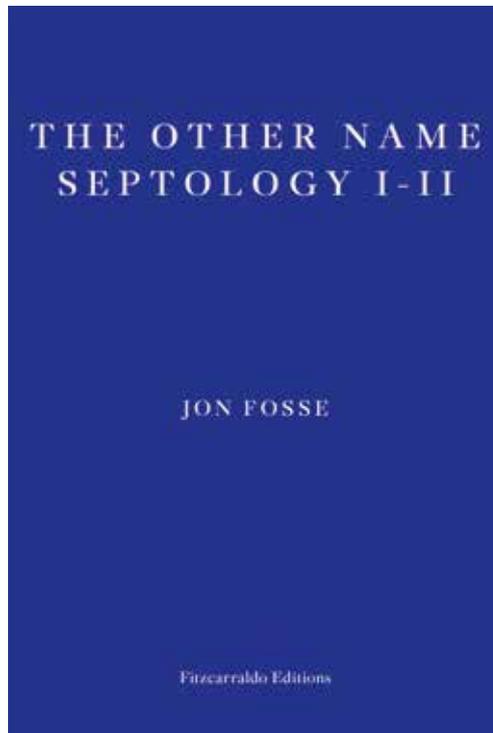


The
2020
International
Booker
Prize

Readers' Guide



The Other Name: Septology I-II

Jon Fosse

Translated by Damion Searls

Fitzcarraldo Editions

Other novels by Jon Fosse
Melancholy (1995-1999)
Morning and Evening (2000)
Trilogy (2014)
Scenes from a Childhood (2018)

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About the author

Jon Fosse was born on the west coast of Norway in September 1959. He is the recipient of numerous prestigious prizes, both in his native Norway and abroad. Since his 1983 fiction debut, *Raudt, svart* (*Red, Black*), Fosse has written prose, poetry, essays, short stories, children's books, and more than 40 plays, with more than 1,000 productions performed and translations into 50 languages. *The Other Name* is the first volume in *Septology*, his latest prose work, which will be published in three volumes by Fitzcarraldo Editions. He lives in Oslo, Norway.

About the translator

Damion Searls was born in New York City, USA, in May 1971. He is a translator from German, Norwegian, French, and Dutch and a writer in English. He has translated four books and a libretto by Jon Fosse – *Melancholy* (co-translated with Grethe Kvernes), *Aliss at the Fire, Morning and Evening* (novel and libretto), and *Scenes from a Childhood* – and books by many other classic modern writers.

About the book

The Other Name: Septology I-II, a major new work by Jon Fosse, one of Europe's most celebrated writers, follows the lives of two men living close to each other on the west coast of Norway. The year is coming to a close and Asle, an ageing painter and widower, is reminiscing about his life. He lives alone, his only friends being his neighbour, Åsleik, a bachelor and traditional Norwegian fisherman-farmer, and Beyer, a gallerist who lives in Bjørgvin, a couple hours' drive south of Dylgja, where he lives. There, in Bjørgvin, is another Asle, also a painter. He and the narrator are doppelgangers – two versions of the same person, two versions of the same life. Written in hypnotic prose that shifts between the first and third person, *The Other Name* calls into question concrete notions around subjectivity and the self. What makes us who we are? And why do we lead one life and not another? With *The Other Name*, the first volume in a trilogy of novels, Fosse presents us with an indelible and poignant exploration of the human condition that will endure as his masterpiece.

What the judges thought

'A portrait of the ravages of alcoholism in two men named Asle, both painters, one who quits drinking with the help of his wife, the other who is in hospital and may never recover. A book about grief, and the shining darkness that is our lot in life.'

Discussion points

The two characters, Asle and Asle, are different versions of the same person. How do they differ and in what ways are they similar?

How did you feel reading a novel without much punctuation? Did you think the style flowed?

Do you think the translator would have approached this writing style differently than a more traditional approach?

Fosse has called his writing 'slow prose', and *Septology* will be published in seven parts in three volumes. What do you think are the benefits of writing, or reading, in 'slow prose' are?

Themed reading

Ducks, Newburyport by Lucy Ellmann
The Unconsoled by Kazuo Ishiguro
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
by Robert Louis Stevenson
Molloy by Samuel Beckett

Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/nov/09/the-other-name-septology-i-ii-jon-fosse-review>

<https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2019/10/4/a-conversation-with-jon-fosse>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-other-name-hypnotic-repetition-and-no-full-stops-1.4118199>

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