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nevédomosti №6

nova-nevedoma.com/re-substack-to-print-short-story/

*The issue today covers a lot of "what to read" as well as adjacent thoughts on the craft and publishing. You'll find a few reviews of my book plus two reviews I've written for others: a story/essay collection by * and a novel by .**

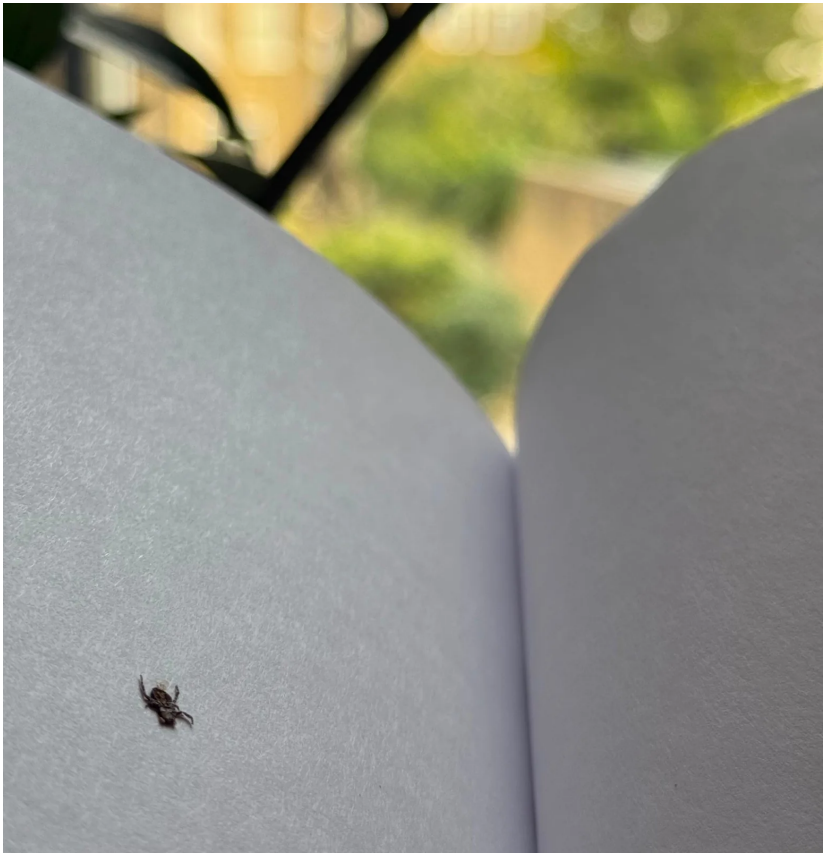
This is something new for me — I had never written a capital R Review before these two (!) — but it's something I want to do more, especially for my contemporaries, friends and fellow writers, to all of whom I believe (having skin in the game) every review is a gift. I want to start with 2-in-1 post but might publish standalone reviews later under nevédomosti section, depending on the timeline and their length.

Before we begin, if you're hungry for short fiction, and I collaborated on an experimental short story, touching on rather whimsical and profound topics. Check it out on her Substack:

With The Speed Of Flatulence — Read on Substack

Re: "I Won't Keep You" by

When I opened the book today to grab some quotes I found a dead spider stuck between the pages. Let's consider it poetic but symbolic of nothing, rather just factual, a little artefact hidden within the book that I believe would appreciate having it.



This is also a beauty of physical books, especially those that started on Substack. You know the feeling; many have attempted describing it since the rise of digital word, but Vladimir Sorokin did it best: "You can

spill coffee on a book or even place a hot coffee pot on it, you can burn it with a cigarette. [...] You can drench it with tears, wine, blood, sperm. And all of this will remain on it as a memory of the reader. [...] But what can an iPad do? Tears or blood will run off it, leaving nothing behind." Spider would've slid down and run away, too.

"I Won't Keep You" is a collection of short stories and essays that had appeared on Trilety's Substack of the same name.

trilety.substack.com — Read on SubstackSubstack or any blog or any feed is chronological at the point when it's written and published — stories are often published in the order they are written — and very likely reverse-chronological or non-chronological when you just discover the publication and start digging the archive. Ultimately, a reader decides what route to take which determines the final experience — whether you start with "Top" or "Most Popular" or "Recent" or just go randomly. As a writer, however, I do believe the order plays an important role in any anthology or short story collection, so when I got the book in my hands, my excitement was not only to read it all again, for I'd read most, but to experience it in a new intended order.

In Andrei Bitov's "The Symmetry Teacher" he describes why the order matters in the fictional "preface" to the book that is framed as a translation of a series of novellas:

> Each chapter of 'The Teacher' can be read as a separate work; the reader is free to give preference to one or another as an

independent story, but if he masters all in succession and hears the echo spreading from the previous to the next and from each to each, then he will discover its source, that is, he will read the novel itself, not a collection of stories. It's something I'm looking for in any collection or even in a novel, nay *nouveau roman*, and also something I've been trying to achieve in my work. Trilety's book, despite being a compilation of very diverse and seemingly unrelated fictions, autofictions, and essays, does that great. It unfolds and echoes via associations, threads, recurring motifs and symbols: femininity, body, loss, grief, eroticism, animals, insects, our connection with nature and self. Often one story ends with an image, idea, concept, symbol, theme, and the next story picks it up in a different setting and continues it, building up the momentum. Despite its title, "I Won't Keep You", on the contrary, it "keeps you", paradoxically so.

"My official diagnosis came two years ago. But I've suffered from Cyborg Syndrome since the age of eight, when the conifers couldn't protect me from the violence of mothering. The difference between being mothered and being smothered is the difference between a wave and a hurricane." — (12) Glaciers are the Gaolers of Floods Although the book deliberately tells us that it is a work of both fiction and non-fiction, as a reader, you'd hardly notice the difference. The only — but hardly reliable clue — would be PoV, where you can safely say that all

> third person stories are fiction and all female first person are autofictional essays. That, however, didn't matter for me, despite having followed Trilety for a while and know a fact or two about her. The book is uniform in style and voice and blurs the distinction between fiction and non-fiction and in that sense is a single work. It is still "a collection" but, in addition to careful ordering, it also has "a core" that makes it whole.
>
> "They say that gaslighting is done to us by others but sometimes we are the ones who gaslight ourselves until we've warped our own reality so badly there is nothing left to question and no one left to love." — (33) Elbow Bend and Back Again Each of the little pieces is closer to poetry than prose: playful, dreamy, extremely lyrical, metaphorical, airy, yet bodily and grounded in reality. Despite often heavy themes and underlying indescribable melancholy behind the façade, most stories often make you smile and even have happy endings. Often whenever I waited for something sad or absurd to happen, none did, either ending on a positive note or leaving it open.

It's hard to make a list of favourites, and I don't see much value in going over each story; as I said, they are closer to poetry, and why would you be doing short retellings of poetry to someone? Instead I've already put some highlighted quotes above and a few below. Most memorable moment was the beginning of the story "Map of Nostalgia", a topic so dear to me in its traditional sense, the feeling that Trilety describes

brilliantly:

> "Nostalgia's start was in a heartache for home. Yet now nostalgia is used to describe a longing for the past. I am lost and looking for a map to find my way back. If I were a Cartographer of Longing, I would chart my Homesickness for you with push pins and strings, connecting the cord between the places of your past. A friend of mine was raised on the island of Guadeloupe. She told me of a tradition where the godparents take the newborn's umbilical cord and plant it with a tree, along with wishes and prayers for the baby to grow as strong as its sapling companion. Ray said, "In Creole, *la lombric an mwen téré*, means home is where my umbilical is buried." Do Creole children suffer less from nostalgia because they know the location of their earthworm origins? Ever a home to return to. But, what is Death's umbilical cord? If we snip a nutrient-giving tube at birth, what bond is snipped at death? There is no regeneration of worm, only a fizzle of electric current that turns into eternal quiet." — (21) Map of Nostalgia This is what makes Trilety's writing special for me — she has a rare gift of arranging those pins and strings, finding unexpected, strange yet profound association between seemingly incompatible things, even polar opposites. On every page you'd stumble on sentences and phrases that amongst all people only Trilety could say, such as another one:

> Only big toe knows that flip-flops were designed to isolate. — (34) Belle Isola I didn't want to make a review "a consumer guide" — probably it's hard to make one for a dense and diverse work like "I Won't Keep You", especially if it's my first one — instead, I wanted to convey why it matters for me. Should you read it and why? If you like lyrical, observant, and playful prose, if you long for great literary short fiction, and if you trust my taste — yes, this book is for you.

I wanted to have "a Substack shelf" but I have to put "I Won't Keep You" next to Valeria Narbikova on my shelf. I can't explain my logic; the books are just soulmates, if it's possible amongst books. My guess is Narbikova and Wade at some point somehow connected to the same metaphysical Source, perhaps with the umbilical cord.

My Book Is Out And Ready For You — Read on Substack

Re: "the big T" by



Me, performing (and accidentally cosplaying) "the big T" wasn't my typical read when it comes to novels, and yet I read it faster than most books of the same size and it ended up being one of the most enjoyable novels I read recently. It also started on Substack, but this time I came to the print version first — a preferred way for me to read a novel.

Before picking it up, I wasn't sure that the story would resonate with me, mostly worried I wouldn't "get it": a modern American bildungsroman about long-lasting friendship between Jude, the narrator, and Tommy, the big T in question. Naturally, someone from a relatively remote Russian village with a radically different upbringing, even though close enough age-wise, could hardly relate to most of what the characters are going through — that someone only has a reductive

high-level movie-based picture of what it's like to grow up in the United States in the 90s-00s and beyond. And yet, despite the geographical and cultural difference, a universal experience of being a child, a teenager, a young adult, of having and losing the loved ones, finding who you are and who you want to be, is still resonating and, well, relatable. It is, first and foremost, an interesting and engaging story, for one spanning years — brilliantly plotted, each chapter being an important episode in the characters' lives. Structure-wise, there's a lot to compliment, both the selection of those events, their more or less standalone nature that however pull you into the story deeper and deeper, and especially my favourite — last sentences. They are something to pay attention to, admire and study. Clancy's done an amazing job there. "Lives flew by" is how I would describe it, which has its pros and cons: you can watch the characters' lives unfold in front of your eyes just in a few evenings, but you have to watch them grow up and move on to the next stage in their life, bittersweetly in case you want to stay in some periods for longer time and explore them more. It is a tour de force rather than a saga, so you should expect years to flash and characters grow before your eyes.

As with any story, especially coming-of-age, you're not only reading the book but also reading your past, filtering what you experience in the book through what you experience in real life. "the big T", covering middle school, high school, college, young adulthood, and later years in the epilogue, has a lot of life in it (pun intended): memories, celebrations, conflicts, dilemmas, etc. in which many readers would

maybe see themselves or people they grew up with, remember those times, relish, nostalgise, grieve. For me, however, it was different, often in a weird, paradoxical way. Friendship I experienced wasn't at all similar to the relationship between Jude and Tommy; I've never lived through something like that, so the book didn't have many "literally me" moments. Instead of reading "what happened", I read "what could've happened but never did", trying to imagine an alternative universe where in my earlier years I could've had a friend like Tommy. You can be a shy, introspective child who, perhaps, deep inside wants to be charming and rebellious, or you can be one of a certain mental and psychological constitution that is rare to find in your peers, thus making it hard to create a real lasting emotional and intellectual bond with most. From that angle, Tommy appears as an ideal friend both as a cure for intellectual and emotional loneliness that many may experience in life — sort of a second you, the only person able to understand you fully — and as a wanna-be-you, someone you would want to be but couldn't and could only feel an inexorable magnetic pull towards. In "the big T" it was both; Jude and Tommy both complement and challenge each other, which is rare and even felt idyllic.

An idyll or a nostalgic childhood mystery — the feeling that follows you through the first half of the book — in a way, an impossible could-be life that you want to linger forever, that universal sensibility of happy childhood for those who have experienced it that way. Having read many "dark books" in the recent years, I always expected something bad to happen (again, yes) by the end of the chapter to get the plot going but

it wasn't necessary; the book in the first half is mostly wholesome, at times melancholic and bittersweet, especially in those wonderful last sentences. The second half won't get significantly darker but, together with the characters, the psychological and thematic layer will become more mature and complex, eventually venturing into the promised spiral of existential struggle and self-destruction that is painful to watch. The questions "who am I?" and "what do I want in life?" take over the narrative for both Jude and Tommy as they head off to college. Both of them want to be artists — a writer and a poet — but life, i.e. their parents, prevents them from it, pushing them into unwanted studies. For both it becomes a struggle: for Jude, more measured and reasonable, it eventually ends well; for Tommy, one who wants to take anything from life and live fast — his last name being Goodspeed for a reason — it doesn't. This way we see two so alike and yet so different men going through alike and yet so different challenges.

As we see the idyll breaking, or rather slowly disintegrating, or rather becoming real, deep and complicated, the book gradually yet rapidly shifts from little "t"s towards bigger "T"s — pun intended as well, and thus described by the narrator:

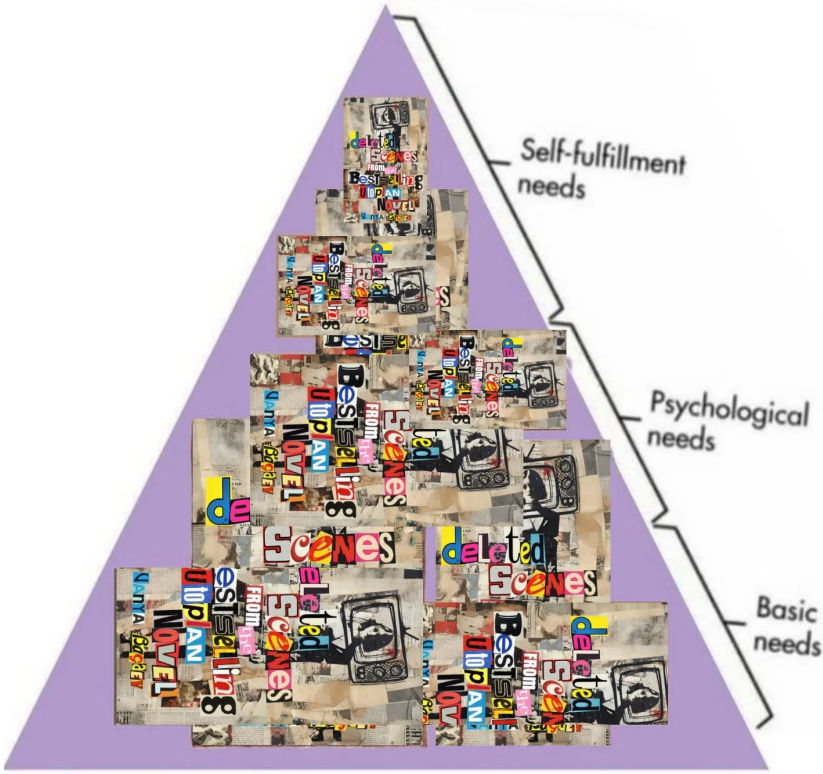
> We all have our little 't's, which are the miniature traumas that happen to everyone in life, the embarrassing moments, the anguish and the bruises, those which are cumulatively harmful in their own right. Then we have big 'T' trauma, which maybe happens a few times, the scar that anyone from any life can

> acquire that warps them for good and from which they may never recover, for better or worse. My big T was Tommy. This was for me the most crucial and memorable passage (and episode) from the book, one of those that I'll take with me. It is a moment that gives the book's title the second, symbolic meaning. It is also a moment at which for me the story ends and everything else after that becomes an epilogue, a necessary and poignant one that I loved reading, yet still an epilogue. It makes another last spin of the spiral back, balancing the tragedy with hope, and gives the book its satisfying closure.

Would I recommend it? Yes. Clancy's a master storyteller. You can see this in his shorter fiction at , and it's evident in his novel. Even if you don't find themes or setting compelling (I didn't, for example; at least not when I picked it up), you'd be absorbed by the story and the charm of its characters.

The Big T Again Print Edition This — Read on Substack

Re: "Deleted Scenes from the Bestselling Utopian Novel"



My “Deleted Scenes...” have been slowly but steadily attracting readership and reviews. Last month published a quite perceptive and thoughtful review by Benji Taylor where he describes my book as “genre-bending, mind-bending and very, very Russian,” unfolding in “a carnival of language, blurring the lines between dream and reality,” which all of course is pleasing to read because it’s exactly how I see it myself as well, even though it’s almost impossible for me to describe it properly. It’s always been either elusive — what is that I wrote? I envy writers who can do that easily (like Clancy!). I struggled with the back

cover blurb, and I struggle with pitching the book to others, and I struggle now with the next one when I think of how I should describe it to my readers. Hence sharing the reviews here has always seemed to me a great idea:

> The dilemmas facing Bagaev's characters (and their thoughts) are familiar to any reader of dystopian fiction, but the darkly comic manner in which he explores them heightens the grotesque absurdity of life under the authoritarian wheel. You can find and read the full review here.

Another one was written by a few months ago.

> — [...] You know like (the thought uses air quotes) "this book was chaotic in the best way". Explain that we felt the book was punchy and heavy at times, but it balanced it with dark humor really well. [...] You can find it here. It is a fictionalised review so it's also a glimpse inside the book, some parts of it.

created a review hub for his novel "American Pleasure" — which is also on my reading list — and I thought I should really put it all together finally. My book's page already has a bunch of links to reviews and excerpts for them but lacks structure and presentation.

If you've bought my "Deleted Scenes" recently or not so recently, please post the pictures, quotes, spread the word anywhere in any way — it

would help immensely. There's no better marketing!

If you too want to write a review and publish it somewhere, I can help you getting hold of a copy, just DM me on Substack or send an email.

With that, thank you for making it to the end.

Now, I bow away!

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