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**Vladimir Nabokov**

**Transparent Things**



Title: Transparent Things

Author: Vladimir Nabokov

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## Description

"*Transparent Things* revolves around the four visits of the hero - sullen, gawky Hugh Person - to Switzerland... As a young publisher, Hugh is sent to interview R., falls in love with Armande on the way, wrests her, after multiple humiliations, from a grinning Scandinavian and returns to NY with his bride... Eight years later - following a murder, a period of madness and a brief imprisonment - Hugh makes a lone sentimental journey to wheedle out his past... The several strands of dream, memory, and time [are] set off against the literary theorizing of R. and, more centrally, against the world of observable objects." Martin Amis

## Insightful reviews

Ben Winch: I won't call this facile because, you know, who's to say? That there's depth of a sort here is clear given Geoff Wilt's and MJ Nichols's reactions among others, but it seems possible there's a disconnect between that depth and the surface, the connection only there for those with intimate former knowledge of Nabokov. Me, I have no such knowledge. I've barely gone near the guy since I was 19, when *Lolita* made me shrug and move on without further thought. Until now, I hadn't quite understood that shrug: I'd put it down to kitsch, to overwriting, to excessive desire to please a crowd (not "the" crowd, but a crowd, for whom lexical contortion is paramount), but now I suspect its cause was sheer banality. Likewise, to me, *Transparent Things* is pretty much all prose-style, and a dated, fussy, convoluted prose style at that. At first, it's true, I appreciated the light touch:

Perhaps if the future existed, concretely and individually, as something that could be discerned by a better brain, the past would not be so seductive: its demands would be balanced by those of the future. Persons might then straddle the middle stretch of the seesaw when considering this or that object. It might be fun.

But as I read on I grew tired of "playful", and suspicious of the author's motives in weaving this pointless-seeming story. To me, it looks like a story made to illustrate an idea or philosophy. Milan Kundera once said, while discussing Kafka, that a poet who serves any truth other than "the truth to be discovered" is a "false poet", and I can't help but suspect Nabokov of that falseness. *Transparent Things* seems artificial?not unrealistic (that I encourage, I applaud) but lacking fire, instinct, inspiration. All dressed up with nowhere to go. To me, it's like a Yngwie Malmsteen song: the guy can play, granted, but if the song he saturates with curlicues is dull, bland and instantly dated, what's the point?

All of which is to say, phew, ain't subjectivity a funny thing? When it comes down to it, maybe it's the *tone* I dislike as much as anything. Something in his demeanor, in his choice of subjects, says "timewaster" to me. And anyone writing a 20,000 word novella who thinks he has time to discuss hot chocolate just gets my goat. Zero sense of urgency. Impossible to see it as a story that needed telling.

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Daniel: Reminiscent of his better-known "Invitation of a Small Evening," Vladimir Nabokov's 1972 short novel "Transparent Things" is, like much of Nabokov's writing, full of humorous wordplay, back-and-forth movements in time, unreliable narration, and mockery of its characters. (Much of this book's humor comes from its copious use of parentheticals -- and from poking fun at the very use of such parentheticals.)

It's hard to say why "Transparent Things" doesn't get the same respect "Invitation of a Small Evening" does, but it should; I may have enjoyed it even more than I did "Invitation of a Small Evening," frankly. I'd highly recommend "Transparent Things" to both those new to Nabokov and the already converted. I expect I'll eventually read it at least once more myself, as I'm sure there are jokes and insights I missed the first time through.

As far as I can tell, from the books of his I've read thus far, Nabokov could do no wrong.

Rob: At least four stars because:

It's Nabokov in full late-period stylistic glory. I've felt let down by a lot of Nabokov's work, but I keep reading him because I still remember the sense of occult glee I felt while walking home from the library at age 18, reading the opening pages of *Lolita* (which I'd checked out with the vague sense that it was the sort of thing one should have read before going to college) -- my first intimation that "literature" (that musty cathedral) might be more closely connected to my own intuitive sense of the English language and its joys than English class had ever let on. *Transparent Things* draws from the same well of spine-tingling goodness.

Certainly not five stars because:

I had no investment in the characters or plot. This has been the norm for me with Nabokov's short fiction. Much like *The Eye*, this feels like a short story with a clever premise expanded to 100 pages, rather than a full novel condensed to 100 pages, and accordingly the characters and story have a made-from-powdered-fiction-mix feel. I don't really think Hugh Person is a character in the same way that Humbert, Kinbote, Van and Ada are characters -- certainly I don't have a picture of him in my mind the way I have a picture of them, nor do I expect him to recur in my thoughts the way they do.

Terri Jacobson: Vladimir Nabokov wrote this publication while he was once seventy three years old. it is a tricky booklet to learn and understand, yet definitely worth the effort. it is the tale of Hugh Person, and his four journeys to Switzerland in the course of his grownup lifetime, and the existence adjustments that occurred to him there. the writer strikes between diversified time sessions within the novel, and which may make it tough to follow. Nabokov truly prompt taking notes whereas one reads this book. I learn many passages over, and ended up studying the full e-book via twice. (It's basically 104 pages.) in lots of methods the ebook is sort of a puzzle to decipher. it is enjoyable to notice the entire cases the place Nabokov makes use of the paintings "transparent." He describes houses, people, and shadows as transparent; sexual love is defined as now not transparent. there are numerous performs at the protagonist's surname of Person. There are cases during which Nabokov turns out to touch upon the sexuality of younger girls: "Not merely did the snapshots keep on with Armande via all of the levels of the prior and

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the entire advancements of beginner photography, however the lady additionally got here in a variety of states of blameless undress. Her mom and dad and aunts, the insatiable takers of adorable pictures, believed in reality lady baby of ten, the dream of a Lutwidgean, had an identical correct to overall nudity as an infant." (This is a connection with Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a guy who took debatable photographs of younger children.) And whilst Hugh is ready to mattress 18 yr outdated Julia (who has been sexually energetic because the age of 13) the next occurs: "Hugh used to be moved to enfold in his shy paw the infantile hand that had unintentionally touched his kneecap. She used to be splendidly wonderful to the sexual eye together with her doll's face, her slanting eyes and topaz-teared earlobes, her mild shape in an orange shirt and black skirt, her slender-jointed limbs, her exotically modern hair squarely minimize at the forehead." And Nabokov additionally writes "Everyone has mystery tensions saved up from infancy. Hugh don't need to feel embarrassment about them. In truth at puberty sexual wish arises as an alternative for the need to kill, which one generally fulfills in one's dreams; and insomnia is basically the phobia of turning into acutely aware in sleep of one's subconscious wants for slaughter and sex." The writing during this ebook is excellent, classic Nabokov. A few passages I liked "His father, a guy of sixty, shorter than Hugh and in addition pudgier, had elderly unappetizingly in the course of his contemporary widowhood; his issues enable off a attribute foreshell, faint yet unmistakable, and he grunted and sighed in his sleep, dreaming of huge unwieldy blocks of blackness, which needed to be looked after out and faraway from one's direction or over which one needed to clamber in agonizing attitudes of debility and despair." "Hugh didn't linger in that individual room, for he had the uncanny feeling that Mrs. Flankard was once making plans to be raped underneath Mr. Flankard's mauve snowflakes. Like many overripe and nonetheless good-looking woman artists, she relatively unaware massive bust, a wrinkled neck, and the odor of stale femininity on an eau de cologne base may repel a frightened male." "This Henry Emery Person, our Person's father, may be defined as a well-meaning, earnest, expensive little man, or as a wretched fraud, looking on the attitude of sunshine and the location of the observer. Loads of handwringing is going approximately at nighttime of remorse, within the dungeon of the irreparable." "What strong words, what weapons, are saved up within the mountains, at appropriate spots, in distinct caches of the granite heart, in the back of painted surfaces of metal made to resemble the mottling of the adjoining rocks!" The prose during this e-book is wealthy with flashes of humor. There's a lot to investigate and view here. There are a number of dream sequences, and there are numerous names and titles of fictional books, plays, etc., which may lead one on many tangents of analysis. Nabokov touches on subject matters of sexuality, aging, the connection among fathers and sons, and the function of "nymphets." Obvious issues is a demanding and bracing studying experience.

Geoff: an ideal novella. You could have your 1,000+ web page encyclopedic mammoths of verbose density of such mind-warpage you have to assemble dictionaries of recent thoughts and schematized stream charts of personality interrelations (and I will have them too); yet occasionally one hundred and five pages of flawless, tautly interwoven pulses of prose is all that is required to ship a lover of phrases into ecstasy. Obvious issues additionally occurs to be a concise formula and summation of the ineffable everlasting crystalwork that's 'Nabokov's metaphysics', of which I have written copiously in this the following Goodreads web site (all gratis, for free, I have not even requested for one eco-friendly dollar!), so I will not repeat myself. By way of the way, were you aware that the sum overall of all fabric reality, with all its part parts,

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provides as much as a major fads ZERO, and that we make fictions in order that there's a few optimistic internet gain, a few cost above the flatline, in order that this grim furnace of dumb our bodies we name the area isn't really completely and inexorably pointless, voiceless, and doomed? learn this e-book in a single sitting. that is all.

Laura Henderson: this can be a chronicle of a depression and masochistic trip of a lone guy to destinations of poignant own significance, in retrospect, in his tragic life. while you're partial to Nabokov's, the most personality is a model of the often-seen neurotic, intelligent, and soul-sick younger man, who's certain by way of a keenness right into a course that turns out continually thwarted. The major guy is awkward, self-critical, and hugely intelligent. Nabokov understands the way to render a "chance flip of events" - in which the anti-hero falls desperately in love with a shallow, beautiful, bitchy ski bunny in Switzerland, whereas operating as a proofreader for a publishing corporation and assembly renowned yet pompous authors. this is often my thought of a good seashore publication however it is gloomy. it really is a simple learn and enthusiasts of Nabokov may possibly like this rendering of a few of his "favorite" issues of regret, unrequited love, man's courting to reminiscence and time, and wrenching nostalgia.

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