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WHY THE SPACE OF SELF-TRANSLATION MATTERS:

Nabokov, Identity, and Arizona

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1. Introduction

During the past decade, the field of Translation Studies, as well as that of Self-Translation Studies, have witnessed an increasing interest towards the understanding of the role played by space in shaping these practices. Vladimir Nabokov's relationship with natural, geographic spaces in the (re-) activation of his creative process proves to be particularly relevant on a number of levels. First of all, in theoretical terms, his views significantly contribute to the discussion around the connection between space and self-translation, especially in those cases when rewriting is involved. Self-translators, in fact, «are routinely given poetic license to rewrite "their" originals» (Grutman, Van Bolderen 2014: 324). Secondly, they give the opportunity to gain a deeper awareness of the dynamic regulating the creation of «a new self in a second language» (Evangelista 2013), resulting from the interaction of the author and the new space they inhabit as they are rethinking their works in a different context. Moreover, such a focus also helps overcome some of the limits that Julie Loison-Charles has recently highlighted in a different academic area of inquiry, namely that of Nabokov Studies:

> [c]learly, Nabokov's relation to translation has always been studied less than his work as an author, and when it is studied, the same recurring topics emerge: his practice of self-translation, the scandal surrounding his translation of Pushkin's masterpiece *Evgenij Onegin* […], *Eugene Onegin* […] and, to a lesser extent, that of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Russian (2023: 2).

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Nabokov's remarks on how the interaction with his surroundings molded his literary activity not only enrich the knowledge about his practice of self-translation, but also open a new window to reconstruct the metamorphosis of his migrant identity. As a matter of fact, although well-researched and detailed accounts of Nabokov's wanderings have been presented in many academic (Boyd 1991; Boyd, Pyle 2000; Boyd 2018; Zimmer 2019; Arzoo 2022) and non-academic publications (Roper 2015), some important episodes of the writer's life so far have been neglected.

One of these episodes include his 1953 stay in Portal, Arizona. Arguably, this sojourn was of critical importance for Nabokov's career as a writer, considering that there he carried on his work on the final version of *Lolita* (as it is possible to read in the *Afterword* of a later edition of the book), and self-translated parts of his autobiographical memoir *Conclusive Evidence*[1] (1951) into Russian (*Другие берега*, 1954) (Boyd 1991: 224). The lack of research on this topic becomes evident at a visual level if opening Robert Roper's 2015 book *Nabokov in America: On the Road to* Lolita [Fig. 1]. In fact, the first image that appears is a map where only the northern portion of the state of Arizona is represented.

In dialogue with both the current developments in Self-Translation studies, as well as in synergy with the state of the art in the field of Nabokov Studies, the present article[2] focuses on how space, and in particular natural landscape, bears an important influence on writers when it comes to self-translation. Nabokov's case proves to be particularly fitting, insofar as his stay(s) in Arizona to pursue entomological research stimulated, amongst others, the work on the self-translation of his autobiographical memoir, inevitably triggering reflections on the migrant condition. Moreover, approaching Nabokov from the point of view of his relationship with the land adds a fresh perspective in the evaluation of what Leona Toker calls the «factographic» mode of writing (2019: 24) he adopted in *Conclusive Evidence* / *Speak, Memory*.

Nabokov's experience can also be of help to better comprehend contemporary macro-phenomena, especially regarding the current, unprec-

1 This is the title of the first version of Nabokov's autobiography *Speak, Memory* (1966).

2 This contribution makes use of original, unpublished material gathered during several field trips to the State of Arizona (USA) within the framework of the MIUR Excellence Project DIVE-IN Diversity & Inclusion, conducted by the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures – Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna (iniziativa Dipartimenti di Eccellenza MIUR [L. 232 del 01/12/2016]).

edented societal and environmental crises. In fact, as Zygmunt Bauman argued, «with pluralism irreversible, a world-scale consensus on world-views and values unlikely, and all extant Weltanschauungen firmly grounded in their respective cultural traditions [...] communication across traditions becomes the major problem of our time» (1987: 143). Thus, understanding how the practice of self-translation fosters the inclusion of diverse migrant voices becomes imperative especially at times when, more often than ever, large «masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous» (Arendt 1973: 459). Furthermore, the uniqueness of the experience of the «*homo sapiens loquendi*» (Agamben 2007: 8) acquires even more importance if read against the background of the ongoing philosophical debate around artificial intelligence and what is human, prompting entirely new questions about societies' bond with technology and nature. Actually, as a result of an impoverishment in the communities' relationship networks, already in 2011 Giorgio Agamben noticed a shift in the concept of "identity", now built «on the basis of data that is merely biological», which he proposes to call «identity without the person» (Agamben 2011: 54). By showing how the interaction of the artist with a remote, extreme landscape influences the exercise of self-translation, Nabokov's experience, and notably his 1953 stay in Portal, brings back to the fore the existential importance of such – disappearing or ignored – ties. Ultimately, this intricate web of sensorial and intellectual responses, activated through the act of self-translation, adds up to the inner identity negotiations that the migrant, who self-translates, inevitably is subjected to. In fact, as George Steiner maintained already in the Seventies,

> [a]ll literature is a linguistic construct. The philosophic, logical-linguistic, psychological investigations of syntax and of the grammars of human feeling, as they have been conducted since 1900, cannot be irrelevant to literature. On the contrary: the poetic case is the essential, the ontologically crystallized instance, of the life of language (1976: viii-ix).

2. Nabokov and Portal, Arizona

Steiner's mention is not casual in this context, insofar as these words appeared in an essay dedicated, amongst others, to Nabokov and his "extraterritoriality". Undoubtedly, the writer's life has been characterized by frequent moves, from one country to the other in the European setting,

then, before returning to Europe, from one state to the other in the United States. Here, Nabokov traveled mainly to hunt butterflies, visiting the Southwest and Arizona in particular[3]. As Boyd's biography confirms (1991: 28), Nabokov explored the Grand Canyon as early as 1941[4], making it one of the very first American states he discovered upon arrival from the old continent. Not surprisingly, in 1961, when asked by Jeanine Colombo with *L'Information d'Israel* about his interest in Arizona, he mentioned his entomological research[5]: «[b]utterflies! And don't look at me with eyes as round as saucers; no, I'm not crazy! For me, you see, every country I see in terms of butterflies and shades of butterflies. I am a collector […]» (Nabokov 2020: 301 – 94).

Nabokov's perhaps most notable mention of his trip to Portal is contained in the Postscript to *Lolita*, *On a Book entitled Lolita* (1956), where he once again embedded his literary endeavors within the wider – and, perhaps, more important – framework of scientific research:

> [e]very summer my wife and I go butterfly hunting. The specimens are deposited at scientific institutions, such as the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard or the Cornell University collection. The locality labels pinned under these butterflies will be a boon to some twenty-first-century scholar with a taste for recondite biography. It was at such of our headquarters as Telluride, Colorado; Afton, Wyoming; Portal, Arizona; and Ashland, Oregon, that *Lolita* was energetically resumed in the evenings or on cloudy days. I finished copying the thing out in longhand in the spring of 1954, and at once began casting around for a publisher (1997: 312).

Nabokov's words reveal significant details about his method, the way he organized his working day, and the time devoted to the literary activity. As a start, it seems to be clear that the time dedicated to search for butterflies had a meaningful impact on his self-translation and creative writing. More specifically, butterfly hunting (i.e. scientific research) seems to be the

3 For further reference on the butterflies of North America and their habitats, see Scott (1992).

4 «This butterfly which I discovered has nothing to do with nymphets. I discovered it in the Grand Canyon in 1941. I know it occurs here, but it is difficult to find» (Nabokov 2020: 258 – 78). In bibliographical references to this edition, page number(s) are the first information after colons, whereas the second number indicates how the interview is indexed in the volume.

5 Cfr. his 1959 interview with Robert H. Boyle. See also Nabokov (2020: 259-260, 263 – 78).

primary catalyst of his choice to visit the American West. The mention of the bad weather he experienced that year further reinforces this idea that, at least in this context, the interaction with the surroundings shaped his work on self-translation. In fact, writing seems to be confined to a residual time cut off from his research (evenings or cloudy days, which are unsuitable to chase these insects).

Not only interviews and other officially published texts, but also private letters and the correspondence sent from Portal provide important details that confirm a special, dynamic interaction between space and the act of self-translation. For example, a letter to Donald Eff dated May 1, 1953 confirms with a great wealth of details that Nabokov's main interest in his expeditions to the West was tied to his entomological research:

> I am on leave of absence from the university this spring and thought it a good idea to spend it collecting in the Chiricahua Mts — and writing a book [*Lolita*].
>
> […]
>
> I am eager to get here (this is its type locality) my *Neonympha maniola* (which R. Chermock demoted to a subspecies of my *dorothea* — wrongly, I think). It should appear late in May. Another *Neonympha, henshawi Edw.*, (the northern form of the Mexican *pyracmon*) coexists with *maniola*. The three are readily separated by the females: what Holland figures as "henshawi" male, is *dorothea*, female. The female of *henshawi* is figured by Edwards (it has a slightly tailed and banded appearance), and that of *maniola* (a rather ruddy thing) is figured by Wright (Butt. W. Coast) (Boyd, Pyle 2000: 497).

Similar thoughts on the Arizonan land as a driver for his journeys, as well as on his daily schedule and the way he balanced exploration and literature, can be found in another letter to Harry Levin, sent on the following day (May 2, 1953):

> [w]e are in the south-east corner of Arizona, on the border of New and Old Mexico. The nearer mountains are maroon, spotted with the dark green of junipers and the lighter green of mesquites, and the far mountains are purple as in the Wellesley song. From eight A.M. to noon, or later, I collect butterflies (only Wells, Conan Doyle and Conrad have portrayed lepidopterists – all of them spies, or murderers, or neurotics) and from two P.M. to dinner time I write (a novel) [*Lolita*] (Boyd, Pyle 2000: 498).

Notably, this letter to Levin also contains helpful information about Nabokov's feelings with regards to the natural landscape of Arizona: «I wonder if your account of your trip will make me Europe-sick, or at least

France-sick. I know that every time I come to this dear West, I feel a pang of recognition, and no Switzerlands could lure me away from Painted Canyon or Silver Creek» (Boyd, Pyle 2000: 498-499). In these lines, Nabokov undoubtedly conveyed the deep emotional connection he felt with Arizona, a sentiment whose intensity grew stronger with the passing of time. In fact, in a 1966 interview for the "Paris Review", when asked «*Do you consider yourself an American?*», Nabokov famously replied:

> I am as American as April in Arizona. The flora, the fauna, the air of the Western states are my links with Asiatic and Arctic Russia. Of course, I owe too much to the Russian language and landscape to be emotionally involved in, say, American regional literature, or Indian dances, or pumpkin pie on a spiritual plane […] (Nabokov 1973: 98).

As this excerpt shows, at least up until 1966[6] the sense of communion Nabokov experienced with Arizona's environment mirrored his relationship with the remote Russian regions, hence the evocative parallel discussed in terms of identity. According to Julian W. Connolly, «with this affirmation […] Vladimir Nabokov […] displayed a salient feature of his verbal art: his creative approach to language and his fondness for rejuvenating dead clichés […]» (Connolly 2012: 209). However, as Susan E. Sweeney has previously observed, «[t]his remark was not merely rhetorical, despite the artfulness of its alliteration and its apparent allusion to the popular song "April in Paris"» (1994: 328). In fact, behind the plenitude of narrative devices Nabokov used to please his readers with, there is a pivotal aspect of truth to his words, which opens another window onto the writer's perception of his own identity. Of course, as he said once, «the writer's art is his real passport» (Nabokov 1973: 63). Nevertheless, a deeper understanding of the statement «I am as American as April in Arizona», nested within the comparison between Russia and Arizona, can be relevant to further comprehend his work on the self-translation of his autobiography.

It might seem paradoxical to establish a connection, within the same simile, between the torrid heat evoked by the American state and the climate of his lost Russia. Arizona is indeed home of the Sonora, i.e. the most biodiverse desert on the planet[7]. Yet, scientific data provides key informa-

6 It should be borne in mind that Nabokov died in 1977.

7 «This mixing of northern and southern species creates an exceptionally high biodiversity in the region» (Wentworth Comus, Dimmitt, Phillips, Brewer 2015: 23).

tion to uncover that element of truth mentioned by Sweeney in Nabokov's cryptic statement. Remarkably, scientists detected a comparable degree of biological diversity in Siberia (Volkova, Volkov, Kuznetsova 2009), an area roughly corresponding to the territories mentioned in Nabokov's 1966 interview. Moreover, since the Sonoran Desert is located on the western edge of a continent in the horse latitudes, all the world's biomes are represented. This stunning variety offered by Arizonan nature seems to mirror Nabokov's life trajectory, constellated by multifold metamorphoses: «I am an American writer, born in Russia and educated in England where I studied French literature, before spending fifteen years in Germany» (1973: 26).

Arguably it is in Arizona, and in the American West, that Nabokov discovered a deep sense of familiarity in an otherwise unknown, foreign land. Not only the incredible biological diversity, but also climatic features contribute to making sense of this new stage of the writer's life. In fact, April is usually a very atypical month, insofar as the weather is unstable, often being disrupted by showers. Such events are rare, given that throughout most of the year the desert is seemingly dead, largely because in such areas plants preserve their energies to survive the dry and harsh climate. Hence, it could be inferred that Nabokov considered himself an atypical American, just as much as this season is for the average weather in Arizona and in the United States in general. Besides this, considering that his comments were in retrospect, the American season possibly represented springtime for Nabokov's migrant identity, both as a man and as a writer. Such reading is supported by Nabokov's massive use of rhetorical devices in the quotation, an aspect previously observed by Connelly. Especially the word "spring", but also "flora", and, to a certain degree, "fauna", imply the concept of "renewal" and "rebirth". Keeping in mind the opening of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), as well as that April was the month of Nabokov's birth, the circle around this idea of "restart" finds its completion. In fact, the character opening Nabokov's first novel directly written in English is Olga Olegovna Orlova, an «egg-like»[8] (Nabokov 2001: 5), ovoidal alliteration "O-O-O", which, as I have discussed elsewhere, functions as a marker of birth and beginning (2018). Interestingly, this alliteration strongly resembles the scheme "A-A-A (+ A-A)", obtained from the capitalized words mentioned in

[8] Cfr. the expression in Latin "ab ovo" (literally: "from the egg") and its meaning "from the beginning", "from the origin".

the first two sentences of the quotation[9]. In this context too the recurrence of the letter "A", i.e. the first of the alphabet, could be considered an indirect allusion to those same ideas of "start".

Ultimately, it is possible to agree with Sweeney when she claims that «[t]he US offered Nabokov himself [...] [a] sense of déjà vu – and, more important, a similarly magical means to return to his own past» (Sweeney 1994: 331). It should not be surprising, then, that it is precisely in the Arizonan context that Nabokov decided not only to "look ahead" with a new novel (*Lolita*), but also to "look back", as he self-translated parts of his autobiographical memoir *Conclusive Evidence* into Russian (Boyd 1991: 224).

3. Space and Nabokov's Self-Translation

Nabokov's exploration of Arizona in pursuit of butterflies undoubtedly represented the privileged lens through which he discovered America both physically and culturally. Likewise, inhabiting this one-of-a-kind space proved to be pivotal for the evolution of both the individual, as well as of his literary activity. In fact, on a personal level, the encounter with this State left a deep mark in him, to the point that, «[w]hen away from his vacation haunts, he spoke of plans to return soon to his beloved West, and he mused that it would be ideal to own a cabin out there as well as a New York apartment, a cabin close to 'a certain little bit of desert in Arizona which I shall never forget'» (Roper 2015: 68). This remark is significant, insofar as Nabokov famously never owned a house after leaving Russia. In fact, in a 1964 interview for *Playboy* with Alvin Toffler (1973: 20-45), he explained that the only place he considered "home" was his family mansion in Saint Petersburg (Ulitsa Bol'shaia Morskaia 47).

Arguably, the deep, sincere emotional bond that Nabokov developed with Arizona became also a catalyst for the artist, and specifically for the self-translation of his *memoir*. In the 1948 prospectus of *Conclusive Evidence*, Nabokov planned to make it a «blending of perfect personal truth with strict artistic selection» (Nabokov 2012: 88). Considering Nabokov's

9 «I am as **A**merican as **A**pril in **A**rizona. The flora, the fauna, the air of the Western states are my links with **A**siatic and **A**rctic Russia» (Nabokov 1973: 98, emphases mine, I.M.).

views on the tight link between creativity and memory, it should not come as surprise that he worked simultaneously both on *Lolita* and his memoir:

> I think memory and imagination belong to the same rather mysterious world of human thought. It seems to me that someone without much imagination also has a poor memory. The child who imagines nothing while playing in the corridors of a castle will remember the castle only very vaguely. There is something in the imagination that connects to memory, and vice versa. Memory could be said to be a sort of imagination concentrated on a certain point… When you remember a thing, you never remember the thing itself, you remember the relation, the association of the thing with something else. And it's the imagination that makes this link between things (Nabokov 2020: 368 – 119).

In Nabokov's perception, then, creativity and memory share a common root, but in his case other actors come into play when writing is involved. Nabokov's most fond childhood memories are indeed those connected to butterflies, as he himself explains in a 1962 interview:

> [i]t all started on a cloudless day in my early boyhood – started as a passion and a spell, and a family tradition. There was a magic room in our country house with my father's collection – the old faded butterflies of his childhood, but precious to me beyond words – now almost a hundred years old, if they still exist. My mother taught me to spread my first swallowtail, my first hawk-moth. That enchantment has always remained with me. I have spoken of this much better in my memoir *Speak, Memory* (2020: 328 –105).

In 1953 Portal, however, the weather was not that Nabokov expected or remembered when he first started collecting butterflies. In fact, in his letters he often complained about the unsuitable meteorological conditions, which prevented him from pursuing his scientific goals. As he reveals in his correspondence, when it was too cloudy or there was too much wind, he would devote his time to finishing the work on *Lolita* or on the self-translation of his autobiography. In this respect, it is possible to infer that scientific research dictated the pace of his creative endeavors, including self-translation. After all, as Nabokov declared, «I have always successfully combined butterfly hunting with my literary work. And generally speaking: I think there is a bond and a blend between art and science at suitable altitudes» (2020: 327 – 105). More specifically, «[b]utterflies help me in my writing. Very often when I go and there are no butterflies, I am thinking. I wrote most of *Lolita* this way» (Nabokov 2020: 263 – 78).

Notably, this focus on butterflies allows to extend the discussion to what Leona Toker calls Nabokov's "*factography*": «[m]ainly […] *Speak, Memory* is distinguished from the tradition of pseudo-autobiography by its implicitly self-reflective emphasis on the *factographic*, non-fictional mode of writing. […] Nabokov *selects* the data for this autobiography but implicitly denies *fictionalization* of its narrative» (2019: 24-25). Art and Nature seem to be in dialogue also in this case, as the precision required in Nabokov's scientific exercise is self-translated into the rigor noticed by Toker. After all, as he once asserted in an interview with Horst Tappe for *Die Welt* (1964), «[b]oth belong together; for me one without the other is unthinkable, they augment each other. The precision of poetry and the inspiration of science» (Nabokov 2020: 339 – 111). Such exactitude is maintained in the Russian self-translation, as well as in the revised version in English, *Speak, Memory*. Even so, while self-translating his own memories, he was actually *revisiting*, *revising*, and *mediating* his past and his past self. During the process, "Nabokov the writer" and "Nabokov the man" «exist […] solely in the interstices of cultures and languages, and this in-between or third space is also the only possible site of translation» (Hokenson, Munson 2007: 154). In this new space occupied by self-translation, the author could not renounce his meticulous accuracy when communicating certain details, as if these words were pinned down in the text to create a reliable roadmap. Arguably, this helped to facilitate the memory of both himself and the readers. This aspect is particularly relevant in the context of Nabokov's production in English language, where natural landscape plays a specific role. In fact, according to Sweeney, «Nabokov used the American setting to conflate spatial and temporal dislocation. His later American novels are all meditations on space and time, in which America's gorgeous landscapes and wide open spaces can almost, but not quite, redeem the irrecoverable past» (1994: 331).

4. Conclusions

Nabokov's encounter with the natural landscape of Arizona certainly produced lifelong effects, which the author himself repeatedly brought up in interviews or private correspondence. As this research has tried to de-

monstrate, a focus on this little-known chapter in the author's life[10] has the potential to reveal meaningful keys to read both his work and the events of his migrant biography. In his self-translation into Russian of *Conclusive Evidence*, for example, one can appreciate the precision of the entomologist. As a result, words become possible testimonies of the closeness of art and science in the mind of the author.

The extreme isolation experienced in Portal and in Arizona possibly created for Nabokov the ideal, primordial broth in which to self-translate the memories from his past. Far from the sounds of the streets, and, to a certain degree, from that of the American English, he could "hear better" his native idioms[11] and, most importantly, the song of his voice. He was probably having the desert in mind when, in 1970, he told Nurit Beretzky that «[r]ootlessness is less important than a confirmed refugee's capacity to branch and blossom in a complete – and very pleasant – void» (2020: 386). After all, as Bakhtin wrote, «in the realm of culture, outsidedness is a most powerful factor in understanding», because «without one's own questions one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreign» (1986: 6-7).

Hence, the physical distance Nabokov had from Russia helped him to calibrate his focus. Notably, this "outsidedness" granted him the necessary detachment from both his home and adoptive cultures to create something uniquely new. This unique feature is evident at the very first level of language, as many Nabokovian scholars have noticed throughout decades. Their analyses of the "Nabokese" confirm what Bakhtin considers the essence of language: «one's own language is never a single language: in it there are always survivals of the past and a potential for other-languagedness» (1981: 66). This potential diversity, which is latent in any language, becomes evident in Nabokov's style. To Bakhtin, when this potential is heightened, «two myths perish simultaneously: the myth of a language that presumes to be the only language, and the myth of a language that presumes to be completely unified» (1981: 68).

In Nabokov's view, however, art is itself a space of exile: «[a]rt is exile. I felt an exile when I was a child in Russia among other children», he confessed (2020: 386). Thus exile, the most radical form of migration, is not a transitory situation but a sort of metaphysical, permanent dimension of

[10] Excluding the sources mentioned in this article, there is no consistent body of literature devoted to Nabokov and Arizona (or the American West in general).

[11] English, Russian, and, to a lesser extent, French.

existence that goes far beyond the geographic or cultural borders of an individual. In an earlier interview released in 1962, he also stated that «[t]here are as many exiles and ages as there are banished men or banned minds. The term "this age" means nothing to me» (2020: 326). Here, the phenomenon of migration is presented as a universal state, a condition now shared by a growing number of people. In this respect, it is possible to consider Nabokov our contemporary, and his case epitome of an epoch that, at least in the field of Russian Studies, seemed closed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Despite the tyrant restraints of time, the value of Nabokov's experience is still radically alive and close to us:

> [b]eyond the personal case, moreover, we find the representative stance, or, rather, motion. A great writer driven from language to language by social upheaval and war is an apt symbol for the age of the refugee. No exile is more radical, no feat of adaptation and new life more demanding. It seems proper that those who create art in a civilization of quasi-barbarism which has made so many homeless, which has torn up tongues and peoples by the root, should themselves be poets unhoused and wanderers across language. Eccentric, aloof, nostalgic, deliberately untimely as he aspires to be and so often is, Nabokov remains, by virtue of his extraterritoriality, profoundly of our time, and one of its spokesmen (Steiner 1976: 10-11).

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Images

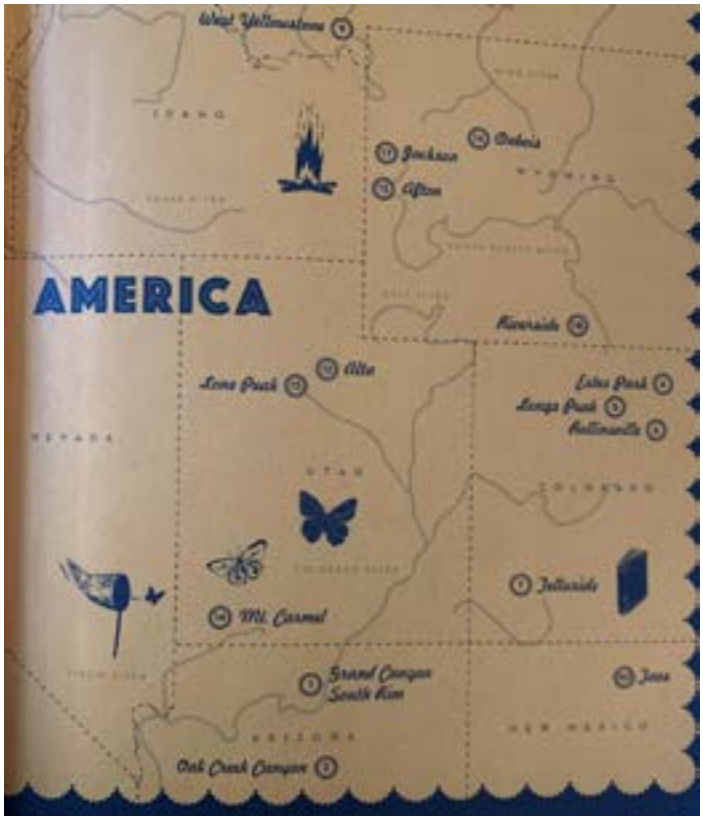

FIGURE 1. The map opening Robert Roper's 2015 book *Nabokov in America: On the Road to* Lolita

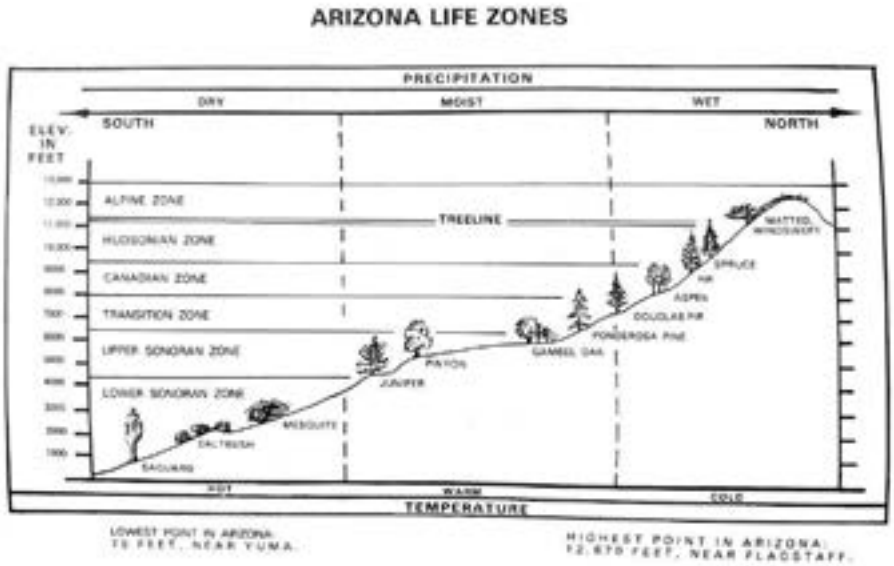

FIGURE 2. Arizona's biodiversity (Weir 1989: 4)

Abstract

Irina Marchesini

Why the Space of Self-Translation Matters: Nabokov, Identity, and Arizona

The year 1953 and, chiefly, his stay in Portal (Arizona), can be considered of crucial importance for Vladimir Nabokov. Here, not only he carried on his scientific research and his work on the final version of *Lolita* but, as Boyd reports, he also self-translated parts of his autobiographical memoir *Conclusive Evidence* into Russian (1991: 224). Interestingly, as Nabokov's letters seem to suggest, the time dedicated to entomological explorations of the land had a meaningful impact on the time devoted to creative writing and self-translation. Thus, in light of the so-called "spatial turn" that has recently invested the field of Translation Studies, this contribution explores the role played by geographical space in shaping the practice of self-translation. More specifically, it investigates the intersection between space, self-translation, self-narration, and the creation of "a new self in a second language" (Evangelista 2013: 177-87). This contribution makes use of original, unpublished documents gathered during several field trips to Arizona.

Keywords: Nabokov, self-translation, Portal, Arizona, desert, identity.