



Who's Writing This?: Fifty-five Writers on Humor, Courage, Self-Loathing, and the Creative Process

Dan Halpern

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After seeing a new translation of Jorge Luis Borges's mini-essay "Borges and I" (included here), Halpern asked numerous writers to muse briefly on "the fictional persona 'behind the scenes,'" the alter(ed) ego that accompanies creation.

He asked some 50 well-known authors-such as Margaret Atwood, Pat Conroy, William Gass, Czeslaw Milosz, James Michener, Joyce Carol Oates, and Cynthia Ozick-to write pieces on this idea. The essays are mostly one- to two-page snapshots and vary widely as to approach. Some are touching, others delightfully silly.

Edward Gorey anagrams his name into those of characters including Ogdred Weary. Others, such as Cecil Brown, posit earthier personas: "He is the proper Negro who is ashamed of me, the nigger." And still others are reflective: Susan Sontag recalls her longtime disavowal of her work and finally comes to feel that "the writer is me: not my double" and thus she is "both Dr. Frankenstein and the monster." Each contributor also submitted a whimsical self-portrait.

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