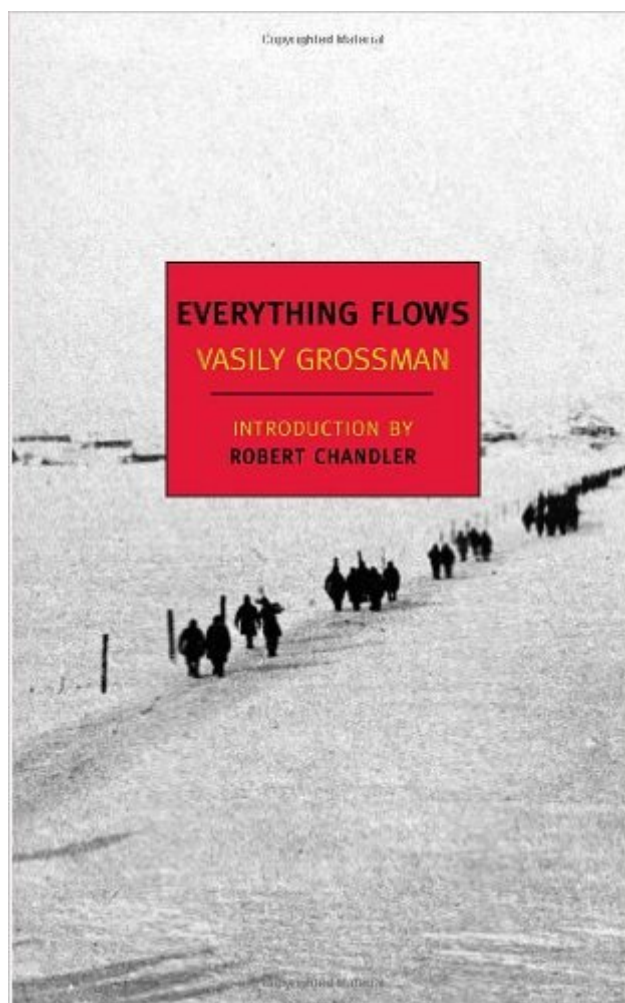


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Everything Flows (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

A New York Review Books Original Everything Flows is Vasily Grossman's final testament, written after the Soviet authorities suppressed his masterpiece, Life and Fate. The main story is simple: released after thirty years in the Soviet camps, Ivan Grigoryevich must struggle to find a place for himself in an unfamiliar world. But in a novel that seeks to take in the whole tragedy of Soviet history, Ivan's story is only one among many. Thus we also hear about Ivan's cousin, Nikolay, a scientist who never let his conscience interfere with his career, and Pinegin, the informer who got Ivan sent to the camps. Then a brilliant short play interrupts the narrative: a series of informers steps forward, each making excuses for the inexcusable things that he did "inexcusable and yet, the informers plead, in Stalinist Russia understandable, almost unavoidable. And at the core of the book, we find the story of Anna Sergeyevna, Ivan's lover, who tells about her eager involvement as an activist in the Terror famine of 1932-33, which led to the deaths of three to five million Ukrainian peasants. Here Everything Flows attains an unbearable lucidity comparable to the last cantos of Dante's Inferno.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I shared all this with my own people There, where misfortune had abandoned us." Anna Akhmatova's Requiem If Life and Fate (New York Review Books Classics) may rightfully be seen as Vasily Grossman's masterpiece, his Everything Flows may rightfully be seen as his testament, a requiem if you will not only for his own life but for the lives of those who lived in his time and place." Everything

Flows" tells a simple, yet emotionally deep and politically nuanced tale. The story begins with the 1957 return to Moscow of Ivan Grigoryevich after 30 years of forced labor in the Gulag. 1957 marked the year, following Khrushchev's denunciation of the excesses of Stalin, in which the tide of prisoners returning from the Gulag reached its peak. He arrives at the Moscow flat of his cousin Nikolay. Nikolay, a scientist with less than stellar skills, has reached some measure of success at the laboratory through dint of being a survivor. The meeting in the flat is entirely unsatisfactory for both parties. Grossman paints a vivid picture of Nikolay, more than a bit jealous that Ivan's light had always shone brighter than his own prior to Ivan's arrest. Nikolay suffers from the guilt of one who was not arrested and who is painfully aware of the choices he made to keep from being arrested. It seems clear that Ivan represents a mirror into which Nikolay can see only his own hollow reflection. Ivan leaves Moscow for his old city of Leningrad, the place where he was first arrested in 1927. By chance, he runs into the person, Pinegin, whose denunciation placed him in jail in the first place.

It's difficult for me to write about a moving piece of literature that doesn't resort to cheap hyperbole, especially when all the overused descriptions and praises seem to fit. Yet 'Everything Flows' is a novel that truly does stand head and shoulders above its peers; quietly though, with little fanfare - befitting the shape and form of its content. Reminiscent of Tadeusz Borowski's 'This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen' in its austere insights into human behavior, 'Everything Flows' takes Borowski's chilling observations one step further and seeks to locate the slumbering humanity within the inhuman chaos of terror and cruelty. Where Borowski mercilessly lacerates us with the horror of the concentration camp, where fear stamps out everything human, Vasily Grossman describes the injustice of the gulag and of the State, and forgivingly looks for the redeemable within the worst of us. Unfinished at the time of Grossman's death, 'Everything Flows' is the story of Ivan Grigoryevich, a man returning to Moscow after thirty years in a labor camp. He is released during Khrushchev's 'thaw', and though the novel begins with Ivan's attempt to reintegrate into the world, as it progresses he transforms into a sort of reflective leitmotiv, one in which all segments of Soviet society can plainly see themselves. His journey toward resolution, often interrupted by authorial interludes, is an examination of a people reared by and brought to heel by the State - they are complicit and victim all at once, and Grossman suggests temperance rather than recrimination. Grossman is not rhetorical nor sentimental, but I find it difficult not to be affected by his sparse lyricism and plain honesty.

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