



About the Author

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Just how did Cal Cunningham -- a twenty-five-year-old bookstore stockboy who is new to Manhattan and who has never written anything -- publish a bestselling novel that sells to the movies for a million dollars?

A mysterious roommate, a timely bike accident, and the rapacious literary agent Blackie Yaeger all play a role in Cal's success.

Deception, blackmail, and murder all play a role in his desperate bid to hold on to it.

And *About the Author* is his first-person account of how he performed this remarkable feat.

About the Author Details

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From Reader Review About the Author for online ebook

Erin says

Full review and more at: <http://bookserinread.blogspot.ca/>

I chose to read this book because of it's title.

My instincts were correct. Goes to show, you can judge a book by both the title and the cover.

I really enjoyed it. I liked going into it having no idea what to expect. I also liked the fact that I really didn't like the main character. He didn't have a lot of qualities that made me appreciate him, and yet, I still wanted to find out how he'd get out of his situation. I guess he made me laugh at times, and that was his redeeming quality. Even when the novel got a little bit ridiculous, the narrator admitted it. He wasn't that funny though. I found him to be a dick for most of the novel. I may have liked the novel more because of this.

I didn't find anything particularly predictable while reading it, which made me happy.

Amy Mota says

Cal Cunningham believes he is destined for fame as a writer. Cal is shocked when he discovers that his law student roommate, Stewart, has secretly written a page- turning—and very literary—novel. To make matters worse, Stewart's novel is a thinly fictionalized version of Cal's own life. When a fatal bicycle accident eliminates Stewart, Cal takes it as an opportunity to make something of himself. Cal then realizes that Stewart had sent a copy to his former girlfriend Janet so he has to take a trip to Vermont. Everything was going good until he fell in love with Janet. They get married. But then Cal finds out that someone else knows his secret and wants to be paid to be quiet but at a high cost.

I really like that Colapinto has an anti-hero narrator and it makes things more interesting so that you are able to see there point of view. How far should he go to protect his secret and his new life? Because he did all this to get personal gain and it was not fair that he took someone else's work to make himself successful so I believe that he should not have the privilege to have an easy time to get success.

Lynn Vannucci says

Damned near perfect suspense. Incredibly meaty and satisfying. Read it.

Daniel says

This book was the most pleasure I had reading in recent years. A roller coaster ride. Not that I would hang around with this guy but this the kind of book I would give as gift, not for the story but for the prose.

John Colapinto proved to be an excellent writer.

I never heard of him before I visited a bookstore on a rainy day. I picked up this release and read a few paragraphs, and a brief comment from Stephen King on the back cover made me purchase it.

Maya Panika says

A wholly believable, engaging and above all, funny story. Really well written, which not always true of a plot-centric book like this. The characters behave like human beings not chess pieces.

I think what I loved most was that I really could completely identify with Cal. He is not a wicked man by any stretch, he's all-too-human - a little self-obsessed, slightly Machiavellian, ambitious, lazy, riddled with guilt and very sorry when he hurts people, even the woman who's made his life an utter misery.

Maybe it's because I was so much inside Cal's head that none of this tale was in any way unpredictable, I second-guessed the story at every single turn and I'm usually terrible at these things (all bar the stupidity of the events of the murder scene which did seem a tad out of character and did lose me for a little while - Cal's a flawed, self-interested man, but never stupid and what he does at that point is very stupid indeed).

A darn good read, with a protagonist just idiotic enough to provide plenty of lose ends for the plot to tie up.

Andrew Hill says

This is an immensely entertaining book that consistently subverts the reader's expectations. It is both a farce and a noir thriller (a neat trick, as I can't recall reading anything like it before), and an astute and biting commentary on literature and the book business. Aspiring (or actual) writers will enjoy Colapinto's hapless protagonist, Cal Cunningham, a would-be novelist whose authorial struggles suck him into a vortex of lying, cheating, stealing, and killing (n.b., I am not giving away plot points). But any reader who appreciates a great plot will love it, too. For Colapinto expertly lures the reader through a series of reversals, each topping the last. Just when Cal appears to disappear down the toilet, he pops back up, like a buoyant and stubborn turd. Incidentally, Cal shares this quality with another key character, and the interaction of these two turds (yes, I really did write that) propels the novel to a satisfying and suitably absurd ending. That Colapinto effects these surprises without straining credibility (too much) is a credit to the screwball atmosphere he establishes at the beginning of the novel.

The novel has a few weak points. There are some jarring notes (mostly factual inaccuracies)--minor issues that would have been revised with closer editing. For example, Cal takes a flight from Newark, NJ to

Burlington, VT on a 747. The venerable "jumbo jet" is many things, but a short-haul regional aircraft is not one of them. 737 is probably what the author intended. The first part of the novel is set in the early 1990s, yet the author describes "double-breasted smoothies with their gold cards and Rolexes". While "double-breasted smoothies" is a neat phrase, evocative of some sort of exotic bird, the image as a whole belongs more in power-suit 1980s of Tom Wolfe's "Bonfire of the Vanities". The early 90s were a return to single-breasted suits (with proliferating buttons and pleated pants), and Amex's Platinum Card (first offered in 1984) had superseded its gold card in terms of cache. But I am quibbling. (Pointing these things out suggests more about my own failings than it does about the author's.)

A more significant problem is the weakness of one of the major female characters, Janet; Colapinto never really gets beyond his physical description of her. Indeed, Colapinto spends too much time on the whole dwelling on people's appearances. The novel is a good example of my inverse theory of external and internal characterization: the more vivid the physical description of a character, the less vivid the inner (psychological and emotional) description. (Yes, I just invented that, though others have expressed the same idea in different terms. "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!") Cal is psychologically and emotionally vivid, but his appearance is ambiguous enough that the reader's imagination is free to conjure up any number of faces that would fit. Janet's appearance is described in great detail, yet the reader never really understands her very well. Perhaps this is owing to the novel's voice (first person, from Cal's perspective), and Janet is to the reader as Cal sees her. But this explanation is still unsatisfying, for it fails to explain Cal's devotion to her. But enough about that. As that great rabbit philosopher, Thumper, once observed: "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all." So, back to the nice.

Colapinto's book is excellent. Cal's reliably bad decisions are the leitmotif of this very funny and engaging story. Despite Cal's failings (or perhaps because of them) the reader never tires of, nor loses sympathy for him in this memorable novel. Highly recommended.

Jody says

This book started out real good and then about 75-100 pages in, it turned into one of those books that I would have to force myself to finish. The only reason I kept on reading was because a friend gave it to me and I knew she would see my review on here so I kept plodding along and all of a sudden I found myself unable to put it down. In the end it all comes together in a way I wasn't expecting and now I am very glad the friend gave it to me and I am glad I kept on reading when I was tempted to put it down. I would suggest this book to read but not because King has endorsed it but because it is a good book.

David Jordan says

For writer-types like me, this novel is a hoot. It tells of Cal Cunningham, a wannabe writer whose nerdy roommate secretly pens a novel based on Cal's sexual adventures on the New York City singles scene, which consume a lot more of his time and energy than writing does. After the roommate dies, Cal steals his manuscript and publishes it as his own, winning literary fame and wealth but eventually entangling himself in blackmail and murder. With wry wit and considerable insight on the lit biz, John Colapinto spins an entertaining tale.

David says

After reading his recent tour de force-- “Undone”-- about the awful and deliberate destruction of the life of a famous self-help writer--I sought out an earlier work of John Colapinto’s, which is how I came to read “About the Author” from 2001.

“About the Author” is not as harsh as “Undone”, but it is no less full of the wrongness that made his later work so enjoyable to the depraved person in me (or maybe the depraved person who also lives in you!). ATA is about an unlovable cad named Cal Cunningham, whose ambition is to be a famous author...only he seems to lack the talent. But for whatever he lacks as a writer, Cal is a cunning Lothario who regales his roommate, Stewart Church, with tales of his sexual conquests, after which Stewart goes to his bedroom in his tiny New York City apartment to do God knows what...

And then later, much to his shock, Cal discovers that Church has been transcribing these adventures and fictionalizing it in his OWN literary work, which he calls “Almost Like Suicide.” Cal is hurt, angry, but most of all utterly convinced of his own writerly ineptitude. Church has taken his life and turned it into brilliant literature. Cal cannot get over it. Upon his discovery of the manuscript, he awaits his roommate to return so he can confront him. But Stewart never returns, having been killed in a bicycle accident on the street. And Cal is confronted with the possibility that he could just steal Stewart's' story and pass it off as his own...because after all it IS his story, isn't it...?

And it goes from there: “Cal’s” novel is a smash hit, Cal gets a big deal to write another book. He even meets a woman and gets married (an entanglement that begins with Stewart and continues with a lie) but then the past catches up with him...

254 pages, pushes the envelope only a little less than "Undone," but still, the foundation for "Undone" is there. I liked all the twists it took, and for the most part, it held my interest throughout. Colapinto's plots are engaging, fun and the way the story turns into itself somewhat (since it is written in 1st person perspective) is very clever. It seems that there is a theme of amoral characters co-existing with the innocents around them in the two books I have read so far. I like it.

On board for the next one, whenever it is.

Kirsten says

Fabulous, hilarious, very sardonic. About a guy who wants to be a writer (but never actually writes a word) who stumbles upon a piece of literary good fortune. Read it, definitely.

Knjigomanjak says

Ve? jako dugo nisam ?itala ovako dobar krimi? ,kao što je roman "Bilješka o piscu", kanadskog pisca Johna Colapinta.

Glavni protagonist romana je Cal Cunningham, 25-godišnji skladištar u New Yorku, kojemu je životna želja biti poznat i slavni pisac. Sve bi bilo lako, da se upravo on ne bori s jednom "sitnicom" koja je jako važna da

bi postao pisac, a to je nedostatak inspiracije za pisanje.

Život mu se svodi na ?esto mijenjanje žena razli?itih godina i zanimanja, a svoje ljubavne egzibicije pri?a svom cimeru Stewartu, povu?enom i stidljivom studentu prava.

Stewart potajno piše roman o Calovom životu i kad mu to jednoga dana ovaj saop?i, Cal biva iznena?en.

Tragi?nim spletom okolnosti Stewart pogine u automobilskoj nesre?i, a Cal "prisvaja" njegov roman i objavljuje pod svojim imenom. I ne samo to. Cal upoznaje i Stewartovu prijašnju djevojku, ljubav njegova života i ženi ju. Naravno, roman ne bi bio tako uzbudljiv, da se ne pojavljuje osoba koja ga ucjenjuje.

To je kratak sadržaj ovog, po meni uzbudljivog i napetog romana, koji sam pro?itala i koji me je vukao na ?itanje do zadnje stranice.

Ono što mi se iznimno svidjelo u ovom romanu je upravo taj hitchcockovski stil , a to zna?i da ovdje zaista ne nedostaje napetosti i naglih obrata situacije.

Roman se bavi pitanjem moralnosti, iskrenosti, prevare i ucjene, ali i najvažnije stvari , a to je plagijat ve? napisanog dijela.

Koliko su neki kadri i?i da bi živjeli na tu?oj slavi?

Kako se sve završilo, ne?u vam re?i. Svakako uzmite roman i pro?itajte. Ne?ete požaliti.

Susan says

This story is fast-paced and clever. One of those good reads you don't want to put down. It's got all the attributes of a Coen Bros. screenplay (dry humor, shocking visuals, irony)...maybe we'll see it on the big screen someday?

Akin says

An interesting premise, let down in execution. The protagonist is the literary equivalent of the woman who runs upstairs in the horror film; you know that no good can come out of her stupidity.

The interesting psychological terrain that the author carves out patiently in the first fifty or so pages is quickly washed away by predictable and not terribly impressive plot developments. The writing becomes formulaic and not particularly inspired. But the saving grace is the ending, which must have seemed farcical at the time but now, post James Frey, has an odd prescience to it.

One to pass on, I'd say.

Jas N says

Excellent execution of an interesting premise. It was clever and fast paced. I enjoyed it start to finish. Great book. Especially in the context of A Million Little Pieces, et al.

Sara Pauff says

I found this literary thriller to be rather unmemorable, despite its unlikeable narrator.

I finished reading this book only a day ago, but the only thing that sticks in my mind is that the main character, Cal Cunningham, is an asshole who thinks -- no, who wants to pretend he's a writer.

But instead of writing his own book, he steals his dead roommate's novel and publishes it under his own name. He makes a fortune, moves to Vermont and marries his dead roommate's former girlfriend. But his literary crimes come back to haunt him when a former one night stand shows up with his roommate's laptop and a copy of the manuscript. She threatens to reveal his secret, blackmails him and his perfect life starts to unravel. This was the best part of the novel, because I felt like Cal gets what he deserves for his lazy, selfish behavior. It's probably the journalist in me, but I think blatant plagiarists deserve some jail time.

However despite all his crimes, Cal still gets a happy ending. He gets his own book contract and his wife returns to him. Perhaps I would have found this book more interesting if I'd read it a few years ago, during the Jayson Blair, Steven Glass or James Frey fiascoes. But now, my only reaction to Cal's story is: Eh. Good for you, Cal. You got away with it. So have lots of people. So will many more, unfortunately.
