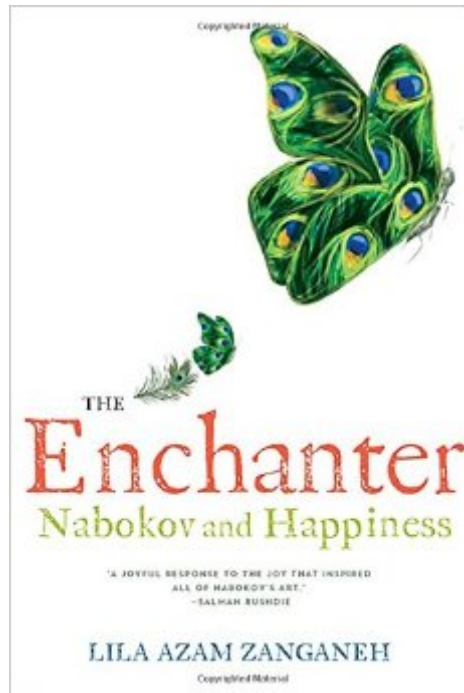


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# The Enchanter: Nabokov And Happiness



Discovering happiness in reading the work of an extraordinary writer. The protagonist of Vladimir Nabokov's *The Gift* playfully dreamed of writing "A Practical Handbook: How to Be Happy." Now, Nabokov's own creative reader Lila Azam Zanganeh lends life to this vision with sly sophistication and ebullient charm, as she shares the delirious joy to be found in reading the masterpieces of "the great writer of happiness." Plunging into the enchanted and luminous worlds of *Invitation of a Small Summer House*; *Ada, or Ardor*; and the infamous *Lolita*, Azam Zanganeh seeks out the Nabokovian experience of time, memory, sexual passion, nature, loss, love in all its forms, and language in all its allusions. She explores Nabokov's geography—from his Russian childhood to the landscapes of "his" America—suffers encounters with his beloved "nature," hallucinates an interview with the master, and seeks the "crunch of happiness" in his singular vocabulary. This beautifully illuminated book will both reignite the passion of experienced Nabakovians and lure the innocent reader to a well of delights as yet unseen.

12 black-and-white illustrations

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The Enchanter is named after the unpublished 1939 novella by Russian author, Vladimir Nabokov, the precursor to his well-known novel *Lolita* (1955) – it was rediscovered twenty years later, translated by his son, Dimitri, and published in 1985 and 1991. The title is also a reference to Nabokov’s view that “Writers may be Teachers, Storytellers, or Enchanters.” • The “real writer, the Enchanter” • he said was a “fellow who sends planets spinning.” • Zanganeh’s book is an exploration of Nabokov’s perceptions of happiness, seen through “a handful” • of his novels and works, such as *The Enchanter* (1939), *The Gift* (1938), *The Real Life of Sebastian*

Knight (1941), Lolita (1955), Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle (1967) and his autobiography Speak, Memory (1951). The author also includes a transcript of her interview with Nabokov, conducted when he was on holiday at Lake Como in 1968. Zanganeh describes Nabokov (1899-1977) as the "great writer of happiness." Her inspiration to write the book was from the protagonist in The Gift who dreamed of writing A Practical Handbook: How to Be Happy. But this is not a practical handbook. The fifteen chapters explore "Alice-like variations" of an aspect of happiness in Nabokov's life, referring to Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel Alice in Wonderland. This is also not a chronological journey through Nabokov's life – it starts about three months before his death in Switzerland, then returns to 1903 when he was four years old near St. Petersburg in Russia. Although it is not a biography, Zanganeh discusses Nabokov's life in Vyra, his girlfriends, his departure from Russia in 1917, and the meeting of Vera Evseevna Slonim whom he met on May 8, 1923 on a bridge in Berlin. He married her in 1925.

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