INTERPRETING THE UNTRANSLATABLE: REPRESENTATIONS OF VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S SELF-TRANSLATIONS IN WORLD LITERATURE

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Introduction

In the final sentences of the postscript to his self-translation of *Lolita* from English to Russian, Vladimir Nabokov reserves a section in which to address his sense of agency in the formations of the twenty different versions of his novel. In his words, "of all these translations, I can answer, as to accuracy and completeness, only for the French one, which I checked myself prior to publication. I can imagine what the Egyptians and the Chinese did with the poor thing, and I imagine still more vividly what the 'displaced lady' who had recently learned English would have done with it, if I had permitted it, or the American who had 'taken' Russian at the university." (Sampson 192)

With the passage of fifty years, the number of translations of *Lolita* and Nabokov's other novels has experienced exponential growth, both in the initial languages listed by Nabokov as well translation into numerous others, especially outside Western spheres. The languages Nabokov points out seem to constitute his most acute reminder that he lacks authority over the majority of *Lolita*'s legacy in translation. However, any reader of the Russian-language version's postscript can infer that the agency Nabokov exercised over *Lolita*'s Russian and French editions is nonetheless unique in spite of his lament of this agency's incompleteness. The model for most mass-market literary translation is that this takes place through an outside translator's interpretation from a source text to recreate its words in a target language, while a smaller, but no less important fraction of texts, have been self-translated by their original authors. Self-translation is far from an irrelevant anomaly to translation studies—Nabokov's career as an author and translator has demonstrated that the product of a self-translation increases the author's agency, marking their translation as the most authoritative while lending comparative scholars insight into those passages that create dilemmas of interpretation for third-party translators.

In comparative literature theory, as a result of shifting socioeconomic ties among Russia, China, and nearby micro-states, Emily Apter has advocated for tracking the movement of the untranslatable in order for literary studies to catch up with transnational aspects of modernity that demand objective analysis. In her research, the untranslatable operates as a reconciliatory element in literary world systems, which "rely on networks of cultural circulation, literary markets, and genre translation" (Apter 582). In other words, this notion of untranslatablility follows the Benjaminian tradition surrounding those ideas which the transfer occurring among languages cannot accommodate (584). This thesis comprises one intersection of analyzing Nabokov as a multilingual literary creator and his self-translations in systems of world literature analyzed by Apter. This thesis will therefore incorporate a degree of international politics, for which it can be argued that literary politics often serve as one front of a more total ideological battleground.

Similarly, I argue that self-translation constitutes a major component of understanding cultural circulation and literary markets—first, through paratextual features of Nabokov's novels, taking shape in techniques of self-marketing, and second, through the textual features that illuminate the transnational reception of his work. The process of self-translation can be complicated by the tendency to edit and sometimes drastically revise a work from the original to the translated version. While Nabokov has written of the "iron hand" with which he refrained from this practice in translating *Lolita*, a few of his other novels and memoirs have seen extensive revisions in translation (Sampson 192). In an interdisciplinary approach to situating Nabokov's self-translated memoirs in psycholinguistic theory, Ines Garcia de la Puente has returned that Nabokov's lived experiences in the Russian language became more detailed when translated into the Russian of *Drugie berega*, alongside a greater self-consciousness of the

Russian reader's presence than that of the English-speaking reader (604). In the transfer of literary knowledge from the source to the target language, new facets of the text and author emerge more vividly in a self-translation than in an outside translation.

Starting from the personal level of the individual author, the implications of self-translated texts resonate in international hegemonies of language and hemispheric world orders through the exchange of national literatures in markets of global literature. David Damrosch has discussed the interactions among national literature, comparative literature, and world literature as "dynamic" in that world literature exists before and within the spaces of national literatures (481). Of his own novels, Nabokov self-translated *Lolita*, *Conclusive Evidence* (or *Speak, Memory*), *Laughter in the Dark*, and *Despair*, and supervised the majority of other translations made by his son Dmitri and others. The self-translation exists as one mode of transmission among these disciplines and widens a literary researcher's perspective on cultural and literary creation in the exchange between the source and target language, not least of which because this traversal of the linguistic gap is facilitated by the author.

Even more than providing cultural and literary insight through the language that unites the two aspects of civilizations, the way Nabokov engaged the nature of aesthetics deepens his impact on world literature. As a figure central to the 20th century Russian-American diaspora and émigré community, Nabokov's self-translations of his novels complicate the field of world literature even further due to his project for total literary autonomy, originating from movements of Russian modernism and Schopenhauerian hierarchies of art. At the same time, judgments of high-brow literary value ascribed to his work are incongruous with Nabokov's self-positioning on the literary market as an émigré in exile writing from characters who are, most often, outsiders. This incongruity of Nabokov's writing situated as an aesthetic projects in juxtaposition

with his own brand of self-marketing is rooted in an engagement with global capitalism. His self-marketing as an outsider is a discussion parallel to concerns with the marketed qualities of the contemporary global novel which Karolina Watroba has examined in Tim Parks's pronouncement of "the dull new global novel" in *The New York Review of Books*, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

With a number of examples in his Anglophone novels, Nabokov's protagonists tend to lean toward the milieu with which he was more familiar than most readers—teachers and émigrés in varying degrees of nostalgia for their homelands while imparting an outsider's perspective on their new, usually American, surroundings, whether textually, subtextually, or both. Compounding this collection of originals and self-translations, numerous outside translations and adaptations of Nabokov's work continue to expand the field of world literature, especially throughout non-NATO regions to include the Middle East and Japan.

Perhaps the facet of literary history that appears as the most incongruous with Nabokov's aesthetics is the artificially facilitated exchange of literary translations propelled by government subterfuge. As a result, he was not known to engage with any government on these terms in spite of writing in the middle of the Cold War, but this history nonetheless resonates within the collective memory of the Russian-American émigré community. In broad terms, with national interests as a primary motivation, state actors tend to orchestrate these cultural exchanges in which banned translations are disseminated as a means to achieve an end that may not always have a clear expression in policy, but always possesses the goal to shift cultural relations between by staging an intervention in the ideologies of their literate populations. While these sorts of acts promoting national interests via translations has no single inventor, one early example of a master translator who recognized the power of literary language to shape the

German people's allegiances was Friedrich Schleiermacher in his lecture to the Berlin Academy of Sciences (1813). His philosophy of translation prioritizes building the German literary canon by "foreignizing" outside literatures, particularly those translated from Napoleon's France (Venuti 19). Schleiermacher's emphasis on manifesting a sense of foreignness for German readers of translations in other languages not only changed courses from theories of translation promoting the paraphrastic methods and imitation of Dryden and others, but also became a way to centralize the German language and overcome the cultural-political domination of the French.

In more recent international politics, this approach to promoting national interests pieces together an ideological message in the words of a novel, poem, or even song. A famous example comes from the U.S. Department of State's American jazz musicians' cultural ambassadorship[1] to the Soviet Union (1956) only one year after *Lolita* entered publication by Olympia Press (1955). While measuring the effectiveness of these tours in accomplishing their objective as part of a greater project to shift the ideologies of countries is difficult to impossible, music is still in use as a tool of cultural diplomacy—even more recently, hip-hop tours throughout the Middle East have been sponsored by the U.S. government along similar lines of intent (Aidi).

In addition to the U.S. State Department's focus on music, conscious efforts to influence readerships through translations have occurred multiple times by both the American Central Intelligence Agency against Soviet government organizations. Most famously, this took place with the dissemination of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* as well as clandestine subsidization to publish the banned work of Alexander Solzhenitsyn detailing the suffering of prisoners in the

[1] The "Jazz Ambassadors" represented a group of American jazz artists hired by the U.S. State Department in 1956 to tour in numerous overseas locations, including Soviet republics, the Middle East, and Africa. The stated objective was to promote democracy and refute criticisms of racial tension in America from politicians in the Soviet Union. Ambassadors included Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington. (Von Eschen 12)

Gulag system (*Memorandum*).[2] A few lines later in the Russian *Lolita*'s postscript, Nabokov alludes to Pasternak's protagonist as "that lyrical doctor with his inclinations toward a vulgar mysticism, his philistine locutions and his charmer out of Charskaya, who brought in so much hard foreign currency for the Soviet government" (Sampson 192). In multiple political contexts of US-Russian relations, reading and translation opened doors to submitting a desired version of a work for consumption, and as policy makers hoped, internalization, by a population. Methods by which this internalization can be measured constitute an entirely new avenue of interdisciplinary research fusing transnational literary studies with their sociocultural environments, but for this thesis's purposes, will be considered in these broad terms.

In contrast to state-sponsored translations of favored works emerging with numerous cultural anchoring points that may have little relevance to the text or music itself as an artistic product, self-translations ensure a safer passage for the untranslatable to transcend borders in artistically autonomous ways, as Goethe envisioned for a *weltliterature*. Instead of the triangular relationship surrounding the text in interactions of the reader, author, and translator, the relationship simplifies to a linear one between the author and reader, given that the author's project for the original work is kept more or less intact. In particular, self-translation extends the Nabokov's agency within his own legacy in Anglophone and Russian-speaking countries throughout his generation of artistically autonomous products. Examining the importance of self-translation to the movement of Nabokov's work across the literary world systems of Russia, Europe, and Anglophone nations opens a way to study his work in adaptation in non-NATO countries, especially in light of the meaning behind his assertions of artistic vulnerability to Chinese and Egyptians' languages' translations in his Russian *Lolita* postscript. This thesis

[2] These documents were released in 2014 under the CIA's Freedom of Information Act and are accessible online in their Electronic Reading Room.

builds from foundations of translation theory and Russian literary modernism as a way to track the role of translation in world literature up to Nabokov's own prescriptions in Chapter One. Chapter Two analyzes Nabokov's self-translation as part of his place in international literatures and the way his engagement with global markets places his project for literary autonomy in jeopardy. Chapter Three expands this scope to encompass Nabokov's novels in their translated and adapted afterlives, as well as the larger implications these adaptations pose for his project of aesthetic autonomy.

The difference between world literature and global literature comes from the connotation increasingly attached to "global" in terms of overt ties to international systems of capitalism. Meanwhile, world literature is taken to mean the circulation of writing beyond its nations of origin and has been accompanied by centuries of scholarship that have widened the field's lines of inclusion with uprooting of dominant Western linguistic and artistic paradigms. This field anchors itself to the notion of *Weltliteratur*, coined by Goethe after reading a Chinese novel in translation to mean a type of writing that could transcend boundaries of nations and languages (Longxi 241). Most Western comparative scholarship of self-translators encompassed the study of prominent Western authors (such as Samuel Beckett or Nabokov). These translations filter a work's multiple meanings through the prism of another language, reinforcing some meanings while uprooting others. Nabokov's novels reveal this process as one case study of a multilingual author—accordingly, Gennady Barabtarlo has noted in "*Onus Probandi*" that "many of the Russian *Lolita*'s emendations help to unravel the riddles of the original" (240).

Without a strict definition in translation studies, a self-translation, also called an auto-translation, is a translation of a work by its own author into a language other than the original (Maklakova, et al. 1261). Famous self-translators in addition to Nabokov include Samuel

Beckett, who translated his plays from French to English, as well as Rabindranath Tagore, Jorge Luis Borges, and Milan Kundera. Grappling with these multilayered terms persists as a question in scholarship and the field's pedagogical implications. Therefore, world literature benefits from more specialized studies of self-translations, as these types of translations open new doors to relatively uncluttered ways of approaching the untranslatable.

Chapter One: Literary Translation and Nation-Building

In addition to the author-translator's agency, the autonomy of a literary text deepens when we take into account its manifestation in a self-translation. Maria Malikova has noted one result of Nabokov's position at a cultural and linguistic intersection—he was able to undertake an aesthetic project of total literary autonomy that placed his work in a category of its own in terms of world literature (Boyd 11). One component of this autonomy can be said to lie in his aesthetic translations of his own work that operated outside the paradigm of literalism he advocated for outside translators, such as in his translation of Aleksandr Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. The translation theory from Nabokov himself, which will be discussed in this chapter, shows a fundamental difference in methodology from his calls for literalism from outside translators and his approach to translating *Lolita* into Russian.

Translation History: Function and Equivalence

In examining translation theories' development over centuries, it becomes clear that the exchange of literary language in Russian and English has not only shaped both languages themselves, but also the flow of commerce throughout contemporary global literary markets. Literary translation's widespread impact necessitates high levels of intellectual scrutiny and debate for the translator's critical role to conduct the flow of information through the linguistic crossroads in question, which Nabokov occupied with English, French, and Russian. These connections prove invaluable to comparative projects based on discrepancies in translation, such as altering words and wordplay, omissions, proper noun changes and other forms of editing within the in-between space of reconstructing a text. The fiercest debates on translation ignite from the stakes that one of the translator's crucial roles is to facilitate the international exchange of ideas, whether or not this facilitation is undertaken consciously.

In his introduction to these developments in paradigms of translation, translator and translation historian Lawrence Venuti visualizes the history of translation theory "as a set of changing relationships between the relative autonomy of the translated text, or the translator's actions, and two other categories: equivalence and function" (Venuti 5). As the benchmark measurements for the quality of a translation, equivalence and function have been renamed and ranked above one another for centuries, a process almost inevitably repeated in any prescriptive theory of how a translation should translate. Equivalence, according to Venuti, is synonymous with accuracy, fidelity, correctness, and similar words valuing a translation that is otherwise "faithful" to the spirit of the original, yet is a term nevertheless shrouded with ambiguity mired in the murky subjectivity of determining what exactly is faithful to the spirit of a work. A self-translation tends to rely on its claim to equivalency in being deemed the authoritative translation of a work. Meanwhile, function as the second category comprises the diverse "effects" of a translation in its how well the reconstruction connects to the receiving readership both linguistically and culturally (Venuti 5). The effectiveness of a translated text in the target language as a piece of world literature often gives way to questions of nation-building in terms of constructing the canons of individual nations.

A theoretical investment in translation as a functional component of nation-building was one approach cultivated by 18th and 19th century German translation theorists that dictated the authority of linguistic boundaries while conflating these boundaries with differences in culture. Central to this investment was the idea that literature held a certain degree of soft power to influence a population; this power included the ability to convey aspects of a civilization such as its culture and values, as well as to sway readerships in a cyclical relationship with the mutual influence of language and culture. Across these approaches to translation developing in England

and Germany, the act of shaping a nation's canon through translation called Elizabethan translators such as Sir Thomas Hoby and Philemon Holland into the service of bringing education to their fellow citizens of England (Venuti 16). One example of a translator who prioritized function in translated texts was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was concerned with the influence of foreign texts on the German language. According to Venuti, this concern was primarily directed toward the development of the German national vernacular persevering against an influx of translations from French literature (Venuti 19). His address to the Berlin Academy of Sciences echoed this call to overcome cultural domination, and later, Schleiermacher became further embroiled in German politics to oppose the Napoleon's European conquests.

With the ambition to stem the flow of influence of the French in German culture, in his essay *On the Different Methods of Translation*, Schleiermacher outlines the possible shapes relationships can take among the author, translator, and reader, and the responsibility inherent in the task of translation of works in a foreign language to German (Schleiermacher 49). In his view, these translators with such a "natural affinity to a foreign state of being that they immerse themselves, in both their lives and their thoughts, in a foreign language and its works" (51). As a consequence, he argues, "they allow their native world and their native tongue to become quite foreign to them." Extending Schleiermacher's argument to the implied consequences for German readers of these translations, translators build their translations upon their own specialized knowledge of linguistic intricacies by expertise in both languages and cultures; therefore, any product will become incomprehensible to those who read only in German and are not fortunate enough to possess this interlinguistic knowledge, which many members of Schleiermacher's possible audiences would not. Schleiermacher advises that fluency in the target language does

not guarantee a good translation; one must also possess interpretive expertise to achieve an "adequate" translation bringing the domestic reader to a foreign text (44).

From Schleiermacher's identification of linguistic influence as conquest over identity, the idea of defamiliarizing a translation to defend a national identity in literature mirrors a conflict over global dominance within literary politics, as well as representing larger implications as in Schleiermacher's desire for political reformation. Later, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe modified this view with the Romantic notion of transcendence by contending that the foreign feel of a translation was precisely what connected the two cultures in combining Schleiermacher's two approaches, rather than using language as a barrier to separate cultures from one another in his discomfort with nationalism (Pizer 3). This vision is realized in his essays on a *weltliteratur*. In a self-translation, bringing the author to the reader becomes only the task of the author, flattening the triangular shape of the relationship to a linear one that nonetheless demands interpretive fluency in the space between the source and target language.

However, Schleiermacher's mistrust of translation as a conduit for foreign influence can be seen in his assessment of German translators who intellectually immerse themselves in a language other than German so deeply that their national allegiances dissolve under the multiple influences of a bicultural identity. Meanwhile, a more recent example of emphasizing function which runs counter to Schleiermacher's views is the Soviet scholar Alexander Anikst's view of English writers Chaucer and Shakespeare. While Schleiermacher rejects incorporating foreign texts into the German canon in order to estrange these texts from their power to infiltrate the German language, Soviet scholar Alexander Anikst views the texts of Chaucer and Shakespeare as "truly national" as an English parallel to the ideal of a Russian writer embodying the spirit of Russia in their work (Zhang 10). Anikst's and Schleiermacher's focuses on a translation's

function intersects at the same objective of nation-building and provides an additional lens with which to view one of Nabokov's approaches to self-translating his Russian texts. As the next section will show, Nabokov's own views of the translator's role heavily leaned upon providing a literal translation functioning as a way in which the reader could understand the words of the original, as an aesthetic equivalent was impossible.

Nabokov's Theories of Translation

A number of implications arise across the landscape of émigré literature for Nabokov's writing (and especially his translation of *Eugene Onegin*) when taking a perspective like Schleiermacher's to reinforce the boundaries of a single nation's identity in translating foreign literary language. The Nabokovs' circumstances in pre-Revolutionary Russia depended upon the cosmopolitanism of an era in which cultural influence from France was in vogue alongside linguistic achievements in two, and frequently more, languages. Attending the prestigious Tenishev School in St Petersburg, Nabokov briefly describes an incident in *Speak, Memory* in which his teachers "accused me of not conforming to my surroundings; of 'showing off,'" (Nabokov 185). The reason for these accusations, in Nabokov's view, was that he wrote papers "mainly by peppering my Russian papers with English and French terms, which came naturally to me" (185). This anecdote precedes a list of idiosyncratic habits of his childhood in school that characterizes the rising tide of the October Revolution as pressure to join a group, teachers' resentment over his family's ability to afford a chauffeur, culminating in the idea young Nabokov felt he carried a "dead rat by the tail with the understanding that I would not dangle it under people's noses" (186). With this view of cosmopolitanism connected to displays of wealth, the literary currents of Russia in terms of nationalism and class that culminated in socialist realism shifted direction to flow against Nabokov's identifying qualities as a writer, which led

not only to transplanting his writing career in the West, but also changing his language of publication from Russian to English. This shift to English by Nabokov is widely viewed as a move of financial survival due to the shrinking of the Russian émigré community able to read his Russian work.

These discussions concerning language tend to mirror the political battleground of state powers at hand ever since Schleiermacher's time of writing, with real consequences in the outcome of which language is seen as "dominant." It is because of the logic central to these discussions that the Soviet Union established the Foreign Censorship Committee to examine foreign material and determine to take action with outright bans, bans "for the public," or to approve with excisions (Choldin 135). It was also the reason to institute the Foreign Languages Publishing House (*Izdatelstvo inostrannoi literatury*) from which to disseminate Russian materials in foreign languages across the world in 1946. When taking into account these attitudes toward the dangers of foreign texts, the flavor of the word émigré to describe "writer" in Russia assumes a traitorous connotation due to the social stigma that these writers broke away from their responsibilities to build their own nation's literary canon. Ines Garcia de la Puente's research in Nabokov's self-translation marks differences in literary creation and memories; Nabokov is also concerned emphasizing his "Russian-ness" to Russian readers, a move that lends a more contemporary understanding to approaches to translation as nation-building (593). De la Puente speculates that as one of the most famous writers of the Russian diaspora in America, Nabokov had faced accusations of "non-Russianness" and acted in accordance with the pressure for a Russian "purity of language" in his translation of *Drugie berega* by leaving out some French expressions that were kept in the English version (593). Kristina Shigaeva also notes that this occurs for all of the French phrases in the self-translation of *Lolita* (28).

In the case of accommodating this source language, Schleiermacher calls to "foreignize" the texts in German—that is, to separate them as not-German in order to alienate them from incorporation into any national canon (Venuti 54). This would be done by sacrificing a language to "alien, unnatural contortions" that "preserve a foreign tone" (54). In addition, Schleiermacher projects the critical backlash a translator would face in exchange for these sacrifices, "when in the interest of the material likeness of tone and rhythm what is expressed in one language with lightness and naturalness is replaced by clumsy, displeasing expressions in the other" (53). Though less motivated by any concrete intention to curate a national literature for America or any English-speaking country, backlash from Edmund Wilson directed at Nabokov's translation of *Eugene Onegin* took on a similar tone, with his objections to the "bald and awkward language" that stripped the novel-in-verse of its former rhythm (Wilson). In other words, *Eugene Onegin* adhered to Pushkin's textual rather than aesthetic features, choosing the literalist method of translation. In English, Nabokov's translation defamiliarized Pushkin's verse in an aesthetic way that, accompanied by comprehensive commentary, discarded the aesthetics of language of both the original author and the translator in order to treat the text and its linguistic features as autonomous, a feat for which Nabokov was praised by other critics. As illustrated by *Eugene Onegin*, foreignizing a translation in its target language to maintain its words' equivalence with the original sheds light on a certain degree of inaccessibility always present in a translated text while encouraging language study, the latter of which David Damrosch remarks world literature classrooms should do more of. These steps toward cultural literacy resonate from Schleiermacher's less-studied lecture on translation, and the sort of "national aesthetic education"[3] foregrounded by Schleiermacher resonates through Nabokov's novels, Russian

[3] Bernofsky, Susan. Foreign Words: Translator-Authors in the Age of Goethe. "From Homer to Shakespeare: The Rise of Service Translation in the Late Eighteenth Century." (27)

modernism, as well as in the hierarchy of art developed by Schleiermacher's contemporary and fellow German, Arthur Schopenhauer.

As a writer highly attuned to questions of authorial intent in the relationship between a translated text and the original, in the essay "The Art of Translation," Nabokov expands on what he terms "verbal transmigration." This essay can be interpreted as an extension of his reasons for self-translation through the canon he depicts—sometimes negatively, as "three grades of evil," while juxtaposing some "requirements" for a translator to achieve the ideal translation as close to the original author's work as possible (Nabokov).

First, Nabokov does not mention self-translation as a route circumventing this line of analysis at all, given that this course of action comprised much of his own career. The reasons for this exclusion could be numerous and complex, but it is most likely that he understood the rarity of an author who was not only functionally fluent enough to translate his or her own work satisfactorily, but artistically fluent in more than one language to give that work justice. Even Nabokov himself, while fluent in French, outsourced the translation of *Pale Fire* to translators Maurice Coindreau and Raymond Girard so that he could work on other projects, though he meticulously supervised every step of the road to publication. When working with other translators, who arguably occupied the highest position of power in terms of interpreting critical aspects of his work for another language, Nabokov did everything possible to retain the text's integrity in the other versions of his work, short of doing the translating himself. Perhaps this was due to his own recognition that, as Judson Rosengrant concludes in his essay on Nabokov's translation of *Onegin*, that Nabokov's theory in the "literalist mode" might have required "more literary skill and scholarly insight than most translators are capable of providing" (Rosengrant 25). Nabokov provided some encouragement for the work of Coindreau and Girard, but his

correspondence with his literary agent shows a dynamic of authorial oversight in which he carefully presided over every word and phrase of the translations, an opportunity most authors miss to double-check translations of their work.

Schopenhauer's Aesthetics, Nabokov's Languages

The Nabokovs fled Russia for England in 1919 in the midst of Russian modernist movements such as symbolism taking shape under the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer's ideas in philosophy and aesthetics. During this time, avant garde styles of Europe were migrating and gathering momentum in Russia through national writers such as Fyodor Sologub and Andrei Belyi's literary criticism (Senderovich 246). Schopenhauer's philosophy of the Will has been studied by Savely Senderovich and Yelena Shvartz as a way to examine Nabokov's conceptual undertones of his work, figuring in shared motifs such as the oak in *Invitation to a Beheading* (Senderovich 246). Similarly, this thesis places Schopenhauer's hierarchy of art as a significant backdrop that brings into relief Nabokov's project of literary autonomy in the context of world literature. Schopenhauer's hierarchy places music at the top, followed by poetry, sculpture and painting, landscape gardening, and architecture residing at the bottom, with the highest aesthetic value in "absolute" music for its removal from the phenomenal world (Schopenahauer 414). "Art for art's sake," as a reductionist phrase, has been passed down from Benjamin Constant's first use in 1804 as a popular phrase denoting the developments of literary autonomy to mean the separation of a work of art from its contextual anchors in society and culture (Haskins 52). In the Kantian tradition, the description of art as "autonomous," which was picked up by Schopenhauer in *World as Will and Representation*, the notion of artistic autonomy separates the contextual element from art and has spawned a number of debates between aesthetes and literary moralists. These debates primarily concern the implications of autonomy's aloofness to one of literature's

long-believed purposes as an engine of social change. While also productive for the effects of this conflict on pedagogical settings, these debates can vary widely by the genre or particular work under consideration.

Because world literature transcends the boundaries of a nation state, the classification of a work as a global typically frees it from moral attachments to a single culture, as a global novel "sees humanity on the level of the species" according to Adam Kirsch in *The Global Novel* and has the flexibility to "deal with traditional cultural markers like appearance and behavior or with elusive cosmic intuitions that seem to transcend place" (Kirsch 25). As a comparison to illustrate the impact of globality on artistic autonomy, to set up an argument for Harriet Beecher's Stowe's highly local *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an artistically autonomous work would be extremely different than to do so for the global novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Setting aside these nonetheless important questions of literary moralism in order to focus on the Schopenhauerian aspects of Nabokov's art is crucial to an understanding of Nabokov's larger aesthetic project through its rootedness in his self-translations and their textual features.

Within *Lolita*, Nabokov's most famous aesthetic project lies in his "love affair with the English language" and "best English book," *Lolita* (Toffler). While this novel is only a culmination of Nabokov's other work in which these ideas of autonomy evolved, *Lolita* most starkly illustrates the cultural battleground occurring in the clash between aesthetic autonomy and literary moralism. This clash erupted in scandals banning the book outright, as readers and entire nation states were initially taken by surprise in Nabokov's literary experimentation; a popular belief rooted in literary moralism was that writing the novel from Humbert Humbert's viewpoint sought to exonerate these crimes. Some condemnation undoubtedly came from those who did not read the book, but other voices in the outcry cited the novel as "pornographic,"

partly influenced by the book's initial pulp publisher Olympia Press, and in the case of Orville Prescott's oft-quoted review in the *New York Times* of 1958, "dull, dull, dull," as well as "repulsive" (Prescott). Entire Western nations such as Australia and France followed suit in publishers deeming the book "dangerous," then reacting with the institution of national bans. England even called for the seizure of all copies in the country (Jarvis 141). While no ban was placed on the book in the United States at the national level, some local communities saw fit to exile it from school curricula and libraries, such as the city of Cincinnati (Cornell).

Far from exonerating Humbert Humbert's crimes, as numerous scholars have noted, *Lolita* is a revolutionary novel and translation partly because, as an author, Nabokov is inclined to brush aside his characters' woes and tell parallel stories through subtext as a matter of concern with the reader's experience, rather than mediating a story solely through textual features of the characters. While Nabokov's critics of the time and those who banned the book seemed to assume the reader's proximity to the narrator signaled the author's endorsement of Humbert's obsession, situating the reader closest to Humbert was the most effective tool at Nabokov's disposal to facilitate the clash between literary aesthetics and literary morality.

Lolita's controversy and widely varied critical response caused the book's popularity to explode but laid a fraught path to Nabokov's self-translation of the novel that was moved forward by his pursuit of artistic agency in translation of his work. Along with the fact that his work was banned outright in the Soviet Union, Nabokov's vision of his Russian-speaking audience falls into place when comparing the English to Russian versions, which will be addressed later. In the Russian edition's postscript, Nabokov notes the mental "blind spot" that had formed where the Soviet Union was concerned and jokes that "I don't have to worry about any Soviet editions of *Lolita*!" (192). Censorship in the Soviet Union under the mandate of

socialist realism as the only school of state-sanctioned art meant that *Lolita* was not published for Russian audiences in an official capacity until 1989.

These shifting dynamics of *Lolita*'s reception across three decades indicate the novel's shock value which eventually leveled off to create an enduring literary legacy for its author. To examine Nabokov as a self-translator in the world of global literature, Chapter Two will examine notions of the global novel as a backdrop for Nabokov's multilingual novels, then place those insights in the context of world literature and global marketing (Watroba 53).

"I believe that the initial reception of Nabokov as a 'missing link' between nineteenth century Russian classics, Russian émigré literature, European modernism and early Soviet postmodernism (e.g., Andrei Bitov) clashes with Nabokov's easy appropriation as a commercial brand. This branding was, of course, facilitated by his highly pragmatic self-positioning on the literary market." –Maria Malikova[4]

Chapter Two: NATO Literatures and Translatability

Nabokov's desire to separate *Lolita*'s literary merit from its international reverberations is an aesthetic project which coexists alongside his engagement with global capitalism. The ways in which this almost paradoxical coexistence operates will be discussed in this chapter, which analyzes Nabokov's engagement within literature's globalization in two halves. The first provides a window into the field of world literature as ever-changing, consistent with many characteristics of globalization itself, in order to show echoes of the transnational in Nabokov's self-portrayals; the second half moves outside the aesthetic project to examine his self-translations at a global crossroads of literary exchange to illustrate the ways in which Nabokov's brand works in this corner of his oeuvre. From an analysis of the reception and environment created by these self-translations, Chapter Three will move to a discussion of how adaptations of Nabokov function outside his vision of artistic autonomy as one afterlife of this conflict.

World Literature and Translation in Modernity

Weltliteratur, at its Goethian core, describes the unsettled unity of world literature texts grouped by, in many scholars' view, a "global dimension not just of contemporary experience, but of contemporary imagination" (Kirsch 25). One important element of world literature as a symptom of globalization is Watroba's description of global novels, also called "airport novels," "market realism," or "global babble" designated as low-brow reading material for the mass-market readership (Watroba 55). All of these terms, according to Watroba, emphasize "the

[4] "Nabokov Studies: Strategic Development of the Field and Scholarly Cooperation." *The Goalkeeper: The Nabokov Almanac.* (3)

complicity of those books with capitalistic modes of production and consumption in the globalized world." (55). This casting, in other words, equates global novels with a type of non-serious literature because it is purposefully targeted to a global readership for widespread translation, costing these authors a large portion of their artistic merit as a result.

While few would agree this designation fits Nabokov's contributions to world literature, elements of Nabokov's self-translations combine to form marketing tendencies that subscribe to the systems of global capitalism stretching from the United States to the Soviet Union. These elements include Nabokov's self-characterization and subject matter tending to rely on American ideas of Russian exoticism and mystery of his life in exile.

Watroba's argument against the unfair hierarchization of novels with elements of "local color" over those elements seen as "global," illustrates Nabokov's position as a writer in world literature in several ways—first, the tension between the local and the global is one way of framing his concerns regarding appearing ineffectual or "Un-Russian" to the target readership of the Russian-language *Lolita.* This clash between local elements of Russian and English languages in the face of a global paradigm mounts even further when also considering Brian Boyd's observation that Nabokov was "out of touch" with American slang in *Lolita*, all the while maintaining his brand as a savvy, linguistically cosmopolitan writer. Nabokov's engagement with this global cosmopolitanism forms the basis of his global marketing, implicitly cultivating a commercial brand.

One example from his self-translations comes from *Lolita*, in which Humbert Humbert's first-person narration is framed by the fictional extradiegetic materials of Dr. John Ray's moralistic commentary upon the "memoir" (Nabokov 3). These textual layers are further compounded in the Russian version with the addition of the postscript as a nonfictional addition

by the author. As a young American girl, Lolita provides most, if not all, of the narrative's slang terms and idioms. Nabokov was able to translate the majority of these to the Russian version with some explanations. One example of how this transfer occurs comes from the phrase "Bronx cheer," as a gesture of flippancy with unclear origins in English aside from the clear reference to the Bronx as a borough of New York City. Nabokov parenthetically incorporates an explanation in Russian as "a thick sound of sickening disgust" (Barabtarlo 245).

Though the delineation of world literature from comparative literature stood on shaky ground in the decades in which Nabokov was writing, scholars began to realize the literatures of NATO countries primarily dominated the field. Damrosch and Spivak's panel assessing issues of world literature in 2011 analyzes definitions of self-translation as well as the characteristics of the local and the global on the world literature stage. In this conversation, Damrosch quotes the Swiss comparatist Werner Friedrich in Friedrich's spearing of the term "world literature" and its shortcomings in 1960 that "world literature is a presumptuous and arrogant term. Sometimes, in flippant moments, I think we should call our programs NATO literatures. Yet even that would be extravagant, for we do not usually deal with more than one quarter of the NATO nations" (Damrosch 364). Friedrich mentions NATO literatures to mean the national literatures of the member countries under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's international alliance, which at the time encompassed only fifteen in number: Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey, and the United States. While Friedrich pointed out the flaws in this institutionalized canon almost a century ago, his observation of the the Eurocentrist vision as one that purported to encompass the world's literary merit continues to resonate in opponents of world literature studies' critiques. In addition to observing a gaping hole in Western imagination, Friedrich's comment also resounds

in world literature's opponents' claims that the field sacrifices depth of textual study for breadth in relatively few national literatures of the West.

Self-Translation as a Key to Untranslatability

The concept of translatability denotes the ease with which a work can be translated (OED). This quality of a work could range from easily translatable on one hand to totally untranslatable on the other without the requirement for the translator to undertake fundamental changes when transposing the original material. Both extremes depend entirely on the ways in which the linguistic and cultural anchoring points of the source language and target language relate to one another. One textual feature affecting translatability is their cosmopolitanism, or the degree to which other languages pervade the source text, an element especially prevalent in Nabokov's work. In "The Task of the Translator," Benjamin undertakes his now-famous explanation of the "kinship" of languages that manifests in a translation (italics added):

> "Translation is a mode…The question of whether a work is translatable has a dual meaning. Either: Will an adequate translator ever be found among the totality of its readers? Or, more pertinently: Does its nature lend itself to translation, and, therefore, in view of the significance of the mode, call for it? …*If translation is a mode, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works*." (Benjamin 76).

In other words, Benjamin defines translatability as a quality that must reside in all works that can be translated. While Benjamin does not explicitly consider the ways in which the definition of translatability changes when an author translates his or her own work, his implication that all work is, to a degree, translatable, echoes in value judgments of the modern global novel in their insistence its words take a purposefully amorphous shape to accommodate the greatest number of languages.

While Nabokov likely would not have been concerned with the degree of translatability in his work for other translators to the extent it would change the way he wrote his novels, he was deeply concerned with his uncertainty and lack of agency vis-a-vis outside translators of his work in Eastern or South American languages, in spite of the postscript's jocular tone surrounding this problem. Working in the impressive range of languages in which he did possess artistic fluency, Nabokov collaborated with his son Dmitri on a great number of translations in his deeply caring endeavor to guide the afterlives of his work. As a result, the majority of Nabokov's work lies in the in-between space of the two extremes of the translatable and untranslatable, with his own translations of American slang as an example.

Meanwhile, untranslatability has been proposed by modern literary theorists as a site of interpretation for comparative texts, to include Emily Apter. A simple example of untranslatability from Russian to English that has presented a challenge to translators is the appropriate way to transfer the meaning of the formal "you" (*vy* in Russian or *vous* in French) when no equivalent pronoun exists in English, aside from the antiquated "thou" that has been used in translations of Pushkin's poem to Anna Olenina as "You and Thou" ("*Ty i vy"*). Similarly, accent and dialect can pose unique challenges to translators working from English as the source language, such as rendering sounds of Faulkner's American South or the dialogue of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Humbert describes himself as having a "queer accent" and initially misinterprets Charlotte Haze's description of "Hourglass Lake" as "Our Glass Lake," which is rendered in the Russian translation as *Ochkovoe ozero* and largely glossed over in comparison (Nabokov 43).

Opposite Watroba and Damrosch as an opponent of world literature studies outlined in her book title—*Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, Emily Apter

pivots her recommendation for comparative literature studies about the central concept of the "Untranslatable," as a word or phrase not easily translated whose linguistic layers serve as a rich interpretive site. Similarly, in her article "Untranslatables: A World System," she proposes the model of study for these cosmopolitan bodies of literature based on these untranslatable words or phrases to approach differences across cultures and literatures. Her article's definition of "translatability" follows Italian literary theorist Franco Moretti's logic that translatability must be defined in "market terms" (Apter 593). Examples of these terms include "mapping or graphing a genre's circulation, influence, imitation, marketability, election to the canon, congeniality to cultural comparatism, and appropriation" as well as by observing the ways in which translation has evolved over time in literary world systems, which she identifies as a more particular methodology to consider world literature (Apter 593).

The self-translations of Nabokov's novels afford a window into the layers of untranslatable words and phrases when these have the good fortune to be translated in the author's own words. Apter's argument partly rests on the fact that while translation gives "an imprecise measure of literary survival," it does indicate the capacity of a genre for "migration and mutation" (593). In his lifetime, Nabokov grew increasingly preoccupied with the migrations of his novels and took what he saw as necessary steps to bridge gaps in interpretation himself in *Despair*, *Lolita*, *Laughter in the Dark*, and *Conclusive Evidence*, with the latter as an intermediary version of his autobiography.

As another opponent of holistic studies of world literature in that they prioritize the general over the particularist approach to study, Spivak challenges Damrosch's call to use world literature to push the limits of comparative literature's Eurocentric comfort zone. One dimension in which Spivak prioritizes a singular approach over the universal is in the literature classroom—

specifically in citing the danger of reductionist tendencies in universalizing experiences of the Other, a critique of the Anglo's "relativist glow" that resonates with Friedrich's identification of a NATO-centric literary canon calling itself world literature (Spivak 378). In Spivak's words, "people from other national origins in the classroom (other, that is, than Anglo) relate sympathetically but superficially, in an aura of same difference. The Anglo relates benevolently to everything, 'knowing about other cultures' in a relativist glow" (Spivak 7). Spivak's example of the slippery slope in these classrooms brought on by liberal multiculturalist ideas (gaining the pejorative adjective "multi-culti") (Damrosch 463) illustrates her warning that complexity of world literature which others cite as its strength can quickly be reduced to placatory universalisms when simplistic ways of interpretation take root, whether in the classroom or in world literature's present incarnation.

A number of passages describing cosmopolitanism in Nabokov's self-translations verge upon universalizing characters' experiences, in part to create a brand based on this heightened sense of international awareness. Moreover, the effects of these moves penetrate more deeply to the novels' aesthetic qualities that explore and deconstruct the author-narrator's authority between readers and characters. One example of the way this deconstruction takes place in the Russian translation of *Lolita* was in Nabokov's vision for his translation's readership—with full knowledge his work would remain banned in the Soviet Union, the question remained surrounding to what kind of audience Nabokov directed his translation. In one explanation by French Nabokov and comparative scholar Agnes Edel-Roy, she postulates that Nabokov invents the Russian reader himself. This reader is constructed within Nabokov's Sirinian identity in Russian that distances not only the Russian version from the English, but also Nabokov from the Russian tradition forged by Dostoyevsky and Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (Edel-Roy 22). She

argues further that Nabokov's Russian translation of *Lolita* sparked the rebirth of the Russian literary tradition's continuity in the West.

The ways in which Nabokov invents the reader of the text stem from the English version and continue in the Russian, given that much more must be explained regarding concepts of America such as American football and idiomatic expressions. As a result of this necessity for additional clarity, Humbert Humbert becomes more of a didactic narrator in the Russian version, explaining "a football cheerleader" from the English in Russian as "the "bare-thighed gals in very short skirts and thick jerseys, who encourage students playing the American version of rugby by rhythmic yelps and frenetic calisthenics," (Barabtarlo 239) as Barabtarlo notes in "*Onus Probandi.*"[5]

As a result of being able to explain these references, looming larger than the issue of his texts' translatability (or untranslatability) to Nabokov was his personal comparison of the texts linguistically in terms of artistic superiority. He tended to end up dissatisfied, first with *Despair*'s first English translation, then with the Russian *Lolita*. Describing Nabokov's sharp awareness of the quality of each version, Alexander Dolinin notes, "It is by maintaining the artistic inferiority of some Russian texts that Nabokov justified his idiosyncratic method of rewriting them in English" (Dolinin 51). In analyzing the idiosyncrasies of Nabokov's self-translations, it is important to keep in mind Dolinin's analysis as only one circumstance that motivated Nabokov's translation projects. By judging these Russian texts as artistically inferior, Nabokov granted himself the authority not only to translate, but also revise his own texts in the process as a strong indication of his self-branding as an émigré author concerned with international reception of his work. In Julia Trubikhina's analysis of Nabokov's status as an exile and an artist, she names his

[5] For further information on differences in the original and self-translation, see Gennady Barabtarlo's "*Onus Probandi*: On the Russian *Lolita*" and Alexander Nakhimovsky's *English-Russian Dictionary of* Lolita translation.

approach to translation with techniques of foreignization similar to those advocated by Friedrich Schleiermacher:

> "Nabokov's understanding of fidelity to the original resulted in 'foreignizing translation in opposition to the Anglo-American tradition of domestication,' and in his denial of the notion of 'abusive fidelity' that would adjust a foreign text to the dominant cultural discourse of the target language. All this situated Nabokov in the perennial exile status of 'non-citizenship': between the Russian and English languages, Russian and Western traditions, and theory and practice." (Trubikhina 222)

Nabokov advances this personal sense of artistic foreignization not for the direct purpose of any nation-building endeavor, but with the goal to develop the Russian literary tradition against challenges when its writers are unmoored from Russia's geography by Soviet censors.

Aesthetics of Self-Translation in Nabokov's Self-Marketing

Reading Nabokov's self-translations from a world literature perspective requires a knowledge of his particular brand found in writing as an émigré about émigré characters. Synonymous with his artistic foreignization of in-betweenness, Nabokov also takes on characteristics of self-exoticization that are evident in his portrayal of white male European émigrés and in descriptions that cater to the stereotypical elements of Russia that Western readers might take for granted. To begin with one example from his later English-language novel *Transparent Things*, the character of Julia serves as a marker of the "multi-culti" approach against which Spivak cautions the classroom. In a passage of *Transparent Things* in which cosmopolitanism intersects with superficial associations of the bourgeoisie that commodify difference in the simplest way, equivalent to the quickness of a glance in order to gain superficial

insight rather than gaze with which meaning can be gleaned. When Julia plans a trip to Moscow, she desires to impress her Russian friends with "a number of phrases," which Armande proceeds to translate for her (Nabokov 45). The phrases Armande translates reflect that the desire to "know about" aspects of local color is also in tandem with the desire to learn only a few aspects of the language: the phrase Julia hopes to memorize is "what a cute little church, what a big snowdrift," reflecting deeply rooted, but also surface-level aspects of Russian culture as a country known worldwide for images of churches and heavy snowfall. As Nabokov's seventh English novel, *Transparent Things* was not translated to Russian by either Dmitri Nabokov or his father, but has produced three independent Russian translations starting with that of Alexander Dolinin (titled *Prosvechivaiushchie predmety*).

The inclusion of expected or stereotypical elements of Russian culture can also followed throughout his self-translations as well as collaborative translations with Dmitri in *Pnin*. While one could argue that these elements are stereotypical for a reason in that they encompass components of the Russian cultural identity, in a Nabokov narrative, these functions as self-exoticizing due to their blithe superficiality. Reasons for this are complex and numerous, but primarily branch from the idea that Nabokov's aesthetic voice often overpowers the plights of his characters, blurring the role of the narrator in deconstructing the novel's form in front of the reader. It follows that references to the Russia or any other nation of Nabokov's fictional worlds fall in line with this pattern, especially the descriptions of Zembla in *Pale Fire* as a universalization of Russia, from which Nabokov was far removed. However, by incorporating these references into the cosmopolitan world of his novels, Nabokov complicates his implicit commodification of the émigré identity with deeper explorations into aesthetics of the Russian literary tradition itself. External to these novels' metafictional worlds, global hegemonies'

linguistic extensions constitute a crucial aspect of Nabokov's novels' past and present. Nabokov translated his Russian-language novels to English as a matter of survival in the West due to structures of Global English dominating artistic spheres of Europe and America, ultimately causing him to break with his creative fluency in his native Russian.

Lolita, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male remains the only text Nabokov self-translated to Russian, perhaps because of the dissatisfying results of this project to which he refers in the Russian edition's postscript (Sampson 192). As Western countries began to repeal hasty bans on *Lolita*, the Soviet censors ensured that the *Glavlit* office doors remained closed to Nabokov's work even as underground translations circulated among reading populations, an artist's predicament reacting to an externally imposed morality of which the narrator of *Despair* takes note in saying, "Mistakes—pseudo mistakes—have been imposed upon me retroactively by my critics when they jumped to the groundless conclusion that my very idea was radically wrong, thereupon picking out those trifling discrepancies, which I myself am aware of and which have no importance whatsoever in the sum of an artist's success" (Nabokov 194). Thirty years after Nabokov's Russian edition was completed, it was finally published in the USSR in 1989. Nabokov supervised a number of outside translators' work who translated his novels to French, to include *Pale Fire* and *Pnin*.

Lolita's elements of local color (which Nabokov calls "local ingredients") occur with the reinvention of aspects of America that appeal the French émigré Humbert Humbert's polyglot imagination. These elements include the landscape and its sprawling enterprises of consumerism, countless roadside motels, diners, and an endless system of highways with hurtling cars connecting all of it. While a number of these ingredients transfer to the Russian-language version without much friction, in one instance, Nabokov alters a description of patrons of a motel writing

down “garbled license numbers left by all these Persons and Orgons and Morells and Trapps” as “warped car numbers” modifying the surnames as “Kuvshinkins, Fatamorgans, and Trapps” (Barabtarlo 247). This modification most likely took place due to the largely insignificant role these names play in the text but suggests a familiarity with the Russian reader in formulating these less alien and more pronounceable names. Many examples of Nabokov’s alterations across the texts mirror this microscopic level of detail when viewed separately, but as a whole, add up to a vividly imagined Russian reader and grant deeper access to the aesthetic philosophy of *Lolita*. In an interview with *Playboy*, Nabokov explains this process of reinventing America for a wider audience as a challenge of his removal from Europe and Russia:

> “It had taken me some 40 years to invent Russia and Western Europe, and now I was faced by a similar task, with a lesser amount of time at my disposal. The obtaining of such local ingredients as would allow me to inject average ‘reality’ into the brew of individual fancy proved, at 50, a much more difficult process than it had been in the Europe of my youth.” (Toffler)

Rather than shoehorning in hallmarks of a national literature in either America or Russia in order to develop these traditions, Nabokov instead foregrounds a multinational perspective as an émigré writing from an émigré’s perspective in his narrator. This move constitutes the foundation of Nabokov’s metaliterary deconstructions of his role as writer and narrator, blurring the boundaries of author, narrator, and reader, complicated by the merging of the author-translator boundary in a self-translation.

In his interviews explaining translation choices along with publications of his literary work in *Playboy*, another aspect of Nabokov’s image emerges as central to his public persona but existing outside his aesthetic projects. Though he has expressed discontent with the reputation of

the erotica and avant garde publisher Olympia Press and their first publication of *Lolita,* as well as refuted accusations that the novel is high-brow pornography, Nabokov does not shy away from the most notorious American news outlet specifically known for meeting this low-culture demand of an international audience. Others, such as Andrew Wolf, have written of Nabokov's engagement with *Playboy* as a marriage of two brands which enjoy a certain level of shocking their audiences. However, Nabokov was not alone amongst the magazine's literary selections: anthologies of *Playboy*'s interviews with famous authors have been published with the literary selections of Kurt Vonnegut, Allen Ginsburg, Tennessee Williams, and Joseph Heller. However, the question remains as to why Nabokov agreed to be featured among the pages of carnal *Playboy* fare while convincing others that *Lolita* rose above the philistine vulgarity accused by the book's critics.

More complicated than pursuing the shock value or reputation as an "intelligent smut author" which Wolf suggests, the answer, I would argue, has to do with self-marketing techniques in partly leaning into the reputation of Olympia Press (Wolf 29). Nabokov engaged with the consumer culture of erotica in America with the purpose of appealing to a greater mainstream readership, even if this required further justification of *Lolita*'s artistic worth to critics who saw his engagement with *Playboy* as evidence of the book's vulgarity. One way that this transpired was in Nabokov's interviews discussing the multilingual intricacies of his self-translation process: "English is, syntactically, an extremely flexible medium, but Russian can be given even more subtle twists and turns. Translating Russian into English is a little easier than translating English into Russian, and 10 times easier than translating English into French" (Toffler). On life as an émigré, he summarizes: "I propelled myself out of Russia so vigorously, with such indignant force, that I have been rolling on and on ever since." The "rolling on" he

describes also occurred even after his death when Playboy obtained the rights to his unfinished work "The Original of Laura," uniting the magazine's literary reputation with Nabokov's personal brand beyond his range of control in his lifetime (Wolf 29).

In translating *Lolita* to Russian, it has long been established from Nabokov's postscript that he was not satisfied with the translation and Dolinin has observed that he often described the feeling of losing the Russian language as a rusty instrument or losing a limb (Dolinin 50). Additionally, Dolinin interprets this language as signaling the birth of Nabokov's émigré identity and the aesthetic project that stems from its realization:

> "The metaphor of dismemberment conceals a deeper and bitterer truth: along with impaired verbal agility, the switch involved the exile from his mastered territory and, therefore, from his former identity. Once again Nabokov lost his native land – the homestead of Russian literature in which he had enjoyed all the prerogatives of the heir apparent – and had to reinvent himself, to transmute the new painful loss and rupture into an aesthetic gain." (50)

The broader implications of Nabokov's switch to English, a partial consequence of which is his loss of his native Russian can be found in Spivak's *Politics of Translation*. She underscores the wholesale translations of texts into English, such as those undertaken by Nabokov, as an inherently anti-democratic endeavor geared toward a majority: "Therefore these texts must be made to speak English…there is nothing essentially noble about the law of the majority either. It is merely the easiest way of being 'democratic' with minorities. In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest" (Spivak 371, *Translation Studies Reader*). Though one could make an argument that Nabokov functions as an agent of advancing the hegemony of Global English, it is important to

note that he did so at the time for reasons of survival. However, in settling into this identity, Nabokov embraced the cosmopolitan ambiguity as a means of a public persona with which he could work in his novels and self-translations.

Before *Lolita*, Nabokov translated *Despair*, or *Otchaianie* (with the latter described as "a far more sonorous howl") from Russian in 1934 to English in 1937, with significant revisions emerging later in an updated 1965 edition (7). Nabokov describes this translation as his "first serious attempt" at writing an entire project in English (7). While not commercially successful to *Lolita*'s standards, *Despair* modeled Nabokov's metaliterary tendencies in the self-professed lying and general unreliability of Hermann as the first-person narrator. Once, Hermann includes the translated axiom "A hungry belly has no ears" and parenthetically adds "I translate his adages anyhow; in German they all jingled with rhymes" (78). This passage mixes layers of translation beginning from the innermost layer of Hermann's translation of Felix's German, with the original novel itself written in Russian, then self-translated to English by Nabokov and subsequently revised several decades later. As one example of cosmopolitanism as an ever-present aspect of Nabokov's fictional narrators and cultures, allusions to an international presence are never far from the forefront of *Despair* and serve to expand the novel's universe to encompass aspects of modern world literature in cultures' inner lives through the lens of translation.

Later in the novel, Hermann addresses his sense of the reader as a small part of a collective, cosmopolitan body of nationalities: "Aye, let other nations, too, translate it into their respective languages, so that American readers may satisfy their craving for gory glamour; the French discern mirages of sodomy in my partiality for a vagabond; and Germans may relish the skittish side of a semi-Slavonic soul…I welcome you all as my readers" (159). These narratorial

glances cast typical imaginings of culture upon a cosmopolitan readership. Notably, these glances contain a number of elements present in *Lolita*, such as the consumerism Nabokov identifies in America as the alliterative "gory glamour" in the English version of *Despair*, Freudian notes of French analysis Hermann anticipates, and the German condemnation of Slavonic skittishness.

Blending the role of creator and narrator, Hermann also addresses the reader with acknowledgments of textual inadequacies, though clearly relishing these as opportunities to ruminate on the very structure of his story itself. "here I am, as you see, twisting and turning and being garrulous about matters which rightly belong to the preface of a book and are misplaced in what the reader may deem its most essential chapter" (160). Anticipating the reader's thoughts constitutes another way in which Nabokov deconstructs his own art form, as these anticipations tend to be known only to the author, available for the reader to interpret themselves.

Julian Connolly argues that it is the function of *Despair*'s allusions to highlight the "fallacy" of Hermann's role as the narrator, but moreover, to reveal the high degree of artifice in Nabokov's prose in his conception of writing itself (310). The influences of Schopenhauer stay with Nabokov's self-conscious creation of art as rooted in artifice in *Despair*, rather than in any fixed imitation of human reality. This transparency brings the reader closer to an understanding of Nabokov's art as artifice that also reaches deeply into the roles of the author and reader, with the narrator taking the form apart like a machine and showing each one to the reader.

In terms of plot, some critics consider *Laughter in the Dark* to be the proto-*Lolita*, originally written in Russian in 1932 as *Kamera Obskura*. In 1938, his final year of writing his novels in Russian, Nabokov translated this novel to English. This self-translation emerged as a result of Nabokov's dissatisfaction with Winifred Roy's initial translation published in London,

titled *Camera Obscura* (Colapinto). Concern for his international image as an author as well as the ever-present high standard for translation that motivated Nabokov to retranslate as well as to revise the text for its lack of "literality" (Raguet-Bouvart). When Nabokov self-translated this novel to English, he notably changed many characters' names. For example, the main character Bruno Kechmar becomes Albert Albinus, and Magda Peters becomes Margot Peters (7). Instead of changing Margot's first lover's name "Robert Gorn" simply to "Robert Horn," Nabokov changed this character's name altogether to "Axel Rex" for the English language version. The holistic result of these changes is that the names occur as sounding less Germanic, thus helping to universalize his text for literary consumption by wider Anglo readerships.

Additionally, the narrator of the introduction of *Laughter in the Dark* ruminates on the act of reading as a starting point for Albinus's story by showing the author's hand in terms of plot unfolding in the novel's first two sentences. "This is the whole of the story," the narrator continues, "and we might have left it at that had there not been profit and pleasure in the telling" (7). Christine Raguet-Bouvart analyzes this choice in *Laughter in the Dark* as reflecting "Nabokov's analysis of the act of reading" is that "for him, a good reader is a re-reader—i.e. someone who reads not a story, but a text" (Raguet-Bouvart). Nabokov's overt invention of his own reader throughout his self-translations underpins his enduring project for literary autonomy, ensuring that his vision for the reader is preserved despite the reality of multiple readerships and modes of reception.

Isolation in another language and set of cultural values also represents a cornerstone of Nabokov's autobiographical revisions that were separately published under the titles *Drugie Berega*, *Conclusive Evidence,* and finally, *Speak, Memory*, which emerged as the final English revision. Nabokov wrote that he presented his initial title idea as "Speak, Mnemosyne" but

acquiesced to publisher Victor Gollancz's opposition that the title would hinder the book's selling power, especially to "little old ladies" who might be too shy to ask for a title they could not pronounce (Nabokov 11). This instance illustrates the shaping of Nabokov's international brand in English as prioritizing commercial success with a global audience in mind completely altering the aesthetic feeling of the title. Further, the engagement with global capitalism in his collaboration with publishers can be seen in his memoir's retitling to cater to an idea of the readership. The process of switching between English and Russian translations as revisions was a much more artistically flexible endeavor for Nabokov than his novel projects simply because of the more acceptably personal dimension to constructing his autobiographical texts.

Nabokov's Self-Translation and Global Marketing

Nabokov's rise to the upper echelons of literary merit while carving out his own identity as an outsider to both the Soviet Union and America created the basis for his own marketing of his work as the enlightened opinions of a foreign observer. In this way, his writing still resonates across cultures in adaptations and appropriations of *Lolita*, some perhaps disparate from the meaning he intended for the relationship between Humbert and Lolita, but all connected as reverberations of the source text. Because a concern with value judgments manifests itself in his later novels buried in metaliterary aspects and the process of writing and publishing, Nabokov represents not only a cultural crossroads, but also one of writing and publishing, object and subject. Beginning with the scandal of *Lolita*, his work circulated the globe under auspices of otherness and protagonists that reflected those characteristics such as Pnin and Humbert Humbert.

In translating one's own writing, elements of the untranslatable pose fewer uncertainties in terms of remaining faithful to artistic interpretation, given that the translator and author are the

same. At first glance, one might even presume these issues of translation tend to fall away when dealing with writing on a personal level that disregards the guesswork and flaws inherent in an outsider's translation. On the other hand, an author still tackles the qualities of his or her own work that prove difficult to translate, as well as confronting parts of language that do not line up evenly. In Nabokov's case, this becomes especially evident in his consideration of marketing that writing for another language of readers. For Nabokov, the universal and the singular persist in his self-translations—the singular can shift due to the different readerships of the translations, while the universal signifies the content of his novels which remains constant even in translation.

This chapter discussed Nabokov's multifaceted self-marketing and the value these choices alongside his self-translations bring to a more complete picture of world literature. Chapter Three will focus on the resonance of this marketing by noting his work's afterlives across the world, both in the literature of national traditions and other rungs of the Schopenhauerian artistic ladder.

Chapter Three: Adaptations on the World Stage

Chapters One and Two investigated the histories and theories of translation in Nabokov's project of achieving literary autonomy for his novels with self-translation and collaborative translation as one means to exert his artistic authority in lieu of an outside translator's. Chapter Three will continue to situate these aspects of Nabokov's legacy with what Maria Malikova calls his "highly pragmatic self-positioning" on the literary market (Boyd, et al 3). This analysis will focus on Nabokov's work in adaptation throughout global literary markets to merge a discussion of international marketing and cultural crossroads with the inextricability of Nabokov's legacy in translation from the percolation of his work through the markets of global capitalism. The majority of this analysis covers the attention given to *Lolita* by non-NATO countries, with references and adaptations of *Despair* and *Laughter in the Dark* where they appear.

To return to Nabokov's Russian postscript in which he jocularly expresses a deeply serious preoccupation with translations of *Lolita* outside his radius of control:

> "*Lolita* has been translated into many languages: it has appeared in separate editions in the Arabic lands, Argentina, Brazil, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, and Uruguay…Of all these translations, I can answer, as to accuracy and completeness, only for the French one, which I checked myself prior to publication. I can imagine what the Egyptians and Chinese did with the poor thing, and I imagine still more vividly what that 'displaced lady' who had recently learned English would have done with it, if I had permitted it, or the American who had 'taken' Russian at the university." (Nabokov 192)

While the passage's tone reads typically of Nabokov's style in projecting a sense of benevolent and self-assured flippancy, beneath lies a deep concern for what he calls "accuracy" and "completeness" (in the Russian, *tochnost' i polnota*) The undifferentiated "Arabic lands" as translated by Earl Sampson (*Arabskie strany*) might suggest one explanation for why Nabokov's work has not received more attention in adaptation in the Middle East in terms of cultural relevance, but this chapter will address Iranian-American Azar Nafisi's *Reading* Lolita *in Tehran* as well as *Lolita*'s accessibility in terms of language and physical copies in several Middle Eastern nations.

This web of languages that Nabokov connects to *Lolita* comes from his particular concern with his lack of artistic agency in the face of the self-translation he has just finished. This language range has risen exponentially since 1965 and has added further adaptations in which Nabokov's art filters through translation and cultural interpretations. One of the paradoxes of Nabokov's legacy is that at once he is lauded as a "missing link" in the Russian literary tradition between the Soviet Union and Russian modernism while also facing accusations of "un-Russianness" from his native country. As a writer concerned with globality, putting himself at risk for critiques "un-Russianness" was precisely what allowed Nabokov to cross transnational borders in literature, translation, and in adaptations that have emerged from his self-translations. These adaptations continue to resonate in fundamental cultural attitudes today regarding sexuality, aesthetics, art, and translation; a non-exhaustive collection of these adaptations will be discussed as powerful examples in their cross-cultural contexts of Nabokov's exponential afterlives.

Nabokov's International Adaptations

There has been rich and diversified scholarship on adaptations of Nabokov, starting with *Nabokov's Dark Cinema* by Alfred Appel Jr. in 1975, in past decades as Nabokov's legacy transitions that of a more contemporary author to joining ranks of the canonized past in circles of Russian, American, and international literature. As a result, his work has given rise to numerous adaptations and translations constructed outside his self-translation model of autonomy. Over the course of his career, Nabokov would "return to a discussion of the shortcomings of process of adaptation, and particularly the limits of dramaturgy" according to Nabokov scholar Bryan Karetnyk (606). This discussion of the limitations inherent in transposing mediums particularly resonates in his comments on the screenplay for *Lolita*. Karetnyk also notes that as a former playwright himself, Nabokov's "quarrel principally has to do with the loss of artistic autonomy over a work that necessarily arises during stage adaptation and performance" (606). In other words, the artistic collaboration necessary in theater among roles such as director, actors, dramaturgs, and scriptwriters (and *sometimes* authors of the original material) vexed Nabokov's sense of agency in the portrayals of his life's work.

However, if Nabokov had felt as strongly about these potential situations of artistic debasement from the limitations he suggested, as the author, he could have limited copyright permissions where possible and barred certain adaptations of his work from publication. Therefore, his concern for narrative transposition to film or stage did not extend as far as outright prevention of adaptations, no matter how many shortcomings were inherent in the process. The most obvious, and most probable, explanation of this dissonance is the monetary value underlying such adaptations capitalizing on the success and scandal of *Lolita* with exposure of his other works as a result as likely proving too good to pass up Nabokov (or most other authors)

to turn down, especially in his incentive of supporting Vera and Dmitri. What Nabokov's criticism identified by Karetnyk illustrates is another glimpse of the clash between Nabokov's desire for literary autonomy and his engagement with global capitalism—he allows these adaptations to be made, also allowing that the author's influence will only stay with the original (and self-translated) texts themselves. Although many adaptations possess their own artistic merit and add to national traditions, on the other hand, adaptations of Nabokov can also be analyzed in a reductionist mode as products of the battle between literary autonomy and capitalism, and the latter eventually taking priority in Nabokov's aesthetic considerations.

While Nabokov self-translated only four of these texts and collaborated with his son and wife on numerous others, more translations overwhelmingly exist outside Nabokov's supervision beginning with the languages he names in his postscript of *Lolita*. Some consider these translations as adaptations in their own right, as they lie outside Nabokov's structures of influence and must necessarily be concerned with the translation's function in the target culture and language, leading to artistic liberties of interpretation. Nabokov's intermediary influence in world literature has been recognized by Maria Malikova that "as a bilingual writer celebrated in Russia, America and Europe, Nabokov created for himself an international field of studies," which, she says, "far surpasses anything available either to far greater Russian writers or to far lesser bilingual ones," adding that "Nabokov studies probably have more potential for development through the enrichment of different national traditions" (Boyd, et al 11). Nabokov's additions to several of these traditions will be examined through receptions of Nabokov's self-translations starting with Russia and the Soviet Union as the most famous example.

Russia

Beginning with the case of *Lolita* in Russian, reception of Nabokov's self-translation was cool compared to its polarizing, but eventually warm, welcome in literary circles reading the English original. One reason for the Russian edition's initially cool reception in 1967, according to Julian Connolly, may have been that "some readers felt that the Russian language of Nabokov's translation was stilted or ungainly, but others, including several of Nabokov's most sensitive readers, have argued to the contrary" (157). This reception mirrors the history of his contribution to English literature by means of his translation of *Eugene Onegin* that received similar criticism in Nabokov's commitment to literalism at the expense of Pushkin's verse, though, naturally, Nabokov allowed himself more aesthetic liberties with his self-translation than with Pushkin's text. Ultimately, Nabokov's Russian translation of *Lolita* has been lauded for what many see as its ability to bridge gaps in the Russian literary tradition wrought by disruption of the Russian intelligentsia's contributions by Soviet censorship and socialist realist requirements (157). As a result of the translation, Connolly states that the "contribution of new vocabulary, pliant syntax, and even those echoes of English idiom" all serve to enrich the Russian literary tradition (157) These textual features infuse bilingual insight from an original to a new equivalent translation that otherwise may have been inaccessible or untranslatable to an outsider.

In terms of adaptation to the stage, *Lolita* has also seen numerous adaptations in Russian music—Rodion Shchedrin's conception of a Russian language opera of *Lolita* (1993) was hailed with enthusiasm by the French Minister of Culture Jack Lang but was effectively held back from the stage from the Paris theater by theater officials with delays in a series of hesitations by Georges-François Hirsch (Karetnyk 604). The opera has received mixed critical responses—

Bryan Karetnyk examines this opera as an afterlife of *Lolita* and pinpoints one of the problems of adapting *Lolita* to other mediums is "how to externalize and transform the richness and psychological complexity of Humbert's solipsistic narrative into a viable dramaturgical framework," but reports that the opera is in many ways a "highly sensitive, nuanced adaptation" (604). In 2019, a Czech production of the opera opened at the National Theatre in Prague directed by Sláva Daubnerová, and in February 2020 moved to the Mariinsky in St. Petersburg (Savikovskaya). Critical reactions have included that of journalist Frank Kuznik has advocated for the Czech production that it deserves wider exposure, adding that it is "more the work of an auteur than a composer" (Kuznik). Meanwhile, Sebastian Smallshaw has commented that Shchedrin's score conveys "somber sameness and drudgery." In terms of faithfulness to *Lolita*, it "largely sticks to the events of the book" but necessarily "does away with its sparklingly eloquent prose and rampant manipulation of the reader" (Smallshaw). Tage Nielsen also adapted one of Nabokov's self-translated novels *Laughter in the Dark* to an opera of the same name (*Latter i Mørket*) in 1995. Nielsen's opera was performed in Germany, Austria, and Copenhagen and has not been revived since 1991, and has received limited critical attention. Since then, in 2003, Victor Sobchak has also written a stage adaptation of *Lolita* that was performed in London and incorporates Nabokov's prose in voiceover from the Russian translation.

Time magazine's endorsement of Viktor Pelevin's *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* of 2004 (*Sviashchennaia Kniga Oborotnia*) described him as "a psychedelic Nabokov for the cyber age." While his novel does not adapt Nabokov's work directly, in their pronouncement, *Time* magazine alludes to Pelevin's style of metafictionality and conspicuously unreliable narrators as well as his use of humor.

America

The power of the single name "Lolita" tends to evoke an emotional response that made Nabokov a household name in America, but most Americans associate the name with the umbrella of controversy that continues to surround the novel. Two movie adaptations of *Lolita* in America directed by Stanley Kubrick (1962) and Adrian Lyne (1997) only begin the list of *Lolita*'s many U.S.-born reincarnations—in addition to a musical produced by Norman Twain and a play by Edward Albee, both screenplays have been translated into other languages and both films are accompanied by soundtracks. The only adaptation (unless considering the Russian translation as adaptation) with which Nabokov worked directly was Kubrick's film in writing its screenplay, though twenty percent has been estimated as what remained from Kubrick's cuts. John Colapinto has argued in the *New Yorker* that *Despair*'s film adaptation has been the only one to rival the "made-for-movie" plot in *Lolita* (Colapinto). *Laughter in the Dark* has also been adapted for the screen with a screenplay by Edward Bond and set in 1960s London rather than Nabokov's setting of 1930s Berlin. This complete change of setting is one example of the ways in which adaptations depart from his intentions for the novel with undertones of concern for the attitudes of Nazi Germany.

Japan

According to Julian Connolly, "*Lolita* has clearly left a significant impression in highbrow culture, but its impact on popular culture is far greater" (168). One example of this impact in international popular culture began when Yasuo Ohkubo translated the Japanese edition of *Lolita* in 1962 (of which Nabokov owned his own copy), but more popular than any other aspect of *Lolita* as a novel is *Lolita* as a fashion subculture. Theresa Winge comments on

the "Lolita aesthetic" as a global commodity in international and Japanese popular culture. While some scholars interpret the multi-genre Victorian-style dressing of men and women to represent Nabokov's character of Lolita, Winge contends that the "Japanese Lolita subculture has redefined the name to create a new meaning that suits its own purposes. This new meaning reflects the modest, innocent, graceful, polite, and *kawaii* image of a Japanese Lolita; however, it also plays suggestively with the idea of a young girl as a forbidden object…As a result, the Lolita subculture has been criticized for its naivete, especially given the role the aesthetic plays in the 'Lolita complex' or *rorikon*—a sexual obsession or fetish directed toward young girls" (50). Also, "The Lolita aesthetic visually communicates membership and identity in the Lolita subcultural community," (58) which transcends cultural boundaries from a connection to literature via a subculture's appropriation. Online boutiques and Lolita fashion stores in Japan show that "commodification and consumption of the Lolita aesthetic on a global scale has created a 'mass marketed' Lolita subculture" (61). As the Lolita fashion subculture is one afterlife of *Lolita* taking place after his death, it can be said that Nabokov had little to no influence in the fashion subculture as an offshoot of his novel. Nonetheless, the implications of this subculture echo from his appeal to international markets in being unafraid to shock readerships and engage outlets of publication such as *Playboy* or Olympia Press.

Along those lines, according to Perry Hinton, the release of the Japanese translation of *Lolita* did not spark a similar controversy to the Western world due to complex gender relations in Japanese popular culture starting from the national literary tradition rooted in the 11th century *Tale of Genji* (Hinton 1589). This reception of Nabokov's novels in elements of fashion illustrates a turn from the stage to the personal, and influence on trends in fashion; elements of this subculture continue to trickle into Western nations such as Great Britain and the United

States in a number of pop-up boutiques. Fashion subculture functions as a medium for interpretation mostly outside literary or stage-based adaptations, and one could argue that the Japanese Lolita aesthetic departs from its origins in many ways until it resembles Nabokov's novel in name only. However, the widespread commodification of Victorian-style outfits reveals the idea of Lolita's potential for mass marketing, and, underlying this potential, the pervasive influence of Lolita's character—not as the girl in Nabokov's novel, but as representing much farther-reaching paradigms of sexuality. The Lolita aesthetic suggests another link between Nabokov's work and global capitalism in a much more commercialized medium than the marketing of literature, film, or the stage.

Middle East

While not an adaptation of *Lolita* in the strict sense but referential to the category of Nabokovian afterlives in its consciousness of the novel, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* by Iranian-American writer Azar Nafisi (2003) details the author's experiences teaching banned literature in Iran to a group of women. These women read a number of other books by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Henry James, but Nafisi writes of *Lolita* that it "gave a different color to Tehran… Tehran helped redefine Nabokov's novel, turning it into this *Lolita*, our *Lolita*" (6). Later, Nafisi writes that "a book like Lolita was difficult to find," due to censorship laws in Iran following the Iranian Revolution (40). Now, however, according to author of *Rituals of Restlessness* Yaghoub Yadali, a copy of *Lolita* can easily be found among booksellers in Tehran as the result of a new comprehensive Persian translation of *Lolita* by Akram Pedramnia that has shifted the dynamic of cultural exchange between Afghanistan and Iran (Yadali). The countries of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran share a deep historical and linguistic past that propels their literary exchanges—typically, Yadali says, book buyers of Afghanistan tend to journey to the

book markets of Iran due to the wider market and the fact that Afghan authors tend to work with Iranian publishers. The Persian *Lolita*, on the other hand, has been published in Afghanistan due to Iran's censorship laws outlawing its content, reversing this norm of the literary market.

With Nafisi's and Yadali's examples of *Lolita*'s legacy in the Middle East, Nabokov's novel continues to enhance national traditions as a global work through providing readers with a wider aperture in which to metaphorize experiences, such as Nafisi's, and by expanding the reach of Middle Eastern literary markets to the West. These adaptations reflect the travel of Nabokov's work through literary world systems as imagined by Apter, and self-translation permits a greater range of translations in that translators can base their translation on either the English or Russian editions as equally authoritative.

Nabokov's larger aesthetic project underlying his translation of his own novels and oversight of others' translations has been lauded as unique in the Russian émigré community and representing leadership among young émigré authors (Naumann 21). Considerations of literary merit and achieving status as a high-brow writer escaping persecution of the Soviet Union's socialist realist agenda caused an ideological rift in Nabokov's relationship to his homeland, which in turn propelled the globalization of his legacy in literature and translation, beginning with the controversy of *Lolita*. Nabokov's dissatisfaction with his own Russian-language translation of *Lolita* illustrates the effects of this separation not only in the loss of language, but also in the modification of creative process that had earlier occurred in his Russian-language to English-language translations of *Laughter in the Dark* and others. An engagement with global capitalism occupied this project of literary autonomy in which Nabokov leaned into his new Russian-American identity as his primary self-identification within literary markets, conscious of expectations of the émigré community of which he was a vital part.

From a broader standpoint, world histories of translation have shown a shift from translation as seen as a tool of nationalism to its role in modernity, bolstering a global network of literary systems. As self-translation is often only mentioned in passing or not discussed at all in these histories, perhaps more should be made of it, considering that Nabokov's self-translations contribute a window into the untranslatable aspects of his novels due to their transmission into at least one other language. This possibility, in addition to the fact that Nabokov was not the only author to exhibit bilingual literary autonomy, deserves more attention. However, in his own work, Nabokov employs this artistic skill to elevate his legacy in Russian and Anglo literatures by encapsulating aspects of the émigré experience and milieu. As these novels are all products of complex interactions of the global market, their cosmopolitan literary fluency in several languages, and diasporic otherness are all at once intimately connected to the Russian tradition while ensuring its survival in a global environment. This connection, in turn, allows Nabokov to occupy a complex position not as a missing link, but as one of many bridges between the Russian literary tradition and its émigré communities around the world. As no other writer before him had accomplished, Nabokov contributed a multi-dimensional, flexible cosmopolitanism to the field of global literature through the translation of his own writing. Likewise, his pursuit of aesthetic autonomy clashes with global literary markets in order to achieve the immense commercial success which made him a household name.

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