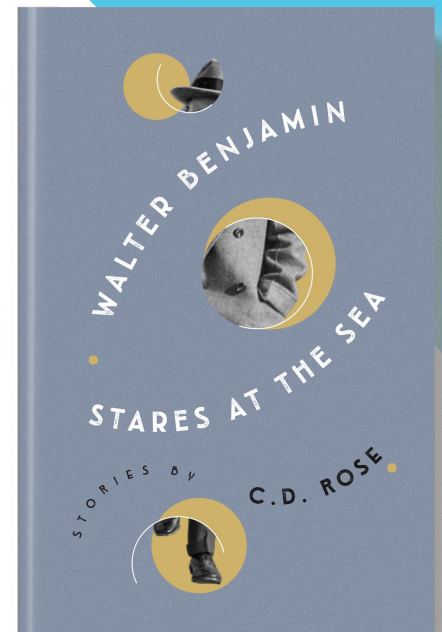


WALTER BENJAMIN STARES AT THE SEA

C.D. Rose

Hardcover 978-1-68589-084-1

eBook 978-1-68589-085-8



“A book that belongs on the same shelf as Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*,” Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*, and several works by Zoran Zivkovic, Stanislaw Lem and David Markson.”

— Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post*

“Taut, serene prose draws the reader into the labyrinthine world of these obliquely connected stories ... Rose presents his finest works yet.”

—Booklist

INTRODUCTION

A collection of entrancing literary fables from an underrated master of the form... Perfect for the fans of David Mitchell, Julio Cortázar and Steven Barthelme are these 15 dreamlike tales.

Welcome to the fictional universe of C. D. Rose, whose stories seem to be set in some unidentifiable but vaguely Mitteleuropean nation, and likewise have an uncanny sense of timelessness — the time could be some cobblestoned Victorian past era, or the present, or even the future.

In these 19 dreamlike tales, ghosts of the past mingle with the quiddities of modernity in a bewitching stew where lost masterpieces surface with translations in an invisible language, where image and photograph become mystically entwined, and where the very nature of reality takes on a shimmering sense of possibility and illusion.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. How does Rose transition between the points of view of each character in “Ognosia”? What roles do looking and recognition play in these perspective shifts? What role do they play in the story as a whole?
2. “But pianos and violins will never really be tamed, because there’s always something about violins and pianos that frightens people, something that disturbs them, because violins and pianos are horses” (68). What does it mean for an instrument to be untamable?
3. In “The Neva Star,” what effect does naming each of the men Sergei have? Are you able to tell them apart? What other distortions and surrealist techniques does Rose use?



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4. What role does technology play in Rose's stories? Do you feel nostalgia for a time before the digital age?
5. In "St. Augustine Checks His Twitter Feed," we see the internal dialogue of St. Augustine after posting something to Twitter. What is Rose saying about social media and its effects?
6. In "What Remains of Claire Blanck," the narrator observes that "all short stories are about loss" (169). What do you imagine could've been "lost" in Rose's stories? Or, what does the narrative leave out?
7. How do you think the structure of "To Athens" contributes to its purpose? What two narratives are being shown and how are they interconnected?
8. Time is a common thread that Rose weaves throughout the stories. Where can you identify time? How is Rose representing it?
9. Rose writes, "a story of things that flicker, things that fade" (176), alluding to the later story title. Why does Rose make this allusion? How are the two related?
10. "The Disappearer," "Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man," and "Everything is Subject to Motion, and Everything is Motion's Subject" tell the stories of lesser-known French pioneers in the field of photography. How is the reputation of each of these men at stake? How has Rose gone about fictionalizing their lives?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

C.D. ROSE was born in the north of England and has lived in a number of countries, including Italy, France and the USA. He holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia, and a PhD from Edge Hill University. Though he currently lives in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, he is at home anywhere there are dark bars, dusty libraries, and good second-hand bookshops.

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