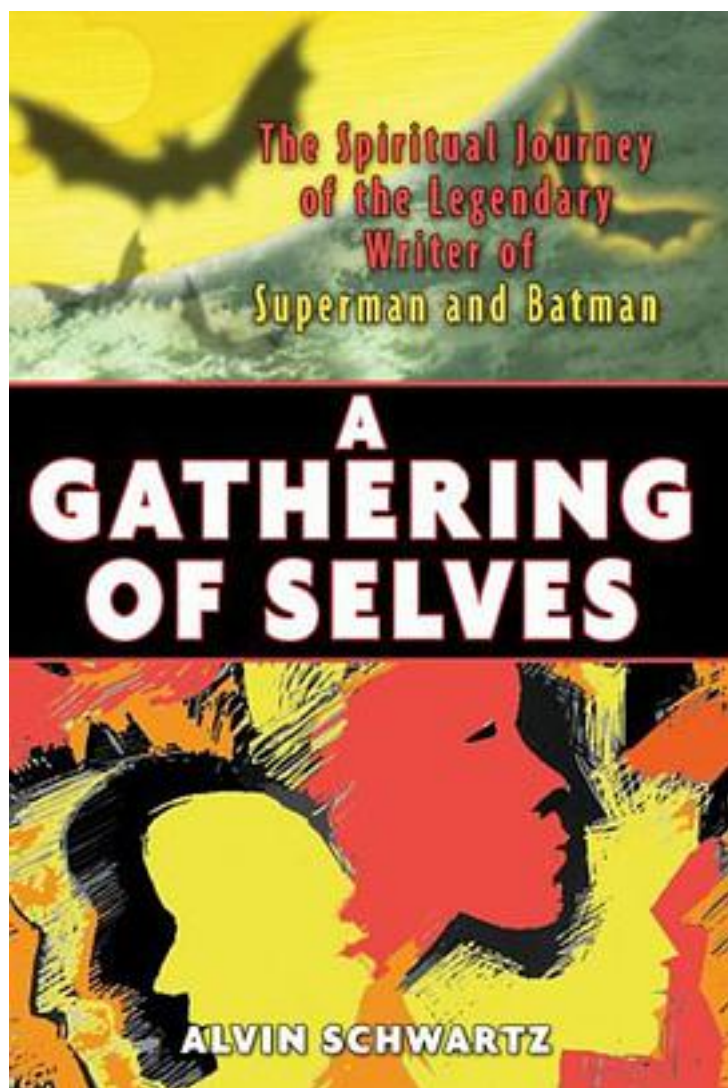


A Gathering of Selves



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著者:Schwartz, Alvin

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For 17 years, Alvin Schwartz lived a double life, one half of which was spent writing the adventures of "Batman" and "Superman", the other half writing novels and spending time with members of New York's intellectual society such as Saul Bellow and Jackson Pollack. During this period, his characters had taken on lives of their own and he realised that his writing of their adventures was more like dictation than creation. He found that personalities can be taken off and on like the suits worn by his superheroes and that the lives of Batman and Superman were melding into his own. The journey of inner awareness that Schwartz undertook at the prompting of the tulpa Thongden (who appeared in his earlier book "An Unlikely Prophet") evoked a great sense of metaphysical unrest, which is where this story begins. With the aid of his mentor, Thongden, Schwartz is carried beyond the ordinary boundaries of personal identity into an interpersonal consciousness inhabited by a multitude of selves, including the dark figure of Batman. While in "An Unlikely Prophet", Schwartz was able to channel the ever-present figure of Superman into a positive voyage of self-discovery, in "A Gathering of Selves" he uses the raw strength offered by Batman to carry him to the next stage of understanding: What we think of as "self" is but one layer of an onion-like structure of multiple selves that co-exist, representing the foundation of the fundamental unity of all being.

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目录:

[A Gathering of Selves 下载链接1](#)

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