

# The Great Lakes Entomologist

---

Volume 1

Issue 4 -- April 1967 *Issue 4 -- April 1967*

Article 10

---

April 1967

Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited.  
Vladimir Nabokov. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,  
1966. 316 pp. \$6.75.

Ronald S. Wilkinson  
*Michigan State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.valpo.edu/tgle>



Part of the [Entomology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Wilkinson, Ronald S. (1967) "Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited. Vladimir Nabokov. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966. 316 pp. \$6.75.," *The Great Lakes Entomologist*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 4 , Article 10.  
Available at: <http://scholar.valpo.edu/tgle/vol1/iss4/10>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Great Lakes Entomologist by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at [scholar@valpo.edu](mailto:scholar@valpo.edu).

## REVIEWS OF RECENT LITERATURE

SPEAK, MEMORY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY REVISITED. Vladimir Nabokov. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966. 316 pp. \$6.75.

Presumably, many of Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov's readers do not know that he is a distinguished entomologist; one can search through the majority of his numerous novels, short stories, translations and critical works without discovering the fact. On the other hand, there may be an entomologist somewhere who does not know that Nabokov of the Lycaenidae is also the author of *Lolita*, *Pnin* and *Nabokov's Dozen*. To those in both categories, and to those who already know how successfully Nabokov has bridged the Two Cultures, we recommend *Speak, Memory*.

This enlarged and revised version of Nabokov's autobiography has a rather complicated past. Many of its chapters appeared in first form in such magazines as *The New Yorker* --where, as example, the sixth was printed as "Butterflies" in 1948. The first version of the autobiography was published in the United States as *Conclusive Evidence* (1951); its success may be measured by the fact that it was translated into five languages. The early form of Chapter 6 has already become a minor classic of its kind, and was included in Patrick Matthews' anthology *The Pursuit of Moths and Butterflies* (1957).

Now there is additional material, woven into the captivating story of Nabokov's childhood in Czarist Russia, his education at Cambridge, and the European exile when the Russian novels were written. Only a hint is given of his later work with the Lepidoptera, as the time-span does not extend beyond the author's emigration to America in 1940. Yet there are evocative passages in which Nabokov recalls his early entomological experiences on the great estate near St. Petersburg. We wait with him at deep-throated flowers and net Spingidae as they feed during the June twilight, and follow him as he sugars for *Catocala adultera* in the cool northern autumn.

There are triumphs and moments of adversity. In a disused store-room, the youthful Nabokov discovers a host of rare entomological books; surely the ownership of Maria Sibylla Merian's superb color-plate work on Surinam insects, Esper's *Die Schmetterlinge* and Boisduval's *Icones historiques de Lépidoptères Nouveaux* would incline anyone toward the collecting of Lepidoptera! We share Nabokov's distress as the Swiss governess, entering his room to read aloud a passage from Rousseau denouncing zoology in favor of botany, sits decisively on a cabinet drawer containing a rare series of *Pieris brassicae* aberrations including a gynandromorph, then 'consoles' him by suggesting that the broken specimens were only "*papillons de potager*".

Vladimir Nabokov has hunted butterflies "in various climes and disguises: as a pretty boy in knickerbockers and sailor cap; as a lanky cosmopolitan expatriate in flannel bags and beret; as a fat hatless old man in shorts," and few writers in English have his power to evoke

the spirit and color of the chase. *Speak, Memory* will surely find its place among those books turned to in desperation on long winter evenings when all that can remind us of happy past seasons are the long rows of specimens, and reminiscences that such authors as Nabokov provide.

R.S.W.

BRIEF NOTICES

ANNUAL REVIEW OF ENTOMOLOGY: VOLUME 12. Edited by Ray F. Smith and Thomas E. Mittler. Palo Alto, California: Annual Reviews, 1967. viii, 563 pp. \$8.50.

Contributions to this year's volume are: The entomologist J.C. Fabricius; Temperature effects on embryonic development in insects; Gut absorption; Food selection by grasshoppers; Bionomics and ecology of predaceous Coccinellidae; Fungal-insect mutualism in trees and timber; Systemic insecticides in trees; Insects and the problem of austral disjunctive distribution; The evolution and past dispersal of the Trichoptera; Evaluation of forest insect infestations (by Fred B. Knight, Department of Forestry, University of Michigan); Mode of action of insecticide synergists; Consequences of insecticide use on nontarget organisms; A critical review of *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *thuringiensis* Berliner and other crystalliferous bacteria; Allergic responses to insects; Transstadial and transovarial development of disease agents in arthropods; Ticks in relation to human diseases caused by *Rickettsia* species; Recent fundamental work on tsetse flies; Recent advances in bee communication and orientation; The evolution and genetics of insect behaviour; and Acoustical communication in arthropods (by Richard D. Alexander, Department of Zoology, University of Michigan).



RAISING LABORATORY ANIMALS: A HANDBOOK FOR BIOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH. James Silvan. Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1966. xiv, 225 pp. Cloth, \$4.95; paper, \$1.45.

This interesting little work contains ideas for the maintenance and study of a great variety of animals, from amoeba to opossum. Entomologists will want to read the chapters about grasshoppers, crickets and termites. There is a useful appendix, listing sources for the purchase of general biological supplies, animals and specialized equipment.



ADVANCES IN INSECT PHYSIOLOGY: VOLUME 3. Edited by J. W. L. Beament, J. E. Treherne and V. B. Wigglesworth. London and New York: Academic Press, 1966. x, 382 pp. \$13.50.

This, the latest volume of a useful series initiated in 1963, contains the following papers: Image formation and sensory transmission in the compound eye; Amino acid and protein metabolism in insect development; Metabolic control mechanisms in insects; The control of polymorphism in aphids; The regulation of breathing in insects. The well chosen type face and pleasing format might well serve as models for other publishers to emulate.