



ILLUMINATIONS

Great Writers on Writing

E. L. Doctorow

“

A novelist is a specialist in nothing, unendowed by discipline and therefore able to travel back and forth freely across the borders that demarcate disciplines. I can employ the concepts of science, the poetics of theology. I can speak as an anthropologist, a philosopher, a pornographer. I can employ the materials of history, I can report as a journalist, I can resort to confession, autobiography, myths, legends, dreams, hallucinations, and the mutterings of poor mad people in the street. All of these have equal weight as far as I am concerned. I will use all the words from every mode of thinking with the assurance that they can meld into a sensible composition. I believe so completely in fiction that I regard it as a mega-discipline, one that incorporates all others, blurs the genres, whips together fact and imagination, and at its best reasserts the authority of the single unaffiliated mind to render the world. Just as it did in ancient times, when the story was a knowledge system, indeed the primary means of organizing and storing knowledge....

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