indifferent to everyone and everything.

Keywords

writing, author, creativity

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How I Write

by Kim Addonizio

I write by osmosis. I write by divine decree. I write by heart, the heart shaking itself off like a dog that has nearly drowned in light. Or the heart dimly lit, sputtering and darkening, the heart shattering and held together again with duct tape and kindergarten paste. I write by memory, which is a beautiful liar. I write lies. I write in an alternate universe, in bed, hating the world and the word “I.” I write at a desk and feel virtuous. I write without a thought in my head. I write groveling for love and attention, and indifferent to everyone and everything. I write crap, shit, clichés, whiny complaints, black speculations, goofy formulations, and give up. I go back and write *nada nada nada I suck why can't I write anything*, and give up again. I write something I like and the next day I realize it's shit. I write a poem, a story, a novel, an essay, a play. Each time I'm lost. Each time I wish I hadn't started down this road, where I can't see my hand in front of my face, a ravine on my right a swamp on my left; there's no one else walking where I'm walking, sometimes I'm crawling, sometimes I stop and weep. Then there are stars, or a cloud shreds itself before the moon, and I get up and keep walking. Sometimes I run and there is no pleasure like running down this road in the near dark, the wind full of voices, the air alive and fluid. I write and it's finally right, the intention rhyming with the result, the marvelous unforeseen surprise of a field flowering with kisses. I write and it's good and I am queen of the kingdom and every flower is for me. I write and it's not good enough; I go and read someone who is very, very good, and feel inspired, and go back and write again. Or feel so discouraged I give up for that day, for a week, for nearly a month, until I stop believing the kingdom exists. I am cursed, until one day, mysteriously, the curse lifts. I go back to writing over and over, the irresistible lover I have known for most of my life, the monster that controls me, the

jabbering creature on my back, the mother who wounds me with grace. I persist. There is a road that doesn't end until I end, and then there is another road, and another I, trying again to tell you something true.

Kim Addonizio is the author, most recently, of *Lucifer at the Starlite: Poems; and Ordinary Genius: A Guide for the Poet Within*, both from W.W. Norton. Her collection of stories, *The Palace of Illusions*, is forthcoming from Counterpoint/Soft Skull in 2014. She teaches writing workshops at her home in Oakland, CA and online. Visit her at www.kimaddonizio.com.

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