

Annotations to *Ada* (11)

Part I Chapter 29

The Kyoto Reading Circle
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Page and line references are to the Vintage International edition.

Part I Chapter 29

178.02: a “luxury” liner that now took a whole week: This table-tennis tournament occurs after Lettrocalamity, which had made flying on planes impossible.

178.07: hydrogram: This is the only entry of this word in *Ada*.

178.08 : July 21 (her dear birthday!): Cf. “A girl was born on July 21, 1872, at Ardis, her putative father's seat in Ladore County, and for some obscure mnemonic reason was registered as Adelaida” (6.17-19).

178.08: Dadaist impatient: “Ada is impatient,” Ada writes to Van. “Patient” is perhaps an oblique reference to patient Aqua in her sanatorium? Ada's love letter echoes Aqua's last letter of love and farewell to Demon and Van, in which the word “patient” is emphasized by quotation marks (29.8). Demon also brings Aqua's memory to this chapter by remembering the *petits bleus* Aqua used to send him (178.11-12). The ants queuing to get at Aqua's pills (19.24) reappear as tiny brown ants on feverish Ada after their tryst (180.01).

178.10: call doris: call Blanche? “Doris” combines “dorophone” and “Ardis.” Later, Van

interprets Ada's message as telling him "to see a mad girl artist called Doris or Odris" (178:20-179:01).

178.12: golubyanka: VN identifies this modestly in his notes as "Russ., small blue butterfly." This is the so-called Nabokov's Blue, or *Lycaeides idas sublivens*.

178.16: Boucher: François Boucher, a famous French Rococo painter (1703-70).

178.19-20: to a hamlet the opposite way from Letham (see?): "Letham" is an anagram of "hamlet."

179.01: gee-gees: horses.

179.02: sugar daddies: nice old gentlemen who patronize willing young women.

179.03: under a false name (Boucher): Dear Bout (Cher Bou?). Van calls Bout (Fr. for "end"), the butler's son, a few lines later 179.10. Boucher is French for "butcher," also a verb meaning "to cork," stopping up holes—a salacious anticipatory joke on the bottle "audibly uncorked" also a few lines later (179.17).

179.06: celebrated mosquito: Chateaubriand's mosquito. See pp. 106-7. See also: "a certain interestingly primitive mosquito" (72.28-29).

179.10: got connected with Bout who was connected with Blanche: Bout is in bed with Blanche.

179.10: drinking hock at seven in the morning: "hock" probably chosen for the suggestive sound.

179.17: A bottle was audibly uncorked: Bout disconnects himself from Blanche.

179:23: “Forest Fork in Forty-Five minutes. Sorry to spit”: Covering already covered ground. Cf. Ch. 25, 158:25-6, “Will you be faithful, will you be faithful to me?” “You spit, my love.”

179.25: “Roger”: has the meaning of (1) fuck, n. and v., as well as (2) “O.K.” (*Reader’s Dictionary*). Also suggesting Buck Rogers?

179.31: the black-haired white angel: Ada is connected to Demon by the blackness of her hair and the reference to “angel.” Demon in the allusion to Lermontov’s *The Demon* is a fallen angel. For previous references to Lucifer and demon, see 73.17: the lucifers fly; 173.33: the demon counterpart of divine time.

180.01: tiny brown ants: See the last lines of Aqua’s last letter, “a lot of cute little ants queuing to get at my pretty pills” (Ch. 3, 29.26-7).

180.02: gypsies stealing their jeeps: alliterative refrain of the same sound as 179.01: gee-gees

180.14-5: Demon had dyed his hair a blacker black: Another name for Demon is “Raven Veen or simply Dark Walter” (Ch. 1, 4:24-5).

180.15: a diamond ring blazing like a Caucasian ridge: brilliantly shining because of the icebergs on the peaks. VN’s note for p. 180, “Graniel Maza”—though the name of a perfume, named after Mr. Kazbeck’s “gran’almaz” or “diamond’s facet”—refers also to Lermontov’s *The Demon*.

180.16: His long, black, blue-ocellated wings: Besides referring to the butterfly Blue, the dark blue color of the Veen family—Aqua, Marina, and Van’s great-great-grandmother Temnosiniy—Demon’s wings also refer to his being named after a fallen angel.

180.18: A temporary Tamara: Demon Veen now has a new mistress, for convenience named Tamara but ironically opposite of Lermontov's self-sacrificing heroine. Cf. *The Demon* by Mikhail Lermontov (1814-41), who was exiled twice to the Caucasus because of his liberalism and who died in a duel like Pushkin. He started writing this poem when he was 14. In the poem, an angel with wings, Demon, exiled from Paradise, looks for and finds Tamara, falls in love with her. He lays down all his power before her in exchange for her love and kisses her, which causes her death. Aqua is likewise victimized by Demon. However, Tamara is also the name of a Georgian princess, who took one lover after another and, when bored with them, threw them out of her window—a female version of Lermontov's Demon.

180.18: all kohl, kasbek rouge: *Kohl* is "coal" in German, which is actually Tamara's eyeshadow. *Kasbek* rouge, her lipstick, is named after Mt. Kazbek and connected to her cheap Caucasian perfume which Van could not stand.

180.21: bluebeard's virility as reflected in morose Van: Like Bluebeard and Lermontov's Demon, Van seems to exhibit his father's tendency to kill his women.