Laughter in the Dark by Vladimir Nabokov: | : Books
Written in Russian, the novel was translated into English by Nabokov himself after he deemed a previous effort by Winifred Roy lacking. Extraordinarily, though, he still considered it his worst novel. In the pairing of the girlish Margot with the helplessly lustful Albinus, it certainly presages the one widely considered his best. Written 23 years before Lolita, Laughter in the Dark may not have its successor’s reach and subtlety, but it contains a final scene that is truly devastating. Classics corner Vladimir Nabokov. Classics corner: Laughter in the Dark. She eventually manipulates him into allowing her to move in to his flat where he resided with his wife, and she sets to working on him getting a divorce so that she might marry him and acquire access to his significant wealth. Margot uses Albinus to fulfill her ambition in life to become a rich film star. Even when
Albinus' daughter, Irma, takes ill and eventually succumbs to pneumonia, Margot insistently drives a wedge between his old life and his new, in order to totalize her capture of him.

Inadvertently, Albinus introduces Margot to Axel Rex at one of his many dinner parties, but he does not know that the two have previously been lovers. Margot and Rex resume their relationship, and start plotting to get Albinus out of the way and rob him of his money. Albinus gets Margot her first role as an actress, using his wealth as largesse to make up for her lack of talent. At the premiere viewing of the movie, Margot realises how inept she was and is petulant about her public exposure as a mediocre actress. Attempting to appease her wounded ego, Albinus convinces her to take a holiday to the south in the new car he has bought for her. Rex refuses to be left behind, and by this point has wangled his way into Albinus' confidence as a fellow artist including convincing Albinus that he could not possibly be interested in Margot as he poses himself as homosexual: he presents himself as the ideal chauffeur for their trip, given that Albinus can barely drive.

Rex and Margot's trysts have become increasingly brazen, and the holiday seems an opportunity to further deepen their affair on Albinus' payroll. The holiday didn't quite go as Margot and Rex planned, since rendezvouses were next to impossible without arousing suspicion. On arriving in a small town and finding most lodgings unavailable, they finally get their chance in the only remaining hotel room the three could find, which shared a bathroom and made clandestine access possible. After a chance encounter with an old friend in the town, Albinus realises that Margot and Rex are engaged in an affair. Enraged, Albinus returns to the hotel and threatens Margot, who insists that there is nothing between her and the allegedly homosexual Rex.

Still distraught, Albinus demands they leave at once, and they abandon Rex at the hotel. On their journey out of town, Albinus crashes the car and is blinded, leaving him in need of care and oblivious to the world around him. Rex and Margot take advantage of his handicap. After sending a letter falsely stating that Rex has gone to America, they rent a chalet in Switzerland where Rex poses as Albinus's doctor, although Albinus is unaware of Rex's presence. The Metamorphosis.

Laughter in the Dark (novel) - Wikipedia

Nabokov lets us in on its punchline straight away. In the opening lines, we're informed that Albinus — husband, father, wealthy Berliner art critic and, it soon emerges, as chinless a nebbish as they come — abandons his wife for the pretty and petulant teenager Margot, who dreams of money and movie stardom. Her venality, slyness and casual cruelty make her deliciously vile; unsurprisingly, things do not end well. As the novel's opening paragraph concludes, Albinus: "loved; was not loved; and his life ended in disaster". Nabokov's deadpan narration charges the novel with countless blackly hilarious moments.

Rex provides many of them. Margot's first lover, an artist and film producer, enters her and Albinus's grasping relationship as a man whose "itch to make fools of his fellow men amounted almost to genius". And Albinus, naturally, is made a fool of. Returning from his child's deathbed, he finds Margot "supine, smoking lustily", feeling "delicious content". Rex, Nabokov adds with glee, "had left a short time before, well-contented too". Photos 4. Add image. Top cast Edit. Anna Karina Margot as Margot. Peter Bowles Paul as Paul. Sebastian Breaks Brian as Brian.


Connections Referenced in The Hitchhiker User reviews 6 Review. Top review. The movie version of Nabokov's pre-Lolita novel received mixed reviews when it was released in Richard Burton did not decline the male lead; he was fired at the start of the filming because of drunkeness. While his replacement, Nicol Williamson, was way too young for the part, Williamson gives an uncanny performance. He is matched by Anna Karina, who is excellent as the devious usherette who captivates him.

This movie was one of her excursions into English-language cinema.

Laughter in the Dark - Wikipedia

On their journey out of town, Albinus, a self-proclaimed poor driver, crashes the car and is blinded, leaving him in need of care and oblivious to the world around him. Rex and Margot take advantage of his handicap, and rent a chalet in Switzerland where Rex poses as Albinus's doctor, although Albinus is unaware of Rex's presence. Unknown to Albinus, he is mocked and tortured during his recovery. He becomes increasingly suspicious as his ears become more attuned and he perceives someone's presence, but his fears are never confirmed. Paul, a friend to the family, suspects forgery Rex and Margot have been bleeding Albinus's accounts dry by forging his signature on cheques, drives to the residence and discovers Rex toying with Albinus in his blinded state. Paul then escorts Albinus back to the home of his ex-wife Elisabeth. After a short time, Albinus receives a call informing him that Fraulein Peters Margot has returned to his flat to collect some things.

Knowing that she is coming, he decides to kill her. Without haste, he makes his way to the flat and traps her inside by barricading the door,
intending to shoot her with his pistol. He seeks her out by her scent and faint sounds, but when he tries to shoot her she overpowers him, grabs the pistol, and Jan 31, Violet wells rated it it was amazing. Probably Nabokov's most accessible novel and in some ways a precursor to the later Lolita. The opening paragraph gives us a precis of the entire story: "Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus. It's come to light that he rewrote much of it in the process and that the original version was actually a rather shoddy affair.

Lucky for him, more of a stickler for perfection than virtually any other writer, all but a handful of already sold copies were destroyed when a German bomb destroyed the warehouse during the Blitz. Thus, this was his first novel written in English. Albinus is an aesthete, overly susceptible to experiences of the eye. He first sees Margot in a cinema. She is, both literally and symbolically, an usherette. All the novel's symbolism is pretty straightforward but deftly handled. The character of Margot allows Nabokov to explore one of his overriding fascinations, human cruelty. The exploitation of helplessness for sadistic kicks.

You sense Hollywood stole one of the book's plot ideas and used it as the pivot of more than one famous dark thriller. All in all, a thoroughly satisfying and compelling novel, much simpler in its blueprint than is usual with Nabokov. View all 23 comments. Aug 14, emma marked it as to-read shelves: classics, non-ya. View all 13 comments. Martha omg how do you know about that? And so, there I was, sitting in a cinema. Like Swann, Albinus is a man of private wealth and refined And so, there I was, sitting in a cinema. Like Swann, Albinus is a man of private wealth and refined tastes who collects art. And not only does he collect the work of famous sixteenth and seventeenth century artists, he also writes articles about them in academic journals exactly as Swann does.

However, Albinus dabbles a little in fakes as well; he's interested in paintings that look so much like the originals that no one can tell the difference. Sure enough, a few scenes in, Odette appears - she's an usherette in a cinema coincidentally. Well, not the real Odette but a young woman quite like her called Margot Peters. Within a few short scenes, Albinus has set Margot up as his mistress and given her lots of money to furnish her new apartment - which she does in a similar style to the one Odette chose for the apartment Swann gave her. And so Margot lies around all day in a chintzy kimono reading cinema magazines.

She becomes very bored and soon finds more entertaining things to occupy her days such as shopping and being seen in smart places. Albinus is of course horribly jealous; he wants to know every detail of where she goes and who she speaks to. Swan and Odette all over again. The scenario is so like Proust's it's hard to tell the difference. No, most of what I've described can be found in the first section of this book with the very fitting title of Laughter in the Dark. There are even film scenes described in detail and some discussions about the difficulties of moving from the silent screen to talkies, all of which made me think that Nabokov must have had some interest in writing screen plays at this point in his career.

When I checked up on this, I found that this book had been made into a joint French-British movie in with the setting changed from s Berlin to s London. An excellent title as it turned out. View all 22 comments. Laughter in the Dark is a love story or rather it is a caricature of a love story. And telling the tale Vladimir Nabokov becomes grotesquely melodramatic. The world is the stage and life is a play: The stage manager of this performance was neither God nor the devil. The hero is an infatuated idealist living with his head in the romantic clouds so he is doomed right from the start… Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus.

Perhaps the only real thing about him was his innate conviction that everything that had ever been created in the domain of art, science or sentiment, was only a more or less clever trick. Laughter in the Dark is a parable of idealistic blindness: some are born to deceive others and some are born to be deceived. Mar 10, Sarah rated it really liked it. I hope. But it can still be good. The whole time I was reading it, I was almost wishing I had saved it for my next trip. It is printed in a big, easy-to-read font that makes it hard to lose your place even when you get distracted by airplane stuff.

It only takes about 3 or 4 hours to read. It has a very fast-moving and weird, deviant plot — so deviant, in fact, that you could probably forget you are flying through the air at dangerous speeds. It makes those around notice that you are interested in early-era Nabokov, which makes you really smart and interesting. View 2 comments. As an independent work, I don't think it belongs in the top tier of Nabokov's lush ouvre, but it seems to me to be a piece where Nabokov establishes his literary sea legs. In this novel, Nabokov is playing with themes of vision, blindness, truth, deception, art and morality. You see many of Nabokov's later motifs surrounding vision floating like mouches volantes through this early work: mirrors, window pairs, minicry, scintillations, semblances, glasses, movies, etc.

It wouldn't be Nabokov if he played any of these themes straight. He bends the narrative and plays with Tolstoy's belief that it is "the essential nature of truth to be hidden from, then revealed to, the eyes. View all 4 comments. May 04, Paquita Maria Sanchez rated it liked it shelves: literature. Leave it to Nabokov to strip you of your faith in humanity. Aug 22, Ivana Books Are Magic rated it really liked it. Curiously enough, the first works of Nabokov I read were not fiction but rather literary criticism. I quite enjoyed reading his views on writing and literature. Predictably, it was not before long that I wanted to read his novels as well. I picked up this book years ago and figured it could be a good introduction to Nabokov. I wanted something less emotionally exhausting to start Nabokov with. So, I opted for Laughter in the Dark. There are some similarities between these two novels. Take the protagonists for instance: once again there is an age difference between lovers.

There is a girl and an older man, but at least the girl in question is not a minor. The femme fatale of this book is a femme, not an adolescent girl. Young, but not underage. Not a child, although she seems to be able to play that role to get what she wants. What is interesting about this novel is that Nabokov literally reveals the plot right away. In the opening lines Nabokov reveals the basic storyline and yet it doesn't make this novel any less interesting. This is the whole of the story and we might have left it at that had there not been profit and pleasure in the telling; and although there is plenty of space on a gravestone to contain, bound in moss, the abridged version of a man's life, detail is always welcome.

Despite the fact that the book reveals both the atmosphere and the plot immediately, it kept my interest from start to finish. Both protagonists are hard to love, but easy to sympathize with. Margot is manipulative, but in an instinctive not a cunning way. Nevertheless, reading about them was very interesting. I suppose it is because they are so human. That goes for all the characters in the novel. There are no so embellishments in this book, not when it comes to society and human beings. Intellectuals and artists- both are sometimes driven by their instincts. Sometimes everything
comes down to biology. Instincts, desires, and human urges. Human beings are not always as sophisticated as we would like to believe.

We mix impulses with love, gratitude with genuine connection. We fall victims to our desires—over and over again. Laughter in the Dark really is a wonderful novel. Nabokov prose flows with ease, and his writing is both elegant and easy to follow. Like I already mentioned, as far as the plot goes there is nothing new, everything is revealed at start, and yet Nabokov makes "seen a hundred times story" into something rather fascinating. The characters are poor excuses for human beings most of the time, but it not hard to sympathize with them in spite of that or maybe because of that.

Once Albinus leaves his wife for Margot, they live in a somewhat stable relationship. Albinus does not mind. But how long can their happiness last? Margot, an abused child that has grown into a selfish woman is obviously bored in her new relationship. Perhaps predictably, soon another character enters the picture and a triangle is formed. Albinus, a boring intellectual, Margot a young cruel mistress and Rex sadistic artist—quite a love triangle they make. One question remains to haunt me: did Albinus really love Margot? What do you think? View all 5 comments. Shelves: reviewed, , nabokov. Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus.

That way Nabokov starts Laughter in the dark and in fact these words are enough to describe the plot. Outwardly it is a banal tale of tragicomic romance of older man with young girl. There are loads such stories but this one stands out with acerbity and witticism. Nabokov is brilliantly ironical and pungent and whole story full of sardonic humour. Laughter in the dark. After reading you may only applaud how apt the title is. Though when you're reading how blinded by passion fool changes into the fooled blind laughter gradually sticks in your throat. View all 8 comments. The flawed human. The insecure being who seeks validation. The manipulated partner. The depressed one who seeks happiness in another life, in order to avoid responsibility and routine.

The neglectful father. Still, somewhere in the dinily lit pages of this book, there is a woman who has dedicated her life to him, one who sees in him the person he is unable to see, one who has helped him morph into the man he has become, one who understands he is living a delusion. Nabokov dedicated this novel to The flawed human. Nabokov dedicated this novel to his wife Vera. Imagine that. Laughter occurs in the dark, both literally and figuratively, as Albinus goes on a downward spiral after abandoning his wife and child for a lover who is a child herself.

Does he love his wife, he does, he thinks, and yet there are things he dislikes, just as there are things he seeks in another. Elisabeth, his wife, is barely seen in this novel; she exists in glimpses, the shell of a woman who is a bit distracted but loyal. The narrative hints at a marriage that also contains a layer of friendship and respect: They had some very delightful trips abroad, and many beautifully soft evenings at home where he sat with her on the balcony high above the blue streets with the wires and chimneys drawn in Indian ink across the sunset, and reflected that he was really happy beyond his deserts. The woman the reader gets to see clearly, however, is Margot, the lover. Like Albinus, she too suffers from feelings of insecurity that stems from a bad childhood. She is an element of the street, one who has gotten accustomed to using her body to get what she wants. Albinus, on the other hand, is a man of high society. This juxtaposition of class and society is something that makes for quite an interesting read, as Albinus is tricked and cheated in ways that are quite humorous, especially given all he has done to his family.

He is laughed at in the streets, in his own home; he is mocked by his lover, by someone he considers a friend; he is mocked by all who once knew him. Everywhere, there is laughter, and it happens in the dark, since Albinus is the last one to see it, until suddenly, he had the obscure sensation of everything being suddenly turned the other way round, so that he had to read it all backward if he wanted to understand. It was a sensation devoid of any pain or astonishment. It was simply something dark and looming, and yet smooth and soundless, coming toward him and there he stood, in a kind of dreamy, helpless stupor, not even trying to avoid that ghostly impact. What makes someone leave a healthy marriage to live in the dark pits of deception, manipulation, and "last burning a hole in his life?"

Albinus is a tortured and disoriented soul who lives in the dark, always reaching, always wanting more, always living inwardly, so that those around him cannot imagine his humiliation and inner pain. View all 14 comments. Nov 28, Sketchbook rated it it was amazing. A cyanide comedy. Nabokov scorns "realism," which befuddles many readers who belch that his characters aren't "likeable. C'mon, we're in a world of surrealism and insecurity that stems from a bad childhood. She is an element of the street, one who has gotten accustomed to using her body to get what she wants. Albinus, on the other hand, is a man of high society. This juxtaposition of class and society is something that makes for quite an interesting read, as Albinus is tricked and cheated in ways that are quite humorous, especially given all he has done to his family.

It begins in Berlin with a borrowing fi "The Blue Angel" : an older chap-a married art scholar and a dullard-swoons over a teenage adorable-slutty usherette in a movie house. He gives up his family and his heart for her. Then it shifts into racy comedy as she has the scholar supporting her and a beau who suggests he's gay. Thine host is ready to believe anything. The scholarly Albinus is good-looking, Nabokov reports, though "his mild blue eyes bulged a little when he was thinking hard," and, since he has a slowish mind, this happens often. Before marriage he knew a few dreary women, including one who always talked about her past in great detail and concluded with "C'est la vie. She wants to get into movies and be a Dietrich-star like Dorianna Karenina. He finances a pic. In a devastating scene, at a preview, Margot sees how awful she is onscreen.

Sobs, moans, hysterics. Enter Axel Rex, a virile scamp up to no good, Margot's exlover After a car accident, in which Albinus is blinded, literally, women, including one who always talked about her past in great detail and concluded with "C'est la vie. She wants to get into movies and be a Dietrich-star like Dorianna Karenina. He finances a pic. In a devastating scene, at a preview, Margot sees how awful she is onscreen.

The lesson is: stick with your wife; and watch out for the pretty ones, they are especially insidious. I wonder to what extent Nabokov was working through his own issues with fidelity and temptation. What goes around, comes around—right? Ostensibly a story about a man who forsakes his wife and child for a new model vixen read: teenager, Laughter in the Dark sets a benchmark on how terrible human beings can be to one another
encounters. His prolonged affair with Margot is eventually revealed to Albinus's wife Elisabeth when Margot deliberately sends a letter to the
who lives in Berlin. He lusts after the year-old Margot whom he meets at a cinema, where she works, and seduces her over the course of many
In , Nabokov used this theme again with Lolita to a much differently developed effect. Albinus is a respected, reasonably happy married art critic
The book gains momentum as you read; as you reach its end you do not want to put it down, not for a single second.

She is by no means guileless. It turns out that it is she who is seducing him! Watch and see what happens. The quality of a book lies in the writing. This book deserves four stars due to its prose. It is the writing in this book that makes it exciting. Luke Daniels narrates the audiobook. I had to listen very carefully to make sure I heard exactly who was doing what. The narration I have given three stars. Nabokov was picky about the translation of his books. This I appreciate. Not liking the book's first English translation by Winifred Roy with the title Camera Obscura , he translated it again, this time himself. His translation was given the title Laughter in the Dark. I recommend this book to those looking for a short, exciting read. My list is few due to a long interval of reluctance due to my limited familiarity with his style, texts and English.

However, I have since gained more confidence from my first encounter with his "Collected Stories" Penguin, in which I could enjoy reading most of them. Interestingly, this novel written in Russian has been translated into English 3. All in all, there are more or less three characteristics that essentially shape the three key characters' fate, each pertaining to wealthiness Albert Albinus , greed Margot Peters and brazennes Axel Rex. As soon as we keep these in mind while reading, Nabokov's plot and dialogs are simply amazing and gradually realize why conflicts just happen. If Albinus were not well to do, he would not exploit his wealth for anything Margot wants.

If Margot were not greedy, she would not propose a divorce ultimatum from him. If Rex were not brazen, he would not mischievously linger on with Margot in a rented Chalet in Switzerland while Albinus could not see due to his accident. To continue View all 17 comments. Nov 24, Rob rated it really liked it. More reviews can be found on my book blog. These are the only two Nabokov novels I've read so far, so I'm hoping he does branch out a bit in his other novels, but this was still a much different story than what happened between Humbert Humbert and Dolores. Where Humbert is a calculated predator, Albert Albinus, this story's older man, is a fumbling and naive fool. H More reviews can be found on my book blog. He's a well-off art critic living in Berlin who meets Margot, a seventeen-year-old girl, and becomes obsessed with her.

He meets with her on a few occasions and eventually - 'seduces' is not the right word here - convinces her to have an affair with him. She is in control from the very beginning, manipulating him every step of the way to get what she wants while slowly dismantling his life. We watch as this relationship progresses and becomes shockingly toxic. All of the characters are completely unlikable in this. Albinus is truly pathetic and Margot is just a vile human being from the very beginning of the story, to the point where it was difficult to imagine what Albinus saw in her, although she does get some sympathy being the target of a man too old for her. I don't need characters to be likable, but it's nice to know what others see in them. As the novel's opening paragraph concludes, Albinus: "loved; was not loved; and his life ended in disaster". Nabokov's deadpan narration charges the novel with countless blackly hilarious moments. Rex provides many of them Margot's first lover, an artist and film producer, enters her and Albinus's grasping relationship as a man whose "itch to make fools of his fellow men amounted almost to genius". And Albinus, naturally, is made a fool of. Returning from his child's deathbed, he finds Margot "supine, smoking lustily", feeling "delicious content". Rex, Nabokov adds with glee, "had left a short time before, well-contented too".

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Laughter in the Dark () - IMDb

Nabokov lets us in on its punchline straight away. In the opening lines, we're informed that Albinus — husband, father, wealthy Berliner art critic and, it soon emerges, as chintzy a nabobish as they come — abandons his wife for the pretty and petulant teenage Margot, who dreams of money and movie stardom. Her venality, slyness and casual cruelty make her deliciously vile; unsurprisingly, things do not end well. As the novel's opening paragraph concludes, Albinus: "loved; was not loved; and his life ended in disaster". Nabokov's deadpan narration charges the novel with countless blackly hilarious moments. Rex provides many of them Margot's first lover, an artist and film producer, enters her and Albinus's grasping relationship as a man whose "itch to make fools of his fellow men amounted almost to genius".

The actions of Albinus at times seem farcical, while Margot takes to playing a sort of femme fatale with her manipulating mannerisms. Nabokov's narrative has the most precise pacing, and is decisive, witty but with a slightly morbid sensibility. Would have loved to see the characters and story developed even further as they were just so readable. I simply crave for more! Anyway, a fabulous novel, one of his very best. View all 16 comments. The book deals with the affection of a middle-aged man for a very young woman, resulting in a mutually parasitic relationship.

In , Nabokov used this theme again with Lolita to a much differently developed effect. Albinus is a respected, reasonably happy married art critic who lives in Berlin. He lusts after the year-old Margot whom he meets at a cinema, where she works, and seduces her over the course of many encounters. His prolonged affair with Margot is eventually revealed to Albinus's wife Elisabeth when Margot deliberately sends a letter to the
Albinus's residence and Albert is unable to intercept it before it is discovered. This results in the dissolution of the Albinuses' marriage. Rather than disown the young troublemaker, he is even more attracted to her. Margot uses him to become a film star, fulfilling her ambition in life.

Albinus introduces Margot to Axel Rex, but he does not know that the two have previously been lovers. Margot and Rex resume their relationship, and start plotting to get Albinus out of the way and rob him of his money. Rex sees the opportunities that Albinus's infatuation with Margot produces, and understands that even a great risk means little to the blind and helpless, in love, in loss, and in dwindling fortune. Albinus gets Margot her first role as an actress, but she does not appear to be very talented. In fact, what she possesses in beauty is best captured by the imagination rather than even a still camera. Only Albinus's wealth ensures that she gets to play her role. Margot realizes that she has played the role poorly and Albinus worries about her reaction.

Rex, however, adores seeing the girl from the streets suffer and takes the opportunity to exploit her ineptitude. After Margot becomes upset when viewing the film, Albinus coaxes her into taking a holiday to the south. They rent a hotel room and, after a chance encounter with an old friend, Albinus happens to surmise that Margot and Rex are engaged in an affair. He has always been envious of Rex in the belief that he is the truest of artists, unlike him. He has stolen beautiful young things from Albinus his whole life, and this is no different. Albinus steals away with Margot and leaves Rex at the hotel. On their journey out of town, Albinus, a self-proclaimed poor driver, crashes the car and is blinded, leaving him in need of care and oblivious to the world around him. Rex and Margot take advantage of his handicap, and rent a chalet in Switzerland where Rex poses as Albinus's doctor, although Albinus is unaware of Rex's presence.

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And so Margot lies around all day in a chintzy kimono reading cinema magazines. She becomes very bored and soon finds more entertaining things to occupy her days such as shopping and being seen in smart places. Albinus is of course horribly jealous; he wants to know every detail of where she goes and who she speaks to. Swan and Odette all over again. The scenario is so like Proust's it's hard to tell the difference. No, most of what I've described can be found in the first section of this book with the very fitting title of Laughter in the Dark.

There are even film scenes described in detail and some discussions about the difficulties of moving from the silent screen to talkies, all of which made me think that Nabokov must have had some interest in writing screen plays at this point in his career. When I checked up on this, I found that this book had been made into a joint French-British movie in with the setting changed from s Berlin to s London. An excellent title as it turned that this book had been made into a joint French-British movie in with the setting changed from s Berlin to s London. An excellent title as it turned out. View all 22 comments. Laughter in the Dark is a love story or rather it is a caricature of a love story. And telling the tale Vladimir Nabokov becomes grotesquely melodramatic. The world is the stage and life is a play: The stage manager of this performance was neither God nor the devil. The hero is an infatuated idealist living with his head in the romantic clouds so he is doomed right from the start… Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus. Perhaps the only real thing about him was his innate conviction that everything that had ever been created in the domain of art, science or sentiment, was only a more or less clever trick. Laughter in the Dark is a parable of idealistic blindness: some are born to deceive others and some are born to be deceived. Mar 10, Sarah rated it really liked it. I hope. But it can still be good.

The whole time I was reading it, I was almost wishing I had saved it for my next trip. It is printed in a big, easy-to-read font that makes it hard to lose your place even when you get distracted by airplane stuff. It only takes about 3 or 4 hours to read. It has a very fast-moving and weird, deviant plot — so deviant, in fact, that you could probably forget you are flying through the air at dangerous speeds. It makes those around notice that you are interested in early-era Nabokov, which makes you really smart and interesting. View 2 comments. As a independent work, I don't...
think it belongs in the top tier of Nabokov's lush ouvre, but it seems to me to be a piece where Nabokov establishes his literary sea legs.

In this novel, Nabokov is playing with themes of vision, blindness, truth, deception, art and morality. You see many of Nabokov’s later motifs surrounding vision floating like mouches volantes through this early work: mirrors, window pains, mimicry, scintillations, semblances, glasses, movies, etc. It wouldn’t be Nabokov if he played any of these themes straight. He bends the narrative and plays with Tolstoy’s belief that it is “the essential nature of truth to be hidden from, revealed to, the eyes.

View all 4 comments. May 04, Paquita Maria Sanchez rated it liked it Shelves: literature. Leave it to Nabokov to strip you of your faith in humanity. Aug 22, Ivana Books Are Magic rated it really liked it. Curiously enough, the first works of Nabokov I read were not fiction but rather literary criticism. I quite enjoyed reading his views on writing and literature. Predictably, it was not before long that I wanted to read his novels as well. I picked up this book years ago and figured it could be a good introduction to Nabokov.

I wanted something less emotionally exhausting to start Nabokov with. So, I opted for Laughter in the Dark. There are some similarities between these two novels. Take the protagonists for instance: once again there is an age difference between lovers. There is a girl and an older man, but at least the girl in question is not a minor. The femme fatale of this book is a femme, not an adolescent girl. Young, but not underage. Not a child, although she seems to be able to play that role to get what she wants. What is interesting about this novel is that Nabokov literally reveals the plot right away. In the opening lines Nabokov reveals the basic storyline and yet it doesn't make this novel any less interesting.

This is the whole of the story and we might have left it at that had there not been profit and pleasure in the telling; and although there is plenty of space on a gravestone to contain, bound in moss, the abridged version of a man’s life, detail is always welcome. Despite the fact that the book reveals both the atmosphere and the plot immediately, it kept my interest from start to finish. Both protagonists are hard to love, but easy to sympathize with. Margot is manipulative, but in an instinctive not a cunning way. Nevertheless, reading about them was very interesting. I suppose it is because they are so human. That goes for all the characters in the novel. There are no no embellishments in this book, not when it comes to society and human beings.

Intellectuals and artists- both are sometimes driven by their instincts. Sometimes everything comes down to biology. Instincts, desires, and human urges. Human beings are not always as sophisticated as we would like to believe. We mix impulses with love, gratitude with genuine connection. We fall victims to our desires- over and over again.

Laughter in the Dark really is a wonderful novel. Nabokov prose flows with ease, and his writing is both elegant and easy to follow. Like I already mentioned, as far as the plot goes there is nothing new, everything is revealed at start, and yet Nabokov makes "seen a hundred times story" into something rather fascinating. The characters are poor excuses for human beings most of the time, but it not hard to sympathize with them in spite of that or maybe because of that. Once Albinus leaves his wife for Margot, they live in a somewhat stable relationship. Albinus does not mind. But how long can their happiness last? Margot, an abused child that has grown into a selfish woman is obviously bored in her new relationship.

Perhaps predictably, soon another character enters the picture and a triangle is formed. Albinus, a boring intellectual, Margot a young cruel mistress and Rex sadistic artist- quite a love triangle they make. One question remains to haunt me: did Albinus really love Margot? What do you think? View all 5 comments. Shelves: reviewed , nabokov. Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus. That way Nabokov starts Laughter in the dark and in fact these words are enough to describe the plot. Outwardly it is a banal tale of tragicomic romance of older man with young girl. There are loads such stories but this one stands out with acerbity and Witticism. Nab Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus.

Nabokov is brilliantly ironical and pungent and whole story full of sardonic humour. Laughter in the dark. After reading you may only applaud how apt the title is. Though when you're reading how blinded by passion fool changes into the fooled blind laughter gradually sticks in your throat. View all 8 comments. The flawed human. The insecure being who seeks validation. The manipulated partner. The depressed one who seeks happiness in another life, in order to avoid responsibility and routine. The neglectful father. Still, somewhere in the dimly lit pages of this book, there is a woman who has dedicated her life to him, one who sees in him the person he is unable to see, one who has helped him morph into the man he has become, one who understands he is living a delusion.

Nabokov dedicated this novel to The flawed human. The book deals with the affection of a middle-aged man for a very young woman, resulting in a mutually parasitic relationship. In Nabokov used this theme again with Lolita to a much differently developed effect. The characters were given different names in the English translation. In the following list the names of the characters of the English translation are given first with the original names in parentheses.

Albinus is a respected, reasonably happy married art critic who lives in Berlin. He lusts after the year-old Margot whom he meets at a cinema, where she works, and woos her over the course of many encounters, primarily with money. His prolonged affair with Margot is eventually revealed to Albinus's wife Elisabeth when Margot deliberately sends a letter to the Albinuses' residence and Albinus is unable to intercept it before it is discovered. Elisabeth leaves with the assistance of her brother, Paul, and takes their daughter, Irma, with her. Rather than disown the young troublemaker, Albinus is even more attracted to Margot. She eventually manipulates him into allowing her to move in to his flat where he resided with his wife, and she sets to working on him getting a divorce so that she might marry him and acquire access to his significant wealth.

Margot uses Albinus to fulfill her ambition in life to become a rich film star. Even when Albinus’ daughter, Irma, takes ill and eventually succumbs to pneumonia, Margot insistently drives a wedge between his old life and his new, in order to totalize her capture of him. Irresolutely, Albinus introduces Margot to Axel Rex at one of his many dinner parties, but he does not know that the two have previously been lovers. Margot and Rex resume their relationship, and start plotting to get Albinus out of the way and rob him of his money. Albinus gets Margot her first role as an actress, using his wealth as largesse to make up for her lack of talent.
At the premiere viewing of the movie, Margot realises how inept she was and is petulant about her public exposure as a mediocre actress. Attempting to appease her wounded ego, Albinus convinces her to take a holiday to the south in the new car he has bought for her. Rex refuses to be left behind, and by this point has wangled his way into Albinus’ confidence as a fellow artist including convincing Albinus that he could not possibly be interested in Margot as he poses himself as homosexual: he presents himself as the ideal chauffeur for their trip, given that Albinus can barely drive.