



# Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else

*C.D. Rose*

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**Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else** C.D. Rose

**In the offbeat style of Wes Anderson, a hilariously charming novel about a heartbroken man trying to redeem himself by championing forgotten books.**

Fleeing heartbreak, an unnamed author goes to an unnamed city to give a series of lectures at an unnamed university about forgotten books...only to find himself involved in a mystery when it turns out the professor who invited him is no where to be found, and no one seems quite sure why he's there.

## Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else Details

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## From Reader Review Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else for online ebook

### Nicole Beaudry says

Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else calls on books like Calvino's *If On A Winter's Night A Traveler*, leaning heavily on love of literature to build a narrative backbone. Our unnamed narrator is in many ways a cliché - he is an academic who drinks heavily, who doubts himself, with an acerbic tongue and wry wit and an inability, it seems, to build fruitful, healthy relationships. In fact, it seems the only long-term relationships he has are with books, particularly those which find themselves forgotten, incapable of breaking into the literary canon. There is a parallel drawn here between the subject matter he has chosen to specialize in, and his own inability, it seems, to maintain a societal foothold. His relationships disintegrate, he frequently finds himself on uneven footing with the rest of the world, his own work is unlikely to do anything groundbreaking, given its subject matter.

Rose, who is both shockingly funny and eloquent, maintains an accessible prose throughout the whole novel, despite its academic subject matter and surrealist treatment of concepts of time, memory, place, literature and personhood. We have a character who may be two characters in that they may be siblings or a single individual exploring both sides of a gender binary, we have a city that is never the same despite never specifically changing although everybody who lives there insists that it does, books that appear and disappear, an author who may or may not have been a person and may or may not have written anything at all, whose grave appears and disappears between two non-descript buildings that may or may not be the very ones in which our narrator has spent his time in the city. With all that, and the lectures at the beginning of every section of plot that seem to mirror the goings on for the narrator, it would become very easy for this book to either lose hold of the reader in dense prose, or in dense plot - neither happens. The language, though lovely, is easy to hold on to, and the plot slides between our fingers like a rope, tethering us to the narrator.

It is, most likely, because the narrator is stable, and because it is a first person narrative. Although I tend not to enjoy first person narratives, it is the clichéd narrator that makes this work. He is recognizable, stable, in unfamiliar surroundings, and he anchors the reader, giving them a touchstone to refer back to when things become more confusing than not. The supporting cast are too bizarre to be clichéd, although at some points the extremity of their oddities become cliché, but they provide colour and humour to the perplexing circumstances in which the narrator finds himself, recounted to the reader whom he knows is a reader. It's a layered narrative, but one that Rose takes care with, so as not to become one of the books he pokes fun at throughout the duration of the story - these books which our narrator lectures on to a subsequently emptier and emptier room.

All in all, *Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else* is clever, funny, extremely bright, and a reminder to all of us who love books that we're sure to love a book that everybody else will forget about while we hang on to our grubby single edition with both hands, breathing life into a story that may or may not be forgotten for good reason.

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### Emily Burke says

Loved it - reminded me of *The Unconsoled* and another book whose title I can't remember-which seems fitting. I love & hate modernist literature in equal measure so am glad to have stumbled upon this ode & spoof.

## Lizzytish says

This should be titled, "I Don't Know What's What Or Who Anyone Else Is."

it was not charming, nor funny.

I enjoy quirky books, but this was too far out there.

I enjoyed the prose of the fictional books however.

Sorry, just not my type.

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## Frances says

I selected this book from an e-mail from the publisher, Melville House. They were located in our old neighborhood of Dumbo, and I wanted to get one of their books for sentimental purposes.

It ended up being a perfect selection. I liked the continuously tilting unknowns that seemed to move ever father away. A very creative book. And yes, charming, as noted on the back of the book.

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## Sam says

### 2.5

*Huge thank you to Penguin Canada for this ARC!*

This pains me, but I struggled with this book. I picked it up on a whim at this year's Ontario Library Super Conference after reading the blurb. I love the "Who's Who" series, and I think that's entirely where my brain was going when reading this novel.

It was partially that, and partially something harder to describe. This is a book that features "lectures" (or rather, waxings) on particular novels, and as well as the story of an unnamed author and journey through an unnamed Middle-European city. No one in this novel really has a name or even a role persay -- bur rather, this is a novel that feels very meditative and thoughtful, but nothing really happens either.

That's ultimately what I struggled with. I don't mind a novel that feels aimless, let alone one that is poetic and thoughtful, but the writing in this book felt so dense at times that for every beautiful line or passage, there was something hard or difficult to navigate through in terms of the writing.

This is a book lover's book for sure, and it's a love letter to readers and that is abundantly clear. I just wish I had connected more with it or had been in a better head space to appreciate a lot of what C.D Rose was attempting to accomplish here.

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## Michael Moglia says

Solid book.

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## Joe Pace says

Interesting style but not my kettle of fish

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## jeremy says

*it may well be nonsense, but the question is worth asking: how far do books contribute to actually causing events in the physical world—be they good or bad? we like to tell ourselves that great literature builds empathy, provides insight into other worlds, ennobles the spirit and so on and so on—but if it can do that, then surely it also has the power to do the opposite.*

situated somewhere near constellations borges and calvino (and the event horizon of bolaño's *nazi literature in the americas*), c.d. rose's *who's who when everyone is someone else* is the playful tale of an author tasked with delivering lectures on forgotten, neglected, and overlooked books of the past. referencing his own previous work of fiction, *the biographical dictionary of literary failure*, rose's new novel unfurls within a mysterious town, peppered with enigmatic figures benign and otherwise. *who's who when everyone is someone else* is part mystery, part literary novel, and part love letter and testament to the enduring power of books and reading. rose deftly creates (imaginary) novels which form the basis of his main character's lecture series, leading one to hope (however against hope) that such books were actually real. references, allusions, and in-the-know nods abound, though even the most learned, earnest reader will undoubtedly miss many (for example, mention of grady tripp's *the arsonist's girl* is undoubtedly a hat tip to michael chabon's *wonder boys*, where the professorial protagonist writes a bestselling novel called *the arsonist's daughter*).

*who's who when everyone is someone else* is often witty, tantalizing, and full of spirit. a longer or more fully-fleshed treatment might have coalesced better, but, nonetheless, rose's fiction is great fun.

*it has taken its toll, i think, all this grubbing in old libraries and bookshops, the damp basements of neglect, all this talking to the aged, the defeated, the deluded and those still with hope yet to be cheated... i had believed i was doing holy work, finding lost manuscripts, resurrecting reputations, at least attempting to witness, to remember, but i had been called a snark, had been accused of laughing at other people's failures while simultaneously failing to create anything of my own. i had tried to find meaning where perhaps there was none. i had stared a little too long into this abyss, i fear.*

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## KarLuis says

An endearing strange loop of a novel which, artfully, does not take itself too seriously to great effect; 3.99/5.

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## karen says

NOW AVAILABLE!!!

*I hate myself when I lack conceptual guts*, frets the protagonist of this book, but that weakness is not one that affects the author.

this is a short novel connected to the author's first book, *The Biographical Dictionary of Literary Failure*; set in an unnamed, "small and somewhat remote city in central Europe," the fictional editor of *b.d.o.l.f.* is called upon to deliver, *a series of ten lectures on lost, forgotten or unjustly neglected books (rather than lost, forgotten or unjustly neglected writers, which had been my previous field.)*

what follows are the transcripts of those lectures, books that do not exist, but many that sound so much fun you wish they did (in other words, the exact same thing as *The Biographical Dictionary of Literary Failure*) and in between those lectures, the author has a book-adventure that reads like a pig pile of borges, calvino, zafon, kafka, and is pretty much exactly what you'd expect - absurd and meandering, full of wordplay and allusions and enough references you'll catch to know there's many more you're missing.

it's clever and fun, but i found i never wanted to read more than a few pages at a time. my tolerance for the absurd has lessened as i've gotten older, so it worked better for me in smaller chunks, and i think i would have preferred a book more that closely mirrored the *Dictionary*; a series of lecture transcripts about imaginary books. he's so good at coming up with plots, concepts and authors that i don't need action and adventure. books are enough. which he should get, since he's also very good at getting to the essence of what makes a booknerd tick:

For many of us, books are our childhood friends and formative experiences. It was an early encounter with a book which, I suspect, had led me to where I found myself right at that moment.

The problem is, I cannot remember *which* book.

As a just-literate child, I had once come across a book in our local library that possessed me. I remember little to nothing of its plot, none of its characters and scarcely any of its words, let alone its title or author, yet that book has haunted me ever since. I remember it as filled with smoke and fire, shadow and flame. I remember its utter mystery and infinite possibility. I was lost, captivated.

The book, of course, had to be returned to the library, and each week I went back there, hoping to borrow it again. I never did. I picked out book after book after book and scoured their pages and pictures and jackets, trying to find a turn of phrase or an illustration I recognized, something which brought the story back to me, but even though I sometimes came close, I never found it again.

I have been looking for that book ever since.

that longing for a forgotten childhood book, the quest for the "original" book in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, the forgotten or destroyed imaginary works rose dreamed up for his two books - it's all tied to the a reader's sense of closure and satisfaction being thwarted by circumstances and it's a very specific haunting itch, which he understands and exploits.

it's overall light and fun, and it's winkingly self-referential, as when he addresses a particular literary device

in one of his lectures:

*Then, of course, there is the book-within-the-book, a device which may look potentially hackneyed today, but seemed so radical as to be off-putting for contemporary readers...The use of the device is, however, far from hackneyed in this book, and thus I have chosen to lecture on it today.*

there are imaginary books with great titles, like *This Dark Night Has Given Me Black Eyes* by Agnar Landvik, which has an even greater story behind the scenes, there's some breathy near-pornographic appreciation of punctuation:

*"I love the way he punctuates."*

*"He certainly has a way with a semicolon."*

*"You like the semicolon?"*

*"Oh God, yes."*

*"Mmm, me too. It's such a rare thing, and so lovely to find someone who likes the semicolon."*

*"It's hard to find someone who can use it so well."*

*"I love how it separates, yet joins."*

there are lovely descriptions in both the physical world:

*The same shabby boxes sat in the opened boot, holding what initially looked like the same books, all broken spines, mildew and sadness.*

and of the psychological composition of the booknerd:

*We were all people that had made ourselves, or each other, up, based on the books we had read. What other way, I wanted to ask, is there to negotiate the real? What other way to be?*

plus, some enviable economy of prose:

*Time passed, whatever.*

i've quoted a lot, because it's a fun book to quote, and even though i "only" gave it a three, it's a high three, and it's more to do with my flickering attention span and the way this book made me drift off into different bookish thoughtspaces than it not being enjoyable.

both this book and the *Dictionary* before it are wonderful at summarizing books i'll never read, but that i can't feel bad about not reading on the grounds that they don't exist. i creep quietly away from reviewing this book with one final, overlong quote because it speaks to all of us:

Why do we pretend to have read books we haven't?

There is surely no shame. A million new books appear every year and we cannot possibly have enough time to have read them all. And there are so many competing demands, after all: I need time to stare out of the window, idly look at newspapers and smoke cigarettes. Do we so

desperately need to stay modish, to have a voice in the cultural conversation? Entire other books have been written telling us how to pretend to have read those we have not. I do not hold with these. I do not lack confidence: I am proud to say I have not read certain things. The unread, after all, still contains its infinite promise.

And yet, and yet, and yet: the words escaped me.

Oh mouth mouth mouth.

Oh drink drink drink.

Oh books. Books books books. There are too many of you. I love you but you overwhelm me. I just need some space sometimes, that's all.

All of us have that guilty pile: the ones we genuinely want to, the ones we think we ought to, the ones we've tried and promised to return to. It grows ever bigger: books proliferate, multiply, swarm, breed each other, parthenogenerate like those strange plants or rare insects which reproduce without sex. Or perhaps books *do* have sex? Quietly, when we aren't looking, making no fuss and leaving little mess but spawning rapidly.

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## **MRIDULA says**

**Rose's *Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else* gives you a glimpse of fiction in its truest sense. It is both witty and mysterious and will keep you entertained throughout.**

The plot takes us through one particular adventure in the life of an Unnamed professor, who has been invited to an unnamed city in Eastern Europe to give a series of lectures on 10 books that have been forgotten over time and deserve more attention. These 10 fictional books engulf us into the world of literary fiction, each book from a different genre and promising a different sort of adventure.

On the other hand, the professor who had initially invited our protagonist is nowhere to be found. A mystery that needs unraveling. While our protagonist walks through the city trying to absorb the society and the culture, he also faces a world where no question has a straight answer, and he is eventually left alone to figure it all out.

The characters are complex, with behavior as strange as it can get (not in a creepy way at all), and the writing is fairly simple. The language kept me hooked and it feels like visiting multiple worlds and authors in the same book. (well, that's how it's supposed to be).

*Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else* gets interesting with every page and there's humor at every curb. The theme is definitely a novel one and would capture your attention too.

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## **Pop Bop says**

Come In, Sit Down, Read This For A While. Think, Enjoy, and Then Pick Up Where You Left Off and Read Some More.

"There are times when narrators tell stories, and times when the narrators themselves are the story. This book

is both." (p. 218)

It seems to me that in lots of postmodern novels it's clear that the author is pretty impressed with himself and his talents, but neither likes nor trusts his readers. That's not the case here. This book is almost limitlessly playful and entertaining, but one of the strongest impressions you get is that the author, through our amiable, witty and vastly erudite narrator, is engaged primarily in the task of delighting and befriending, in a confiding and conspiratorial way, the reader. Almost everything about this book is imaginary, (that's the currency of fiction, after all), but it's one of those books that you wish were somehow real.

As a practical matter this is two entirely separate, although thematically connected, books. On the one hand we have the story of an unnamed narrator, in an unidentified city, engaged in a circular and mystifying adventure. On the other hand we have a series of nine complete lectures given by this unnamed hero. In which he describes and defends nine books that have become undeservedly neglected or forgotten.

So, if you enjoy books about non-existent books, (you know, the ones that collect forewords to books that were never written, or list imaginary library holdings, or just generally go all Borges on you), then you'll love this book. The forgotten books are fascinating and the lectures are compelling, clever, and varied. Because the forgotten books are so different, (mystery, Gothic, romance, history, kitchen sink, experimental, and so on), each lecture allows our author/narrator to comment on and illuminate different genres and styles without being limited by the actual words in any actual books. Hypothetical lectures about imaginary books are the best, I've discovered.

But you can put that aside if you wish. In between lectures our hero wanders around the vaguely dreary, vaguely Eastern European city, becoming more and more confused as the city changes shape, buildings move around, people become different people, ghosts and specters drift in and out, and no one will ever give a definite answer to any question, ever. Comparisons are tricky things, but this felt like the movie "Dark City", written by Jan Morris in the style of "Last Letters From Hav", set in a place imagined by Carlos Zafon, then translated into the Italian by Italo Calvino, then translated into German by Franz Kafka, and then proofread, edited and brought back into English by Aldous Huxley on a good day.

But put all that aside as well, and just remember this - there is at least one amusing line, one very funny line, (there's a difference), two great deadpan lines, one remarkably clever and literate line, and two thought provoking lines, on virtually every page. You just can't beat that.

(Please note that I received a free advance copy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

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## **Zachary Houle says**

Writers write. Writers read. And so it's no shock that the favourite subject of writers is reading, often turning bits of writerly hubris about reading into a book. C.D. Rose has written one such novel called *Who's Who When Everyone is Someone Else* that features a man who is invited to lecture in an unnamed middle European city on the subject of 10 forgotten books?—?books that have silently gone out of print, but deserve to be championed. The problem is, the Professor who invited him to lecture is nowhere to be found, and the attendance for these lectures are fledging at best.

To that end, *Who's Who* is a work of humourously absurdist fiction. It reminded me a lot of latter period Jonathan Lethem?—?particularly his novella *This Shape We're In*, which is something of a forgotten book in

and of itself as it initially had a modest print run through McSweeney's. The style and substance are vaguely Lethem-esque, to put it another way. But Who's Who is a book that defends a dwindling artform. You know that a book like this might be needed when the leader of the free world doesn't seem to read any books. (Well, perhaps other than his own.)

Read the rest here: [https://medium.com/@zachary\\_houle/a-r...](https://medium.com/@zachary_houle/a-r...)

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### **Rebecca says**

I found this book to be a pretentious slog. It described fictional lost works that sounded terrible and was bound together by narration that was meant to be intriguing and mysterious but felt monochrome and grey instead. The last page says it hopes it was not boring as boredom is the worst thing. Too bad that wasn't on the cover. I could have avoided it all together. I think this book was supposed to be funny at parts but I don't think I ever even cracked a smile.

I will say the cover art is genius so kudos to the artist/designer.

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### **Ellen says**

This is a really unusual story in which neither the reader nor the narrator knows for certain what is true vs. what is false. The narrator, a writer and professor, is asked by a professor at a university in an unnamed Balkan state to give a series of lectures on "bad books"; he selects these books by going through his notebooks, then writes up his lecture for each book. His procedure in giving the lectures is to begin by reading from the particular book and, with the student audience and other professors listening carefully, he explains why each book is "bad" - poorly written, unsuccessfully realized characters, and the like.

As we read on, it becomes clear that nothing in his recounting of his adventures after he gets to country is absolutely true. He checks into a hotel and discovers that its closet is loaded with overcoats, at least one of which looks the same as his own. He doesn't meet the professor who'd invited him to lecture; instead he is under the wing of a woman professor: The Professora, who is critical of his lectures yet wants him to sit with her in her office and drink while she chainsmokes for hours. He's often with the Professora's assistant, Ana, who may or may not be a woman. Later in the book we meet her brother, Oto, who looks exactly like her. He may not exist at all. The original professor who'd contacted him originally shows up once or twice and then disappears. The Professora or Ana tell him the professor has died, but that may not be true because the writer sees the professor in the narrator's bar, the "? Cafe". The weirdness continues until no one has a clue about reality vs. imaginative scenes and people.

Suffice it to say that once I began reading this novel I found myself unable to put it down. I finished reading it in a record three days. I'd definitely recommend this book to my friends and other readers who enjoy a little unreality in the books they read.

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