

Proposed Additions to *Ada* Online Annotations

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Family Tree

Adelaida Veen: Anagrams to “ADA EDEN ALIVE” or “ADA EDEN A VEIL”

Part One, Chapter 1

[5.31](#): **dove hole marked RE AMOR**: “RE AMOR” aptly anagrams to “ORA MER” meaning “now wed” in Italian, given the content of Marina’s message (agreement to marriage) and Dan’s location (Italy).

Part One, Chapter 3

[18.15-20](#): **It was owing...minds bien rangés (not apt to unhobble hobgoblins) rejected Terra...token of their own irrationality**: “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines” is a famous quote from “Self-Reliance,” an essay written by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1841. The implication here is that a deranged mind, not hobbled by insistent consistency, is able to accept the irrational notion of Terra.

[23.31](#): **“elmo”**: Exaggerated stereotype Italian pronunciation of English word “elm.”

Part One, Chapter 10

[61.10-14](#): **Elsie de Nord, a vulgar literary demimondaine...never to be procurable by Elsie**: “Elsie de Nord” = “LC *d’ignor*,” in other words, ignorant Literary Critic. In the plural form, “Elsies” = “literary critics.” Cf. The “vulgar” descriptor relates to another Elsie, Philip Rack’s wife, whose “LC” completes the transformation of Philip Rack’s anagram “PHALIC PRIK” into “PHALLIC PRICK” ([197.13](#)).

Part One, Chapter 13

81.13-14: *as if recalling other shores, other, radial, waves. Lucette, one fist on her hip sang a St. Malô fisher-song*: Evokes a solitary plunge into the water, i.e., Lucette's suicidal jump generating radial waves out to the American and European shores of the Atlantic, especially since "Lucette" begins the next sentence that links her to Chateaubriand's sister Lucile (from St. Malô), who may have committed suicide. This paragraph also alludes to Lady Erminin's suicide (81.07) as well as mention a "half-sibling" (81.06), which Lucette is to Van and Ada.

Part One, Chapter 21

133.26-27: *Judge Bald...Albino Riots of 1835*: Possibly a reference to William Archibald Spooner (1844-1930) of "spoonerism" fame, given Nabokov's proclivity to word play, Spooner's presence at Oxford during VN's Cambridge (U.K.) years, and as Spooner was described as an albino (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Archibald_Spooner, accessed 31 December 2020). Since the discussion here is about incest, the "Albino Riots" may play on the myth that inbreeding causes albinism.

Part One, Chapter 24

148.10-11: *the year of the obsolete brand being 1842*: 1842 was a red-letter year for beer lovers, as that is when the pilsner, the "original golden lager," was first produced by Josef Groll in the Bohemian city of Pilsen (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilsner>, accessed 31 December 2020). On Earth, at least, the 1842 brand could have been called obsolete in 1884, because "The brewery registered *Pilsner Bier B. B.* name in 1859. In 1898, they also registered names *Original Pilsner Bier 1842 Plzeňský pramen*, *Prapramen*, *Měšťanské Plzeňské*, *Plzeňský pravý zdroj* and finally *Pilsner Urquell* and *Plzeňský Prazdroj*, which are in use today" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilsner_Urquell, accessed 31 December 2020).

152.09-10: *She was, cette Lucette, like the girl in Ah, cette Line (a popular novel)*: Likely a reference to *The Princess Aline* by Richard Harding Davis, published in 1895, which was the 5th-best-selling novel in the U.S. that year (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Princess_Aline, accessed 31 December 2020). The title character was based on Princess Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt, who married Tsar Nicholas II to become Alexandra Feodorovna (1872-1918), the last Empress of Russia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_Feodorovna_\(Alix_of_Hesse\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_Feodorovna_(Alix_of_Hesse)), accessed 31 December 2020). Note the closeness of "Ah, cette, Line" to "*hachette* Aline," which could be translated as "little ax Aline," which, in turn, might be crunched to "little Alix." The transformation of "*hachette*" to "Ashette" also echoes the Lucette-as-Cinderella motif. The

murder of Alexandra by the Bolsheviks in 1918 makes her a martyr (although not officially recognized as such by the Russian Orthodox Church until 1981), which parallels Lucette's role as "martyr" to Van and Ada's "persecutions."

Part One, Chapter 25

[156.03](#): **N.A.**: Probably New Amsterdam (as a state name rather than a city name). "New Amsterdam" occurs once in *Ada*, in connection with "Madhatters" ([222.16-17](#)), implying that the term was used similarly in Antiterre as on our Earth.

Part One, Chapter 27

[168.09](#): **coral**: Consonant with the presumed (oral) act.

Part One, Chapter 31

[187.10-12](#): **a girl in black with bare arms: an old runabout, shivering at every jerk, was being cranked up by a hoary chauffeur**: The sentence is constructed here so that the old runabout could refer to the girl in black with bare arms, i.e., Ada. Interpreted that way, it could be read, "an old runabout [a girl who 'gets around'], shivering [presumably in delight] at every jerk, was being cranked up by a hoary [whoring] chauffeur [driver or stoker, one who 'warms up']"; thus, foreshadowing Ada's multiple infidelities. Cf. "horsetail" [whore's tale] ([188.09](#)).

[188.09](#): **brutal black horsetail**: Or, whore's tale, another foreshadowing of Ada's infidelities. Cf. "runabout" ([187.10-12](#)).

[193.25-27](#): **we shall live quietly, you as my housekeeper, I as your epileptic, and then, as in your Chekhov, "we shall see the whole sky swarm with diamonds"**: Quite apart from the Chekhov reference, the Beatles' song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" was released on 26 May 1967, during Nabokov's composition of *Ada*. It was part of their landmark album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Therefore, this sentence could be taken as a foretelling of the final years of Van and Ada's life, the pair living quietly, infirm Van being taken care of by Ada, with the spirit of long-dead Lucy (Lucette) looking down on them from a starry sky. John Lennon based the style of the song lyrics on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy_in_the_Sky_with_Diamonds, accessed 1 January 2021).

Part One, Chapter 32

197.06: **Pedro**: Given the high density of comic sexual wordplay in this chapter and the abundance of disguised phalluses (Cf. Philip Rack, 197.13, pianist, 200.11, *kok*, 202.04), it is worth noting that Peter, the English equivalent of Pedro, is slang for penis.

197.13: **Philip Rack**: Anagram of “PHALIC PRIK.” Poorly spelled on its own; however, it can be corrected to “PHALLIC PRICK” with the addition of “L” and “C” from his wife’s name, Elsie. Cf. Elsie = LC = literary critic (61.10-14). The phallic nature of Rack is obscured in his name, just as his real identity as a rival for Ada’s attentions are hidden behind a pathetic appearance from vain Van’s view. Cf. Pedro (197.06), pianist (200.11), *kok* (202.04).

199.33-200.07: **chlorinated celestino (“blues your bath”)...that Vere de Vere**: The yellow urine mixed with the celestino blue of the pool water results in green (*verde* or *vert* from Vere de Vere).

200.11: **the pianist, floating up**: “pianist” → “penis” Cf. Pedro (197.06), Philip Rack (197.13), *kok* (202.04).

201.1: **Herr Rack swam up again and joined Ada**: *Her* Rack...joined Ada, a subtle hint that the relationship between the two is more than meets the eye.

Part One, Chapter 35

217.24-26: **One day he brought his shaving kit along and helped her to get rid of all three patches of body hair**: “Now I’m Scheher,” he said, “and you are his Ada”: Shaving pubic and armpit hair is prescribed under Islamic law (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_hygienical_jurisprudence, accessed 1 January 2021).

Part One, Chapter 36

222.04-05: **mildly romantic in a maidenly headcocking way**: Could be restructured in a strongly sexual way as “maidenhead” and “cock.”

224.07-08: **The missing A eventually turned up under an Aproned Armchair**: “Aproned” recalls coachman Trofim Fartukov, as *fartukov* means “of aprons.” Furthermore, since he remarks to Van that he would not touch Blanche “even through a leathern apron” (300.14-15), we could surmise that the “aproned” chair was upholstered in leather. Also, given that this chapter focuses on Flavita/Scrabble, it is tempting to fantasize a game using the letters from APRONED ARMCHAIR. Let’s suppose that Ada and Van decide to play a lightning round using only seven

letters each. Van draws APRONED, Ada, ARMCHIR (an “A” is initially missing). Ada lets Van go first, as he is the weaker player. The 5 x 5 grid shown is centered on a Scrabble board. Pink is Double Word Score, dark blue is Triple Letter Score, and light blue is Double Letter Score.

Van: (too obvious of a move?) 12 pts

		A ₁		
		D ₂		
		O ₁		
		R ₁		
		E ₁		

Ada: (returning in kind) 18 pts

		A ₁		
		D ₂		
		O ₁		
		R ₁		
C ₃	H ₄	E ₁	R ₁	I ₁

Van: (mock-protests against her use of French) 2 pts

		A ₁		
		D ₂		
	N ₁	O ₁		
		R ₁		
C ₃	H ₄	E ₁	R ₁	I ₁

Ada: (calmly maximizing her points) 14 pts

	M ₃	A ₁		
	A ₁	D ₂		
	N ₁	O ₁		
		R ₁		
C ₃	H ₄	E ₁	R ₁	I ₁

Van: (not much choice) 7 pts

	M ₃	A ₁	P ₃	
	A ₁	D ₂		
	N ₁	O ₁		
		R ₁		
C ₃	H ₄	E ₁	R ₁	I ₁

Ada: (triumphantly discovering a lost “A” under her leather armchair) 14 pts

	M ₃	A ₁	P ₃	
	A ₁	D ₂	A ₁	
	N ₁	O ₁	R ₁	
		R ₁		
C ₃	H ₄	E ₁	R ₁	I ₁

Final score: Ada, 46 pts; Van, 21 pts

(Bonus: The letter tiles form a pleasingly symmetric shape resembling, perhaps, an old oak tree.)

Part One, Chapter 39

[266.16](#): **The smallest pine had its cicada**: “pine had its cicada” anagrams to “picnic site had Ada”

[267.05-06](#): **you don’t have to tear the waistband, you brute. “Carefully husked brute,” said Van tenderly**: “husked brute” anagrams to “rebuked thus”—which makes perfect sense in this context, since Van was just rebuked by Ada for being too rough.

[271.15](#): **Ada’s and Ida’s healths**: Ada + Ida = Aïda, a continuation of the Verdi (“Traverdiata” singing the Green Grass aria) theme (Cf. [269.34-270.03](#)).

[275.07-19](#): **the Count’s bursting face...grunting Count...unfortunate Count**: Van the narrator adds (veiled) insult to injury here by the repeated use of “Count” in reference to Percy, as it is phonetically close to “cunt.”

[281.09-10](#): **In the fatal course of the most painful ailments, sometimes (nodding gravely)**: “nodding gravely”—a pun on nodding toward the grave.

Part One, Chapter 40

[287.20](#): **I wonder...if I haven’t just seen a tadpole**: An anagram of “tadpole” is “old peat,” or, in other words Old Veen. The butler sees a tadpole-Van in his naïve youthful state still unaware of Ada’s infidelities, yet the anagrammatic transformation lets him foresee a Van made older and more worldly by the upcoming discovery of his love’s unfaithfulness.

Part One, Chapter 42

[310.12](#): **Dorofey Road**: Three paragraphs earlier, Van recounts a dream of Bouteillan explaining that the “dor” of the Ladore equaled the corruption of hydro in “dorophone” ([309.29-30](#)). Thus, together with the meaning of “fey” as (W2) “1 Fated or doomed to die; dying, also, enfeebled; delirious. *Archaic & Scot.*, Dorofey can be read as someone fated to die by water, i.e., Lucette, who commits suicide by drowning. The word “fey” occurs only twice in *Ada*: The first instance is earlier in this chapter, where it is used to describe Blanche ([308.20](#)), presumably in the sense of (W2) 4. Having the air of one under a doom or spell; otherworldly; elfin. As Brian Boyd’s annotations and afternotes make clear, Lucette and Blanche are thematically associated in many ways. In the second occurrence, Lucette’s lips are described as fey in the Ovenman’s Bar scene ([460.26](#)). The name Dorofey, therefore, is quite clearly linked to Lucette. The character Dorofey, Van’s “beefy-handed male nurse” (Cf. [312.17](#)), gets substituted for Tatiana, a “secret of feminine grace” that reminds Van of Ada, when he begs her to massage his legs. In this sense also, Dorofey is closely linked to Lucette, since, for Van, she is an undesired substitute for Ada.

[312.17](#): **Dorofey, a beefy-handed male nurse**: If Tatiana is a stand-in for Ada, then Dorofey, as an unwanted substitute for Tatiana is a stand-in for Lucette. The name Dorofey, read as doro = water and fey = fated to die, would mean “one fated to die by water,” an apt descriptor for Lucette. Cf. Dorofey Road ([310.12](#)).

[312.29-30](#): **must be climbing nowadays Wellington Mountain**: Perhaps the Antiterranean equivalent of our Mt. Washington, the highest peak in the northeastern U.S. and a popular hiking destination, given the transatlantic doubling “when Washingtonias were Wellingtonias” remark in I.13 ([81.20-21](#)).

[316.17](#): **Baron von Wien**: This makes Van a “wiener,” a fitting epithet for the poorly behaving (sexually harassing) Veen of this chapter.

[318.07](#): **Flesh Hall**: Can be spoonerized to “Flash Hell,” another apt item in Van’s list of pain-inducers. Also, perhaps, a touch of Kim Beahm’s flash camera.

Part One, Chapter 43

[323.14-20](#): **a deep hollow voice...Vanda Broom**: Hollow → Halloween, plus broom suggests a witch, reflecting Van’s fear that she might have been bewitching to Ada.