



# The Secret Miracle: The Novelist's Handbook

*Daniel Alarcon*

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**The world's best contemporary writers—from Michael Chabon and Claire Messud to Jonathan Lethem and Amy Tan—engage in a wide-ranging, insightful, and oft- surprising roundtable discussion on the art of writing fiction**

Drawing back the curtain on the mysterious process of writing novels, *The Secret Miracle* brings together the foremost practitioners of the craft to discuss how they write. Paul Auster, Roddy Doyle, Allegra Goodman, Aleksandar Hemon, Mario Vargas Llosa, Susan Minot, Rick Moody, Haruki Murakami, George Pelecanos, Gary Shteyngart, and others take us step by step through the alchemy of writing fiction, answering everything from nuts-and-bolts queries—"Do you outline?"—to perennial questions posed by writers and readers alike: "What makes a character compelling?"

From Stephen King's deadpan distinction between novels and short stories ("Novels are longer and have more s\*\*t in them") to Colm Toibin's anti-romanticized take on his characters ("They are just words") to José Manuel Prieto's mature perspective on the anxieties of influence ("Influences are felt or weigh you down more when young"), every page contains insights found nowhere else.

With honesty, humor, and elegance, *The Secret Miracle* gives both aspiring writers and lovers of literature a master class in the art of writing.

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