

Annotations to Ada (20)
Part I Chapter 38
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The Kyoto Reading Circle in Collaboration with Brian Boyd

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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 38

237.1: *kontretan*: Marina’s mispronunciation of “*contrestemps*,” an unexpected and unfortunate occurrence.

237.16: *accursed generalizer*: Nabokov hates general ideas, generalization and generalizers. Cf. “Only talent interests me in paintings and books. Not general ideas, but the individual contribution” (*Strong Opinions*, 33); “As soon as we start defining such terms as ‘the writer,’ ‘the world,’ ‘the novel,’ and so on, we slip into a solipsismal abyss where general ideas dissolve” (Op. cit., 136); “Let us not generalize. The common captivity in time is felt differently by different people, and some people may not feel it at all. Generalizations are full of loopholes and traps” (Op. cit., 142).

237.25: *Twice in the summer of 1885*: The year when Van enters Chose.

237.27: *A dinner in 1886, in June or July (where was Van?)*: In Ch. 29, he was in England. Cf. “In mid-July, 1886, while Van was winning the table tennis tournament on board a “luxury” liner (that now took a whole week to reach in white dignity Manhattan from Dover!), . . . (178)

238.7: *his “prebrandial” brandy*: A pun on “prerandial.”

238.17: My land, sweet land: parodies "My home sweet home," the last line of "God Bless America."

God bless America, Land that I love.
Stand beside her, and guide her.
Thru the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam.
God bless America, My home sweet home.

238.27: Bahamudas: Bahamas + Bermudas.

239.3: the Michaelmas term: Michaelmas is September 29th. [BB: Michaelmas Term, the first academic term of the university year at Cambridge, Oxford and other British universities, runs from September or October to Christmas.](#)

239.9: that fresh oeillet in your lapel eye: Oeillet means both carnation and "eyelet" in French.

239.10: its last syllable: "tan" in "Manhattan."

239.12: Akapulkovo: Acapulco + Pulkovo. The latter is a village 12.5 miles south of St. Petersburg. Russia's main astronomical observatory there was founded in 1839.

239.19: "Petit negre, au champ qui fleurone," . . . and altogether adorable young Cr  ole: In a story "Les Petits Souliers" by H  g  sипpe Moreau (1810-1838) published in *Journal des demoiselles* no2 (April 1836), Josephine, ex-empress to Napoleon, sings a love song by the title to a devoted seaman before his departure.

"Petit n  gre, au champ qui fleurone"

Petit n  gre, au champ qui fleuronne
Va moissonner pour ma couronne :
La n  gresse fuyant aux bois, Marronne,
M'a pr  dit la grandeur des rois

Vingt fois.

Petit nègre, va, qui t'arrête ?
Serait-ce déjà la tempête
Qui doit effleurer si souvent
Ma tête,
Et jeter mon bonheur mouvant
Au vent ?

Las ! j'en pleure déjà la perte.
Adieu donc, pour la mer déserte,
La rivière des Trois-Ilets
Si verte,
Où dans ma barque aux blonds filets,
J'allais !

Adieu: les vents m'ont entraînée,
Ma patrie et ma sœur aînée !
La fleur veut mourir où la fleur
Est née,
Et j'étais si bien sur ton cœur,
Ma sœur !

The e-text of the story:

<http://www.bmlisieux.com/litterature/moreau/souliers.htm>

The image of the actual pages from the issue of Journal des demoiselles:

http://books.google.co.jp/books?id=04EoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA116&lpg=PA116&dq=Petit+negre,+au+champ+qui+fleuronne&source=bl&ots=4KvMoFUOkN&sig=SzFXNYxFBuB8RWYFOXdEeR86JaU&hl=ja&ei=vT5YStCBoPW7AOhpWWCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3

Josephine, née Marie Josèphe Rose Tascher de la Pagerie was born in Les Trois-Ilets, Martinique, on 23 June 1763, to a wealthy white Crole family that owned a sugar plantation (Wikipedia).

239.32: Kim Beauharnais: suggests Josephine de Beauharnais. De Beauharnais is the name of Josephine's first husband.

240.13-4: (wagging his left forefinger three times at the height of his temple): See Ada's identical gesture (227.13-4).

240.17: Crêmlin on my bald spot: See 231.27 where Blanche wipes Crimea clean on the globe. A pate-globe connection also appears on 230.6-7, "the bald pate of tan Tartary as represented on a large old globe." Also, "Crême" of Crêmlin continues the pun on shoe crème from Demon's reference to his own "shoe-shined hair" (240.10).

240.18: my aunt Kitty married the banker Bolenski after divorcing that dreadful old wencher Lyovka Tolstoy, the writer: One and only mention of this character in the novel. "Bol" in "boletus" (mushroom) is a part of the name Bolenski. Lyovka recalls Lyovin in Anna Karenina by Tolstoy. The Veens are related to the novelist Tolstoy.

240.32: shaftment: A measure, the distance from the tip of the extended thumb across the breadth of the palm, about six inches. [Archaic and Dial.] W2.

240.34: Hump of Venus: is commonly called "Hill of Venus." BB: *shaft* and *hump* are both slang terms for "copulate."

241.4: the Sister of your Life: naturally suggests Ada. On the other hand, the term is used for the Sister Line, a fine line on the thumb side of the Life Line. The Sister Line is also known as the Line of Mars. From Richard Webster's *Palm Reading for Beginners*. (Llewellyn Pubns, 2000), 51. "Mars" is related with "Mercuries" (241.19). This also alludes to Boris Pasternak's *My Sister--Life* [Sestra moya-zhizn'] (1922).

241.13: my affairs are such that I can satisfy great greed: Usually "My affairs are such that" is used in a bad case.

241.15: the sweetest word in the language rhymes with 'billiard': The word is "milliard," thousand million, that is, billion.

241.21: "That's very black of you": Converted "white of you," a Southern racist compliment which means "good of you."

241.23: the Mississippi region where most magistrates, public benefactors, high priests

of various so-called “denominations,” and other honorable and generous men, had the dark or darkish skin of their West-African ancestors, who had been the first navigators to reach the Gulf of Mexico: An example of the variously changed world history in *Ada*. The African-American descents story follow the thread of “Créole” and “*petit nègre*.” The “Denominations” means religion sects, at the same time, the term makes the Motif of capitalism together with “Capital” on the previous page.

242.4: Moses de Vere: His first appearance by this name. In Ch. 32, he was introduced as “Vere de Vere” (200). **BB:** presumably the father of Vere de Vere.

242.18: amerlocks: According to Eric Roman and Jeff Edmunds in their NABOKV-L contribution, “amerlocks” is “usually spelt ‘amerloques’ [and] is a French derogatory term for Americans.” NABOKV-L Archives March 1996 (#55).

242.33: Chateau Latour d'Estoc: Cf. Leland de la Durantaye cites Nabokov's remark in an interview with *Il Giorno* “The people I invite to my feasts must have stomachs as strong as wineskins, and not ask for a glass of Beaujolais when I offer them a barrel of Chateau Latour d'Ivoire” (*Style is Matter: The Moral Art of Vladimir Nabokov*, 32). Stacy Schiff also refers to the remark. *Véra: Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov*, 55. **BB:** The wine estate Château Lafite Rothschild produces one of the world's most expensive red wines. There are various distinguished Château La Tour wines. “D'Estoc” literally means *stock*, which in English as an adjective can also mean “trite; banal; commonplace” (W2, sense 3) but can also mean “something regularly kept in stock, or ready for use” (W2, sense 2), both of which are comically incongruous here: the wine will be an expensive rarity, but kept in stock for connoisseurs like the Veens.

243.21: Well, let us have the cognac, as planned, unless you are a *filius aquae*?” . . . “Oh, I prefer claret. . . .”: “Filius aquae” is “son of water,” as Vivian Darkbloom notes. It also means “son of Aqua.” Van cleverly escapes the tricky suggestion, including the problem of his parentage, just as Ada in Ch. 14 cunningly evades Greg's unintentional trappy question about her father, “I guess it's your father under that oak, isn't it?” by “No, it's an elm” (86).

243.32-33: the clockwork began slowing down: See 256.4, not for Dan himself on “Mad Avenue,” but for Dan's car, breaking down on Fourth Avenue. Dan had a stroke before, as Demon mentions.

243.34: Let our sweethearts never meet: A toast common in the British Royal Navy: “To our sweethearts and wives. May they never meet.”

244.12: Tell him I'm the youngest Venutian?: Indication that Van has already become a member of Villa Venus. See 176.13-4 where Dick offers to introduce him to it.

244.19: a subtle question: about the true relationship between Van and Ada. Demon never succeeds in asking this question during his visit.

245.14: Old Demon, iridescent wings humped: Cf. 180.16 where Demon’s “long, black, blue-ocellated wings trailed and quivered in the ocean breeze.”

244.15: “Curious, you calling it that”: referring to the “torrid affair” Van had, which is the title also of Marina’s only cinema hit (see 253.15), the reason for Demon making the remark.

245.22: Tamara's castle: Based on Lermontov’s poem, “The Demon,” Anton Rubinstein created an opera by the same name, in which the Demon falls in love with Tamara, a princess who is to wed a prince. The Demon promises the whole world’s submission to her if she will be his. She is both horrified and attracted and locks herself up in her castle. The prince’s procession is stopped by a landslide, the prince killed by Tartars. His body is brought to the castle which had been prepared for the wedding. Tamara flees to a convent but the Demon pursues her inside and she can no longer resist him. The angel appears and shows him the ghost of the dead prince. Tamara falls dead.

245.23: (Lermontov paraphrased by Lowden): See 127:33 where Lowden is mentioned as combination of Auden and Lowell, two poets VN hated.

245.25: when you wore a raincoat . . . after seeing your dentist: See 167. Demon does not appear in the narration of this scene in Chapter 27, which makes us wonder why he could describe it and which makes us doubly suspicious of his words, “the last time I enjoyed you.” **BB:** while this recalls the phrasing of the I.27 scene at 167 that occurred in fall 1884, unlike the encounter with Ada in April 1888 that Demon recollects here.

246.8-9: Observation is not always the mother of deduction: Something Nabokov’s

favorite detective Sherlock Holmes would say, but with the negative added by Demon.

246.10-11: there is nothing improper about a hanky dumped on a Bechstein: referring to the piano lessons in *Mansefield Park*. See p. 38 for Price, the footman, an echo of Fanny Price.

246.13-15: “Lorsque son fi-ancé ...”: The beginning lines of François Coppée’s “The Night-watch (from: Henry M. Soper, *Scrapbook Recitations* (1876), BiblioLife, LLC.)
http://books.google.co.jp/books?id=rXYDwgX1OWQC&pg=PA15&lpg=PA15&dq=Francois+Coppee+The+Night+Watch&source=bl&ots=yIthoNMxrW&sig=PiHfQcYK63yqW1-p0GcsnIrs9oc&hl=ja&ei=XEXmTNfrHsieOTy-IAL&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Francois%20Coppee%20The%20Night%20Watch&f=false

Soon as her lover to the war had gone,
Without tears or commonplace despair,
Irene de Grandfief, a maiden pure
And noble-minded, reassumed the garb
That at the convent she had worn—black dress
With narrow perlerine—and the small cross
In silver at her breast. Her piano closed,
Her jewels put away—all save one ring,
Gift of the Viscount Roger on that eve
In the past spring-time when with tremulous joy
She had pledged her life

246.28: “Old storytelling devices”: See 250.4.

246.29: all this is easier described than imagined: See 79:33: “all this is more readily imagined than described.” The self-reflexive composition theme becomes big in late Nabokov—manuscripts, galleys, storytelling devices, references to famous novels and poems.

246.29-31: only close relatives can be forgiven for paraphrasing illustrious poems: VN says paraphrasing should not be done in translation in his *Commentary to Eugene Onegin*. Van forgives Ada because she is the closest of the close relatives.

246.34-247.2: "For the snake of rhyme?" . . . 'snakeroot' into 'snagrel': alliteration of "sn" sparked by Van's volunteering "a snatch of Pushkin" (246.34). "Snakeroot" (also called "bugbane," "bestort," or "senega root") is a plant believed to be effective against snakebites. "Snagrel" is probably VN's combination of "snag" and "doggerel."

247.2: birthwort: "Birthwort" (e.g. European Birthwort, *A. clematitis*) refers to these species' flower shape, resembling a birth canal. It is poisonous and can be fatal and was used in childbirth. A preparation was given to women in labor to expel the placenta, but it may just also kill the patient. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristolochia>). The obvious suggestion, since "wort" is German for "word," is "the birth of a word," with dangerous risks of giving birth to "doggerels." The association with "snake" suggests the Adam and Eve theme. **See 247.6-7: The unfortunate plant used to be considered by the ancient inhabitants of the Lodore region not so much as a remedy for the bite of a reptile, as the token of a very young woman's easy delivery.**





247.14-7: “Leur chute est lente. . . de sang”: See 127.26-9, where Ada shows Van her translation of Coppée’s “Autumn in October” required by Mlle. Larivière, in which she changes the French pronoun *on* to “the woodchopper,” which in Van’s report to Demon of his “cousin’s” translation is transformed to “leavesdropper.” See 98.12 for the first use of the word for the squirrel eavesdropping.

247.33-248.1: wearing a spangled dress, her face . . . sought by ripe stars”: references to the star-spangled banner, a minor motif in the chapter. Marina is a “ripe star,” an ageing (44 years old) actress. See 238.17 where the American anthem is quoted: “My land, sweet land.” In *Speak, Memory*, a picture book has a mother and daughter wearing dresses made of the stars and stripes.

248.16: Years later he rendered me a service that I will never forget: Jones got rid of Kitchen Kim for Van. See 407 where it becomes clear that Jones becomes a “prominent policeman” in Lower Ladore.

248.24: miniver-furred slipper: See 114.16.

248.27: a twofold déjà-vu: artistic retrospect is one déjà-vu of the children’s déjà-vu. See 114 for the slipper scene. See also 68 where Dack carries away a wad of blood-soaked cottonwool. Thus, many waves of déjà-vu scenes occur in an artistic pattern.

249.4: I’m Fanny Price: See the first staircase scene in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* where Fanny is crying.

249.8-9: a wonderful screenplay about mysterious children doing strange things in old parks: VN's note refers to Austen's *Mansfield Park* but perhaps also a hidden reference to Lolita and her friends performing *The Enchanted Hunters*.

249.13-14: By the way, how's Lucette?: Demon's question is ignored by the others. He asks the same question again (Cf **261.34**).

249.23: Vronsky: See *Anna Karenina* Part 6 Chapter 5, mushroom hunting scene.

249.24: "Grib": In addition to VN's note, Russian **starigrib** meaning an old man.

249.26: a puff of Russian ancestry: Traditionally, Russian gentlemen used to smoke between courses.

250.4: to continue the novelistic structure: See 246.28: "old storytelling devices"; 242.24: "to use a hoary narrational turn." These emphasize the theme of novelistic devices that runs particularly strong throughout this chapter, which depicts the veneer of a happy family reunion but is at bottom an awkward farcical scene. "Not even the reader . . . was at his or her ease . . ." (250.14).

250.19: with a ghost pointing them out to her: Reference to Dr. Krolik, the insect specialist.

250.31-2: to a spectator (with a camera or a program): Reference to Kitchen Kim, the spectator. See **255.4-5**.

250.17: gray beads: See "the pot of Graybead" **249.29**.

251.24: Calville apples: "Calville blanc d'hiver" (Calville white winter) apples, famous ancient species of quality apples for French cuisine.

(Right: Apple Calville Saint Sauveur: First discovered in France, 1839)



251.24: Persy grapes: See 132.1: Miss Vertograd. Vinograd is the origin of Gradus's name in the *Pale Fire* poem line 17. *Speak, Memory* mentions the same grape, Chapter 6, "translucent green" grapes.

251.26 what he gallicistically called condemned doors: Refers to a French expression "des porte condamnées," which means simply "sealed doors."

252.1-2 who would woosh down fluffy slopes on a bobsleigh a fortnight after parturition: Compare the physically strong Marina with the frail Aqua who produced a stillborn male infant after "skiing at full pulver into a larch stump" (25.28).

252.6 after a lapse of nearly seventeen years: There is a chronological discrepancy. The duel in which Demon was wounded was in 1869. Seventeen years would make the date 1871, a two-year gap. Was Homaïs nodding again?

252.19-20 on the eve of her wedding: December 15, 1871.

253.8 "between mirror and fan": Lautrec? Proust?

253.16-17 his Utter Devotion: As if Marina were a Goddess.

253.24-31 In the trickwork close-up of two left hands belonging to different sexes – doing what? . . . Marina could no longer recall . . . But where? when?: Marina's hunch is right. On Van's first visit to Ardis Hall, she saw Ada's and Van's left hands progressing "with strikingly similar flips and glides like siblings taking their first dancing lesson"

(40.1-2) along the balustrade when they went upstairs.

253.26-27 though only four years elapsed!: It was June 1884 when Van visited Ardis Hall for the first time.

253.27-28. playing à quatre mains?—no, neither took piano lessons: Not piano lessons, but “dancing lesson” (40.2).

254.14 Proust's After-effect: Alludes to the Combray chapter in Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* at the end of the long passage on asparagus: “Elles jouaient, dans leurs farces poétiques et grossières comme une féerie de Shakespeare, à changer mon pot de chambre en un vase de parfum.” (*A la recherche du temps perdu, I, Du côté de chez Swann* (Gallimard, 1988) 119. “Elles” refers to asparagus, which play antics in their poetic farce like Shakespeare's fairies and change my chamber pot into a vase full of perfume. Asparagus does, according to those who have experienced it, produce this after-effect in one's water.

254.23-7: Well, his look as if they were about to octopus the food he serves. But that's not the point. He pants. Marina! . . . It's depressing. It's a rhythmic pumping pant. It made my soup ripple: P sound repetition.

255.1-3: He's as healthy as a bull and has rowed me from Ardisville to Ladore and back, and enjoyed it, many times this summer: As Marina often says something problematic without being aware of it, her talk here makes the reader wonder if it was really a boat that he “rowed.”

255.8: the most exclusive *bals masqué*s: Another allusion to Cendrillon concerning Blanche.

255.29: Lord Byron's Hock: “Hock and soda water,” *Don Juan*, Canto II, line 1434.

255.30: Our Lady's Tears: seems to be a pun on a German wine Madonna, the precursor of "Liebfraumilch" ("Our Lady's Milk").

256.9-10: I had the definite impression that it was his mechanism that had stalled, not the Hardpan's: Demon talks to Marina about his encounter with “corrupting” Dan on Fourth Avenue. On p. 243, he tells Van and Ada almost the same episode that occurred

in a different place: “I met him in town recently, near Mad [obviously, Madison] Avenue, saw him walking toward me quite normally, but then as he caught sight of me, a block away, the clockwork began slowing down and he stopped—oh, helplessly!—before he reached me.

256.10: the Hardpan: What is its original brand? Cf. “I ordered a Roseley like yours . . .” (257). A Roseley probably refers to a Rolls Royce. **BB: Combines Rolls-Royce and Wolseley.** another “posh” British car firm.

256.20: his last illness: after that little stroke he had (243).

256.16-7: half a million which Demon considered henceforth as a loan his cousin should certainly refund him: Cf. “It would cost hardly more than a couple of millions minus what Cousin Dan owes me, . . .” (241).

256.21-3: whom Dan had asked on a memorable occasion to help him get “something nice for a half-Russian child interested in biology: In chapter 13, Dan sent home a doll as a gift celebrating Ada’s twelfth birthday. “. . . this thoughtful and very expensive gift was a huge beautiful doll—unfortunately, and strangely, more or less naked; still more strangely, with a braced right leg and a bandaged left arm, and a boxful of plaster jackets and rubber accessories, instead of the usual frocks and frills. Directions in Russian or Bulgarian made no sense because they were not in the modern Roman, but in the old Cyrillic, a nightmare alphabet which Dan had never been able to master (84).

256.34: *La féve de Diane*: “*La féve de roi*” is a broad bean (*féve*) hidden in “*la galette des rois*” [the cake of the kings], a cake celebrating the Epiphany. Tradition holds that the cake is “to draw the kings” to the Epiphany. The person who finds the trinket in their slice becomes the king for the day and will have to offer the next cake. In 1870 the beans were replaced by various figurines of porcelain. These days many of them are made of plastic. Various *fèves* can be seen at: <http://fevemania.exblog.jp/i18/2/>

257.04: I tried to find a Silentium: The Silentium must be a [motorcycle](#) here, but *Silentium!* (1830) is a poem written by Fyodor Ivanovich Tyutchev (1803-1873) and translated into English by Vladimir Nabokov. Nabokov’s reading of the poem in his translation is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJGX76Py1Mo>

Speak not, lie hidden, and conceal

the way you dream, the things you feel.
Deep in your spirit let them rise
akin to stars in crystal skies
that set before the night is blurred:
delight in them and speak no word.
How can a heart expression find?
How should another know your mind?
Will he discern what quickens you?
A thought, once uttered, is untrue.
Dimmed is the fountainhead when stirred:
drink at the source and speak no word.
Live in your inner self alone
within your soul a world has grown,
the magic of veiled thoughts that might
be blinded by the outer light,
drowned in the noise of day, unheard...
take in their song and speak no word.

/trans. by Vladimir Nabokov/

257.05: because of the war: This is the first time we hear about the war being fought at the time.

257.10: our great Canadian's lovely lines: François Coppée.

257.11: la virginité: alludes to Virgin Mother. Cf. 255.30: Our Lady's Tears.

257.16: Praskovia: a famous Russian serf actress and soprano opera singer (1768-1803).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praskovia_Kovalyova-Zhemchugova. BB: **Prascovie de Prey** (242.16) has a name that combines a Russian serf-girl's name and Frenchified aristocracy.

258.01-6: Who does not harbor in the darkest gulf of his mind . . . "What was that?" exclaimed Marina: Van in discourse time and Marina in real time cross each other so that it seems as though Marina is interrupting Van in a real-time conversation.

258.06: certicle: anagram for "electric."

258. 07: Antiamberians: According to Nabokov's notes for p. 23 (592), "lammer" (Fr l'ambre) is an "allusion to electricity." See **23.12: an unmentionable 'lammer'** and **258.18: the unmentionable god of thunder:** The word "lammer" has probable origin in Scottish. The French "l'ambre" means "amber," connecting this color with the banned electricity in Antiterra. Amberina glass is blended colour glass in which the lower part, a yellowish amber, merges into a ruby-red colour higher in the vessel. Amberina glass was also produced at New Bedford, Mass., under the name rose amber (Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/> EBchecked/topic/18874/ amberina-glass). See **117.1: her amber-black eyes:** for Ada's eyes watching the barn-burning, while Kitchen Kim lurks in the dark garden, taking pictures.

258.18:Nobody was taking pictures except Perun: But, of course, Kitchen Kim is actually taking pictures of them.

258.18: Perun: Russian Jupiter. In Russian, *peruny* means disaster. See also **23.32: St. Zeus.** **23.31: elmo:** refers to St. Elmo's fire, another natural phenomenon that produces electricity.

258.18: the unmentionable god of thunder: "unmentionable" will be repeated on **261.29: "an unmentionable blackguard."**

258.29: Peterson's Grouse: Peterson is Roger Tory Peterson (1908–1996), an American naturalist, ornithologist, artist, and educator. He is held to be one of the founding inspirations for the 20th century environmental movement. His publications include *A Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern and Central North America* (1934).

259.02: Dr. Lapiner's chalet: Dr. Lapiner appears in Part I, Chapter 1, "Dr. Lapiner's walled alpine garden" (7.26-27) and Part II, Chapter 11, "Dr. Lapiner's wife, born Countess Alp" (440.22).

259.06: "the honor one had made to it": refers to "Peterson's" of "Peterson's Grouse."

259.09: asperges en branches: appear in Stanza 26 in *Onegin's Journey*. Classified in the lily family, Liliaceae. Demon and Ada eat the asparagus in exactly the same way, divulging their true relationship as father and daughter.

259.13: the prim lily of the valley: also in the lily family, Liliaceae.

259.16: (a ridiculous little schism): a great religious schism in Russian history deeply dividing Russian society —“Raskol’nik” (meaning “dissenter” or “schism”) of 1667—by a group upholding crossing oneself with three fingers (for the Trinity) instead of two. One of the surviving sects, the Dukhobor sect, escaped to Canada. Hence, the name “the Great Lake of Slaves” (Slavs) (259.19), [almost the name of an actual lake \(Great Slave Lake\)](#) in Canada. Christian references stand out in this chapter.

259.20: Semyon Afanasievich Vengerov . . . (1855-1954): actually he died in 1920.

259.23-4: the cannibal joy of young gourmets tearing “plump and live” oysters out of their “cloisters”: From Nabokov’s translation of “Fragments of *Onegin’s Journey*” in *Eugene Onegin* Stanza XXVI, lines 8 – 9:

Off flies gluttonous juventy
To swallow from their sea shells
The cloisterers, plump and alive,
Slightly asperged with lemon.

Another connection would be the “fat” oysters eaten by the Walrus and the Carpenter in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*. “Cloisterers” may again suggest reference to the religious schism (see 259.16) in the Russian orthodox church ending in the reformist leader, Avvakum (1620 or 1621 – 1682), being burned at the stake in 1682.

259. 26: a certain Crimean Khan once popular with reporters and politicians: alludes to Stalin whom Winston Churchill in his memoirs called “a great good man,” according to Nabokov’s notes (599). Churchill, famous for his cigars, leads to the references to smoking on the next page.

259.26-7: Richard Leonard Churchill: As often happens in *Ada*, names get mixed up. There is an American author named Winston Churchill who wrote a novel entitled *Richard Carvil* (1899).

259.29: “A Great Good Man”: Although Nabokov writes that Churchill “enthusiastically applied” this phrase to Stalin, we could not find evidence of it in his recounting of World War II.

259.32: dipping the reversed corolla of one hand in a bowl . . . performing the same rite: similar to the gesture of crossing oneself with holy water, continuing the Christian

theme and the Schism of 1667. Since Ada and Demon cross themselves in the same way, their true blood relationship is hinted again.

260.20: profitrol: (Fr. profiterole) tobacco-colored small cream puffs with chocolate sauce but Nabokov calls attention to profit “rolls” referring to rolled tobacco, or Havana cigars.

260.21: Gavana: Havana; in Russian, [Gavana](#).

260.01: an Albany: a cigarette made in South Africa.

260.02: Turkish cigarettes: Probably Camel.

260.16: I like a smoke when I go mushrooming: In Chapter 37, Ada smells of tobacco, which worries Van. “She smelled of tobacco, either because (as she said) she had spent an hour in a compartment for smokers, or had smoked (she added) a cigarette or two herself in the doctor’s waiting room, or else because (and this she did not say) her unknown lover was a heavy smoker, his open red mouth full of rolling blue fog” (236).

260.29: a long distance call: This is the first time in the novel where the dorophone rings in the house.

260.29: Marina, who had been waiting . . . a torrid letter: Marina thinks mistakenly that the call is from Pedro, whereas it actually was from Dan. Later, in Chapter 39, an aerogram is received with similar confusion, Ada expecting it to be from Philip, Marina from Pedro.

261.16: Norbert von Miller: reappears in 440.23.

261.25: Norman Miller: Mixture of Henry Miller and Norman Mailer, neither of whom Nabokov admired, especially Henry Miller. The use of the name “Miller” links Marina’s confusion of names with Humbert’s philistine ignorance of details and distinctions, a frequent theme for Nabokov, exemplified in his failure to differentiate between butterflies and moths, merely calling them “insects”: “Millions of so-called ‘Millers,’ a kind of insect, were swarming around the neon contours of ‘No Vacancy’” (*Annotated Lolita* 241.20-1). Miller is a species of pine tip moth. Humbert also calls moths “hundreds of powdered bugs” (126.27).

261.25: Fainley, Fehler and Miller: “Feign” suggested by “Fainley” emphasizes deceptiveness. “Fehler” means “mistake” in German.

261.27: Wilfrid Laurier: Canada's first Francophone prime minister 1896 – 1911, famous for his policies of conciliation between French and English Canada.



261.32: “Partir c'est mourir un peu”: A famous scene in Raymond Chandler's *The Long Good-bye*, which is a quote from Alphonse Allais, who probably in turn took it from Edmond Harancourt's “Rondel de l'Adieu,” as follows:

Partir, c'est mourir un peu,
C'est mourir à ce qu'on aime:
On laisse un peu de soi-même
En toute heure et dans tout lieu.

C'est toujours le deuil d'un voeu,
Le dernier vers d'un poème;
Partir, c'est mourir un peu,
C'est mourir à ce qu'on aime.

Et l'on part, et c'est un jeu,
Et jusqu'à l'adieu suprême
C'est son âme que l'on sème,
Que l'on sème à chaque adieu:
Partir, c'est mourir un peu . . .

261.34: By the way, how's Lucette?: This is the second time that Demon asks this question and again, no one answers. Lucette is an unmentionable subject, as is the "L" disaster.

262.7-8: I did not have a hat but I did have gloves: See **238.16-17**. Demon always wears gloves but never an overcoat (**238.16**). He apparently took the gloves off when he slapped Blanche's bottom (**242.26-7**).

262.10: I recall the cold of this flower, which I took from a vase in passing: Demon remembers his hands were bare because he had slapped Blanche's bottom (see **242.26-8**) because she had "garbled" his "simple request" and had broken the flower vase. The flower refers to Blanche who was cold to him.

262.17-8: his key 221: Demon is given traits of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes lives at 221 Baker Street. See Sherlock Holmes-like sentences or parodies of them spoken by Demon, such as **246.4: I'll show what a diviner I am: your dream is to be a concert pianist!** and **246.8-9: Observation is not always the mother of deduction.**

263.28: He tried to ask me . . . Oh it was not a nice family reunion. What exactly went wrong at dinner?: See **243.13**. Two possible questions might have been in Demon's mind to ask Van. One, "Do you know that Ada is your sister?" Two, "Are you having an affair with Ada?" The second is more probable. Demon is not really ready to ask him and that is why the evening was so awkward.

263.32: till dee do us part: refers both to death and the first letter of Demon's name, foreshadowing Demon's future role.

264.1: the law and the social lice: Pun on social "lies," as Brian Boyd points out also for **93.3: Two-Lice sheet.**

264.12: "Spies from Terra?": This mention of Terra comes so suddenly that it is a mystery why Ada associates Terra with the "two secret agents in an alien country" Van had mentioned. The only way we can understand so far is through the twin motif that runs throughout the novel.

264.13: I accept it as a state of mind: Perhaps implying that Aqua went mad because

she becomes aware of Terra's possibility.

264.16: another religious kiss: the first religious kiss was given her “morally” (line 6) and completes the religious theme in this chapter.

264.19-20: You will sit as you did four years ago, . . . drawing the same flower: See 99-100.

264.25-8: Lights in the rooms were going out. . . beryozī: First stanza of five written by Romanov in 1883, without any title. Tchaikovsky composed music to this poem. This poem is very similar to A.K. Tolstoi's 1871 poem “The Time Was Early in Spring” (“To bylo ranneyu vesnoy”). Skylarenko in Nabokv-L of November 14, 2002, gives his translation:

We were young and happy, by spring surrounded
But I was silent, afraid to speak
You looked at me without speaking
I couldn't believe what you held secret in your heart
Nightingale's song speaks to us and ends.

Rozī means “roses,” *beryozī* means “birches.” They are perfect rhymes. The roses-birches rhyme is also found in *Speak Memory* (Penguin Chapter 11, p. 171). *Eugene Onegin* also has the “rose” theme in Chapter 4, Stanza 42, where Pushkin rhymes *morosī* (extreme cold) with *rozī*.

264.30: Konstantin Romanov: Minor poet (1858-1915), nephew of Alexander II, honorary member of the Imperial Academy of Science, became its president in 1889. The real time of Terra at this point is 1888.

265.8: Memoirs of a Happy Chair: In *Lolita*, “Memoirs of a ...” is a title used by Humbert often to suggest pornographic content. Ada never wears panties. See the first picnic scene (87.7-9).