

Annotations to *Ada* (19)
Part I Chapter 37
July 2011

The Kyoto Reading Circle in Collaboration with Brian Boyd

The following members of the Kyoto Reading Circle are equally responsible for the text here: Shun'ichiro Akikusa, Atsushi Goto, Maya Minao Medlock, Shoko Miura, Akiko Nakata and Tadashi Wakashima.

The Kyoto Reading Circle is deeply grateful to Professor Boyd for his generous comments and corrections. The comments contributed by Brian Boyd are indicated by his initials, "BB," and/or in blue. Page and line references are to the Vintage International edition.

Part I Chapter 37

230.4: Van lay reading Rattner on Terra: See Part I, Chapter 12: **73:20**: "Van, who at the time had still not really tasted the Terror of Terra" for Van's beginning awareness of Terra; and the reversal of author-subject in Part I, Chapter 40: **283.1-2**: "Van was lying in his netted nest under the linodendrons, reading Antiterrenus on Rattner." This is year 1888 when Van is 18. BB: "Rattner" is a real English surname, but also an anagram of "N.T. Terra" or, if sounded out, almost "Antiterra."

230.13: Zayats: This word which is a distortion of Seitz, the gynecologist, is Russian for "hare." References to rabbits follow: Line 14, "Dr. 'Rabbit,' line 15 BB: = Dr. Krolik, "leporine group"). Rabbits were used to test pregnancy. Developed in 1927 by Bernhard Zondek and Selmar Aschheim, the test "consisted of injecting the tested woman's urine into a female rabbit, then examining the rabbit's ovaries a few days later, which would change in response to a hormone only secreted by pregnant women."(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit_test) This became the basis for modern pregnancy tests which no longer require rabbits or other test animals. Thus, the rabbit motif relates to the question of Ada's possible pregnancy.

231.7: borrowed, Ada contended, from Mansfield Park: Jane Austen's novel for which Nabokov in *Lectures on Literature* drew a map of Sotherton Court, (Nabokov, *Lectures*

on *Literature*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, p. 31). He describes the wilderness as “a little planted wood two acres of larch and laurel about half a mile long.” Like Nabokov’s pencil drawing of Sotherton Court, the scene here is apparently being drawn in pencil. The rain is seen “slanting in parallel pencil lines against the darker background of a larch plantation . . .” (231.5-6).

231.9: kerosene: The word the children were trying to spell in flavita in the previous chapter.

231.22: “Beer Tower”: recalls Ada’s tower in Chapter 12 which crumbles down when Van leaves the balcony.

231.25: the rhomboid peninsula: in the shape of Crimea.

231.31: the horrible “Berenice”: BB: The play *Bérénice* (1670), by Jean Racine (1639-1699), whose work Nabokov always disliked (*SM* 108: “Racine’s absurd play,” *SM* 113, “as innocent of sense as the alliterative sins of Racine’s pious verse”).

232.9: chayku: BB: see Darkbloom: Russ., tea (diminutive).

232.27: Azov: The sea by which Chekhov was born.

233.3: How oft we sat . . . in that?: Griboedov, Act I, Scene 7.

233.16: The dog came in . . .: This dog resembles Nabokov’s mother’s dog, a dachshund whose ancestor was Chekhov’s dog.

233.26: I had my first one when I was fourteen: He had his fist sexual experience with a shopgirl when he was fourteen (33.09: “fourteen and a virgin”). When he then says, “She had raven black hair and a skin like skimmed milk,” we become aware he is talking not about the fussy pig-pink whorelet” (33.17) but about Ada and that for him, his first love was Ada. Her raven black hair indicates Ada’s true father is Raven Veen.

234.17: opéra bouffe: late 19th-century comic French operettas so-named because many were performed at the Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens.

234.33: or else because (and this she did not say) her unknown lover was a heavy smoker: Van's jealous suspicion of Ada smelling of tobacco is echoed by Ada later on. See **260.16:** "this horrid tease insists I smell of some romantic Turk or Albanian met in the woods."

The index page to the annotations to *Ada*: <http://vnjapan.org/main/ada/index.html>