



## *Ada's "Last Tango" in Dance, Song and Film*

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## Ada's "Last Tango" in Dance, Song and Film

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Van's brief stage career as a maniambulist concludes with a London performance in which he dances a tango with a female partner from the Crimea. The unnamed song to which they dance, mostly widely known as "The Last Tango" is one that was very popular in Europe in the period before and after WWI. The Russian version, "Poslednee Tango," supplied the plot for a 1918 Russian film adaptation starring Vera Xolodnaya whose work was well known to both VN and his "Tamara" from their furtive afternoon trysts in wintry Saint-Petersburg cinemas. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Nabokov heard the song in his Crimean stay (if not before), and likely saw the film. Nor was this VN's only filmic experience in the Crimea. In *Drugie berega*, he describes a bizarre encounter with the leading movie star of the day—Ivan Mozzhukhin—in what is described as a rehearsal scene for a movie loosely based on Tolstoy's *Hadji Murad*, later released under the title *Der Weiss Teufel*. The paper examines the role of these musical and cinematic elements as they are interwoven into *Ada* and *Speak Memory*. The talk is accompanied by a recording of "The Last Tango" and fragments of the eponymous film, as well as the Mozzhukin feature.

Nabokov's reputation as a mandarin writer has led to a less than full appreciation of his oeuvre's lighter side. *Ada* is rich in allusions to popular song and dance, and film. "Scrabble" provides intimations from Terra; Marina has a long career on stage and screen; Ada has a dalliance in film, and Van has a brief fling as a music-hall eccentric dancer. Not only do they abound, but they are interwoven into the novel's themes and motif complexes<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Author's Note. This essay coordinated with both audio and visual materials. To hear and see these, the reader is referred to the Nabokov web page ZEMBLA at <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/tango1.htm>. The essay's endnotes contain

Van launches his short-lived, incognito stage career as the maniambulist Mascodagama during his student years at Chose University in England. His final performance takes place in a London theater and concludes with a tango in which he dances on his hands while wearing a mask and costume that reverse his torso so that his boot-shod hands serve as his dancing feet and his up-ended feet wear a bearded face mask: “For the tango, which completed his number on his last tour, he was given a partner, a Crimean cabaret dancer in a very short scintillating frock cut very low on the back. She sang the tango tune in Russian:

Pod	znóynīm	nébom	Argentínī,
Pod	strástniy	góvor	mandolínī
‘Neath	sultry	sky	of
To the hot hum of mandolina”			(I-30)

The song’s first line *Pod znóynīm nébom Argentínī* opens a famous tango—*Poslednee Tango* (The Last Tango).<sup>2</sup> It is Van’s last performance for he will soon be wounded in a duel and never again dance on his hands. *Le Dernier tango: Chanson argentine*, was assertedly composed in 1913 by Émile Doloire with words by Armand Foucher.<sup>3</sup> In fact, only the lyrics were new since the French “composers” had stolen the melody from a turn-of-the century tango by Argentine composer Angel Villoldo who had named it *El Choclo*, literally “The Ear of Corn” but, according to the composer’s sister, the sobriquet of a blond-headed local thug and pimp.”<sup>4</sup> The opening lines and refrain of the French variant are:

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inserted markers [ZEMBLA-1, 2.] directing the reader to the appropriate web materials.

<sup>2</sup> The song is known in Russian under three titles: *Poslednee tango*, *Pod znoinym nebom Argentiny*, and *Argentinskoe tango*. There are two sets of Russian lyrics: one by singer Iza Kremer and another by lyricist Pavel German. Both are very loose paraphrases of the French original and performers sometimes mix them. I am indebted to Professor Yuri Shcheglov for this information and to Pavel Greenberg, an Iza Kremer buff who shared information and enthusiasm, as well as Vadim Kozin’s recording of *Poslednee Tango*. I also thank Evgeny Belodubrovsky. Be it noted that Nabokov borrows only the first line and supplies a second line of his making.

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoire de la Chanson. 1100 chansons du Moyen-Age à 1919*, ed. Martin Penét (Omnibus: Paris, 2001), pp. 1221-22.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Selles, “El Choclo and its curious adaptation into English,” [www.todotango.com/english/biblioteca/cronicas/el\\_choclo.asp](http://www.todotango.com/english/biblioteca/cronicas/el_choclo.asp)

C'est sous le ciel de Argentine  
 Où la femme est toujours devine  
 Qu'au son des musiques câlines  
 On danse le tango!

The lyrics relate the tale of a Paraguayan visitor to Paris who sees the blond Rita, dancing the tango in a supper club. She becomes his adored mistress, lavishly squanders his fortune, then mocks and dumps him. Time passes and one night her abandoned lover appears at a night club she frequents and asks only for “a last tango.” As they dance, he strangles her.

Most Russians know the song with quite different lyrics:

В далекой знойной Аргентине,  
 Где небо южное так сине,  
 Там женщины, как на картине, —  
 Там Джо влюбился в Кло...

In a Russian version, Rita is renamed “Klo” (Chloe). Klo and her lover Dzho dance for coins in a sleazy Argentinian bar. There Klo is seen by a wealthy English tourist, a “Sir” no less, who whisks her off to a life of luxury in Paris. There she lives the high life in glamorous night spots, spending wildly and dancing until her former partner “Dzho” appears on the scene as part of an Argentine tango act. Once again she agrees to a last tango during which Dzho “with a diabolical smile plunges his knife into Klo’s throat<sup>5</sup>.” Nabokov obviously knew the French lyrics (as well as the Russian) since in *Ada* he (re-)names Van’s dance partner “Rita,” rather than the Klo of the Russian lyrics.<sup>6</sup> The Russian lyrics were created by the Odessa singer Iza Kremer. Kremer, who had studied voice in Western Europe, where she had heard the “intimate” songs of Montmartre as sung by Yvette Guibert who, incidentally, also makes a cameo appearance in *Ada*. Kremer, whose name appears on the cover of the sheet music, popularized *Poslednee Tango* on her tours to Petersburg and Moscow, and often performed it in Odessa, Kiev, and in the southern Crimea during the Civil War. Whether Nabokov first heard the song in Petersburg or in 1918 Yalta we shall never know, but the singer gave at least four concerts in Yalta during his time in the vicinity. Kremer never recorded in Russia, nor did she record *Poslednee Tango* in her years in

<sup>5</sup> For the lurid cover of the cover of the Russian sheet music for “The Last Tango,” see image at ZEMBLA-1.

<sup>6</sup> Both the French and the Russian lyrics may be found in Appendix I.

the US and then Argentina where she spent her last years.<sup>7</sup> Legend has it that she withdrew the song from her repertoire after the suicide of a despondent young officer in a Kiev audience.<sup>8</sup>



**Iza Kremer**

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<sup>7</sup> Information on Kremer is drawn from Boris Savchenko's *Estrada retro: Iurii Morfessi, Aleksandr Vertinskii, Iza Kremer, Petr Leshchenko, Vadim Kozin, Izabella Iur'eva*. (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1996), pp. 137-210. Since Kramer never recorded the song, I have provided a version recorded by her contemporary Vadim Kozin. A photo of Kramer and Kozin's recording may be seen and heard at ZEMBLA-2 & 3.

<sup>8</sup> "The Song That I Love—and Hate: Isa Kramer's New Year Story" by Prosper Buranelli. Probably in the *Chicago Tribune* of December 31, 1922. My thanks to Lois Barr who generously shared her Isa Kramer files with me. Professor Barr is the producer of the documentary "Isa Kramer: The People's Diva" (2000).



[http://www.stanford.edu/group/isaac\\_babel/gallery/iza\\_kremer.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/group/isaac_babel/gallery/iza_kremer.htm)

**Recording of Kozin singing *POSLEDNEE TANGO***

Iza Kremer's new Russian lyrics are credited for the plot line of a silent film starring Vera Kholodnaya, the most famous Russian female

star of her era. The film was appropriately called *Poslednee Tango*.<sup>9</sup> The film, released in May 1918, was silent, but it is safe to assume that the song was used as live musical accompaniment at each showing. Kholodnaya appeared in one last film that Nabokov may have seen. Following a performance in Odessa, she contracted Spanish influenza and died. Her elaborate funeral was the subject of a documentary news clip featuring her cortège and casket. *Poslednee Tango* flickers in and out of several Russian later novels. The most famous, Ilf and Petrov's *Zolotoi telenok* (1931) [The Golden Calf], was among the few Soviet novels that Nabokov enjoyed. The song appears in chapter XX entitled "Командор танцует танго," where the rogue hero Ostap Bender sings the first few bars to himself and is so carried away that even his samovar and typewriter join in the melody as he launches into a solo tango dance.<sup>10</sup> The scene and song appear in several screen versions of *Zolotoi telenok*. The youthful Vasily Aksyonov also drew on the song as the title and motif of a surreal travel piece about a 1963 film festival in Argentina.<sup>11</sup> As a curious aside, I note that the song, retitled "Kiss of Fire" and graced with new lyrics, enjoyed a renaissance in the summer of 1952 when it was Number One on the American Hit Parade for fourteen weeks. It was recorded by several pop singers, including Tony [Martin?] (who figures on *Lolita*'s Hit Parade) and Louis Armstrong (who receives a passing nod in *Pale Fire*). At the time Nabokov was on a butterfly expedition to Wyoming and *en route* was collecting pop music references from radio and juke boxes as background for *Lolita*'s adolescent world. Nabokov must have been bemused to recognize *Poslednee Tango* in its new osculatory incarnation and have been reminded of his own Crimean encounter.<sup>12</sup>

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9 *Velikii Kinemo: Katalog sokhranivshikhsia igrovykh fil'mov Rossii. 1908-1919.*, eds. V. Ivanova i dr. Moskva: NLO, 2002. Moscow film director Oleg Dorman generously provided me with the surviving fragments of Kholodnaya's film *Poslednee tango*. For a picture of Kholodnaya and stills from her first and last tango scenes, see ZEMBLA 4,5,6

10 "Pod nebom znojnoi Argentiny" in *Zhal', chto vas ne bylo s nami. Povest' i rasskazy* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1969), pp. 260-93.

11 "Pod nebom znojnoi Argentiny" in *Zhal', chto vas ne bylo s nami. Povest' i rasskazy* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1969), pp. 260-93.

12 "The Last Tango" is not the last tango in Nabokov's work: The young Martin Edelweiss in *Glory* fantasizes dancing the tango with a beautiful young Creole

Van's last tango performance as Mascodagama takes place in London. Rather oddly, the chapter (I-30) has a persistent "Crimea" motif. It is introduced as a part of Van's effort to conceal his show business activities from his tutors at straight-laced Chose where he studies Philosophy and Psychiatry in his attempt to probe the nature of the Terra/Antiterra phenomenon. To throw the Chose authorities off the scent he starts rumors that Mascodagama is from Tartary whence a number of touring circus performers have recently defected. Van suspects that a detective at Chose may have stumbled on his show business identity in investigating the attempted murder of one of Van's Chose mentors, the psychiatrist P.O. Tyomkin, by a dagger-wielding Prince Potyomkin from Sebastopol, Id. The double allusion is obviously to Gregory Potyomkin, who secured the Crimea for Catherine the Great and became its governor. The motif becomes fully explicit in Mascodagama's tango partner: "Fragile, red-haired 'Rita' (he never learned her real name), a pretty Karaite from Chufut Kale where, she nostalgically said, the Crimean cornel, kizil', bloomed yellow among the arid rocks, bore an odd resemblance to Lucette as she was to look ten years later. During their dance, all Van saw of her were her silver slippers turning and marching nimbly in rhythm with the soles of his hands." (*Ada* I-30) This allusion to Lucette is noteworthy. Although she dies by drowning, not by dagger, the remarked resemblance between her and "Rita" recalls Klo's death. The Klo-Lucette connection is also hinted by Prince Potyomkin's dagger.<sup>13</sup> It is also to be noted the shipboard film that Lucette and Van see before the aborted assignation and suicide is suggestively named "Don Juan's Last Fling."

The southern Crimea was Nabokov's first stage of exile. In *Drugie berega*, he describes the interlude of 1918 when the German occupiers

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whom he dreams of rescuing from a shipwreck (V); in *Korol', dama, valet*, Franz listlessly watches Marta tango to "Montevideo, Montevideo ist keine Gegend für meinen Leo" (XII). There seems to be no record of Nabokov doing the tango but he professed an interest in dancing in his youth and once foxtrotted with Pavlova in London. My thanks to Barbara Wyllie for her musical expertise.

13 Nabokov makes a similar wordplay with "Potyomkin" in *Lolita*. In Humbert's "cryptogrammatic paperchase" for Lo a clue based on Coleridge's "person from Porlock" is replaced in the Russian version by "и едва ли следовало быть знатоком кинематографа, чтобы раскусить пошлую подковырку в адресе: "П. О. Темкин, Одесса, Техас". My thanks to Alexander Dolinin.



established a degree of stability in the Yalta area where the exiles (which included many refugees from the Russian entertainment world, as well as the intelligentsia) sought interim respite. Cafes and theaters flourished. Much of the burgeoning Russian film industry had fled to Odessa and the Crimea. On one of his mountain butterfly forays near Yalta Nabokov encountered a rehearsal for a scene in a film based on Tolstoy's *Hadji-Murad*. Unaware of the filming, Nabokov had the surreal experience of seeing "a strange cavalier clad in a Circassian costume" trying to control his uncooperative horse. When reality reasserts itself Nabokov realizes that the distraught horseman in yellow face make-up is the leading screen idol of the day, Ivan Mozzhukhin, whom he and Tamara had often seen in the Saint Petersburg movie theaters. The film was not completed before both Mozzhukhin, his film company, and the Nabokovs fled the Crimea but the episode had an unrecorded sequel in Berlin.

Mozzhikhin continued his career in France and Germany where much of the Russian film industry carried on. It was not until 1930 that Mozzhukhin finally starred in a Franco-German film loosely based on Tolstoy's *Hadji-Murad* (1930) but that film, apart from Mozzhukhin's role, apparently had but modest connection with the Crimean scene that Nabokov recounts in *Speak, Memory*. It seems likely that Nabokov, who worked as a movie extra in Berlin, may well have seen the 1930 film entitled *Der Weisse Teufel* directed by Aleksandr Volkov who had often worked with Mozzhukhin in Russia. According to the location credits, *The White Devil* (or *Belyi d'iavol*) was shot chiefly in France and Switzerland with a few scenes in Saint-Petersburg.<sup>14</sup> Why did Nabokov chose to use the incidental Crimea encounter with Mozzhukhin in the "Tamara" chapter (XII) of his highly patterned autobiography? In their efforts to attain at least semi-seclusion for their romance, the lovers had spent many winter afternoons in Saint Petersburg's movie theaters where Mozzhukhin (and Vera Kholodnaya) were often on the screen. After the revolution, the young lovers ended up in the south of Russia: Volodya in the

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<sup>14</sup> The Crimean *Hadji-Murad* film apparently never got beyond the preliminary rehearsal stages. Russian film historian Neya Zorkaya tells me that it is unlikely that film shot in 1918 would still be usable over a decade later. My thanks to Ms Zorkaya and Moscow film maker Oleg Dorman. Further information on *Der weisse Teufel* may be found at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021539/>.

Crimea, and “Tamara” on the Ukrainian estate that her father managed. An erratic correspondence sprang up in which the former lovers, now both exiles, looked back on their romance as a golden age. In his more adventurous moods, Nabokov contemplated joining the White Army, not, he says, with the intention of liberating Petersburg, but of “reaching Tamara in her Ukrainian hamlet” (251)

How does the Mozzhukhin’s *Der Weisse Teufel* figure in this? Unlike Nabokov’s youthful daydream, Tolstoy’s novella does not feature any hair-raising rescue of a maiden in distress. The Chechen chieftain Hadji-Murad has defected to the Russians because of a falling out with Shamil, the legendary commander of the Caucasian tribesmen. He has, however, been forced to leave his mother, sons, and wife (in that order) in Shamil’s hands. Hadji-Murad offers his services to the Russians on the condition that they secure the release of his family. His new allies are distrustful and unwilling to take action. Finally Murad flees the Russian encampment hoping to rescue his family. The Russians pursue and he is killed. The Mozzhukhin film script is rather different. A love interest is inserted into Tolstoy’s austere tale. Hadji-Murad is sent to Saint-Petersburg by his new allies where the mountain chieftain even meets the tsar. But as time passes in this cold and formal setting he languishes until he meets a beautiful Circassian ballet dancer, Zaira, an Imperial favorite. She too longs for the freedom of her native Caucasus. The couple fall in love and Hadji-Murad flees Petersburg with Zaira.<sup>15</sup> Thus Murad/Mozzhukin, a.k.a. “Der Weisse Teufel” enacts the rescue of his beloved just as Nabokov daydreamed of rescuing Tamara. It is no coincidence that the name “Tamara” has strong Caucasian (and Lermontovian) associations and that Nabokov suggests that “Tamara had a drop of Tatar or Circassian blood” (230). The 1930 film is presumably what induces Nabokov to elevate his chance Crimean encounter with the costumed Mozzhukhin/Murad into a structural building block in *Speak Memory*, integrating it into the Tamara, Crimea, and exile themes.

The Crimean theme also figures in Van’s Mascodagama act prior to his tango with Rita:

The stage would be empty when the curtain went up;  
then, after five heartbeats of theatrical suspense,

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<sup>15</sup> For stills from the film showing Mozzhukin as the dashing Chechen chieftain and Zaira, see ZEMBLA-7 & 8.

something swept out of the wings, enormous and black, to the accompaniment of dervish drums .... Into the harsh light of its gaudily carpeted space a masked giant, fully eight feet tall, erupted, running strongly in the kind of soft boots worn by Cossack dancers. A voluminous, black shaggy cloak of the *burka* type enveloped his *silhouette inquiétante* ... from neck to knee or what appeared to be those sections of his body. A Karakul cap surmounted his top. A black mask covered the upper part of his heavily bearded face. The unpleasant colossus kept strutting up and down the stage for a while, then the strut changed to the restless walk of a caged madman, then he whirled, and to a clash of cymbals in the orchestra and a cry of terror (perhaps faked) in the gallery, Mascodagama turned over in the air and stood on his head. In this weird position, with his cap acting as a pseudopodal pad, he jumped up and down, pogo-stick fashion — and suddenly came apart. Van's face, shining with sweat, grinned between the legs of the boots that still shod his rigidly raised arms. Simultaneously his real feet kicked off and away the false head with its crumpled cap and bearded mask. (I-30)

These last words point to the meaning of Van's stage name: The "Masco"—referring to his mask; the gama, to his legs. The *burka* and the *Karakul* cap, both connected with Central Asia, reinforce the association with the Crimea and somewhat resemble the attire of Mozzhukin as Hadji-Murad. Van's exotic stance might also be understood as a geographic echo of the exile motif since the Crimea is southern counterpoint to Nabokov's beloved St. Petersburg. It is perhaps worth remarking that the Crimea vaguely corresponds to the sultry Argentine at the southern extreme of the New World.

Van's Mascodagama performance is not his first display of dancing on his hands. That takes place at the Ardis picnic celebrating Ada's twelfth birthday.

His reversed body gracefully curved, his brown legs hoisted like a Tarentine sail, his joined ankles tacking, Van gripped with splayed hands the brow of gravity, and moved to and fro, veering and sidestepping, opening his mouth the wrong way, and blinking in the odd bilboquet fashion peculiar to eyelids in his abnormal position. Even more extraordinary than the variety and velocity of the movements he made in imitation of animal hind legs was the effortlessness of

his stance; King Wing warned him that Vekchelo, a Yukon professional, lost it by the time he was twenty-two; but that summer afternoon . . . [the] fourteen-year-old Van treated us to the greatest performance we have ever seen a brachiambulant give. Not the faintest flush showed on his face or neck! Now and then, when he detached his organs of locomotion from the lenient ground, and seemed actually to clap his hands in midair, in a miraculous parody of a ballet jump, one wondered if this dreamy indolence of levitation was not a result of the earth's canceling its pull in a fit of absentminded benevolence. (*Ada*, XIII, pp. 81-83)

There is much that could be said about this passage. I refer the reader to Jansy Mello's observation about the allusion to Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Brian Boyd's amplification in *ADAonline*.<sup>16</sup> Other than underlining the programmatic importance of the passage, we offer the passing thought that the name "Vekchelo" derives from the Russian word for "person" (*chelovek*). The switched syllables echo Van's inverted stance. As we shall see, this inversion has both physical and aesthetic dimensions. "Van ascribes the satisfaction he derives from his stage act as belonging "to the same order as the one he later derived from self-imposed, extravagantly difficult, seemingly absurd tasks when... he sought to express something, which *until* expressed had only a twilight being (or even none at all—nothing but the illusion of the backward shadow of its imminent expression)... It was the standing of a metaphor on its head not for the sake of the trick's difficulty, but in order to perceive an ascending waterfall or a sunrise in reverse: a triumph, in a sense, over the ardis of time. Thus the rapture young Mascodagama derived from overcoming gravity was akin to that of artistic revelation.... Van on the stage was performing organically what his figures of speech were to perform later in life—acrobatic wonders that had never been expected from them and which frightened children" (184)

This is the aesthetic rationale for introducing the hand-dancing routine. The aesthetic aspect is, however, rooted in the physical or, more precisely, in sensory data as reshaped by physical stance or literal point of view. Nabokov was acutely aware of this literary device

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<sup>16</sup> Nabokv-L Archive: 25 April 2004 and **ADAonline** at <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/ada/index.htm>

(perhaps in part because of the then current discussion of *остранение* [making strange] among the Russian Formalists) and often used it in his own work. In Nabokov's 1926 story "Terror" [Ужас], the narrator describes:

how once in my childhood, on waking up, I raised my still sleepy eyes while pressing the back of my neck to my low pillow and saw, leaning toward me over the bed head, an incomprehensible face, noseless, with a hussar's black mustache just below its octopus eyes, and with teeth set in its forehead. I sat up with a shriek and immediately the mustache became eyebrows and the entire face was transformed into that of my mother which I had glimpsed at first in an unwonted upside-down aspect." (119)

The 1928 *King, Queen, Knave* affords another example:<sup>17</sup>

"When, having returned home around ten, Franz was proceeding along the corridor, he heard a muffled tittering behind the landlord's door. The door was ajar. He looked into the room as he passed. The old landlord, clad only in his underwear, was standing on all fours and, bending his grayish-ruddy head, was peering through his legs at himself in the cheval glass." (87)

This last example is of particular interest since Nabokov chose to paraphrase it in his Cornell lectures on Joyce. Brian Boyd in his *ADAonline* Annotations calls attention to Nabokov's lecture comments on Joyce's *Ulysses*. Noting Joyce's shifting styles in each chapter he remarks:

this constant shift of the viewpoint conveys a more varied knowledge, fresh glimpses from this or that side. If you have ever tried to stand and bend your head so as to look back between your knees, with your face turned upside down, you will see the world in a totally different light. Try it on the beach: it is very funny to see people walking when you look at them upside down. They seem to be, with each step, disengaging their feet from the glue of gravitation, without losing their dignity. Well, this trick of changing the vista, of changing the prism and the viewpoint, can be compared to Joyce's new literary technique, to the new kind of twist through which you see a greener grass, a fresher world. (LL 289)

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<sup>17</sup> My thanks to Jacob Wilkenfeld whose NABOKV-L posting (March 27, 2005) called my attention to this parallel.

Van's Mascodagama persona is another of *Ada's* inversions--one that has special resonance with its distorted mirror-image worlds--Antiterra and Terra. Van's tango is a manifestation of this multiverse--"an overcoming of gravity... akin to artistic revelation." Once again we see how Nabokov embodies his larger themes in even small details drawn from popular culture.

## APPENDIX I

### Последнее танго [*The Last Tango*] Lyrics by Iza Kremer

В	далекой	знойной	Аргентине,
Где	небо	южное	так сине,
Там	женщины,	как на	картине, —
Там	Джо	влюбился	в Кло...
Чуть	зажигался	свет	вечерний,
Она	плясала	с ним	в таверне
Для	пьяной	и	разгульной черни
Дразнящее танго...			
Но	вот однажды	с крошечной	эстрады
Ее	в Париж	увез английский	сэр...
И	вскоре Кло	в пакэновском	наряде
Была	царицей	на Bataille	de fleurs.
Ее	лицо	классической	камеи,
Ее	фигурка	в стиле	Tanagra
Знал	весь Париж	и любовался	ею
На Grand Prix в Opéra...			
В	ночных	шикарных	ресторанах,
На	низких	бархатных	диванах,
С	шампанским	в узеньких	бокалах
Приводит		ночи	Кло...
Поют	о страсти	нежно	скрипки,
И	Кло, сгибая	стан свой	гибкий
И	рассыпая	всем	улыбки,
Идет плясать танго...			
Но	вот навстречу	вышел кто-то	стройный...
Он	Кло	спокойно руку	подает,
Партнера	Джо	из Аргентины	знойной

Она в танцоре этом узнает...  
Трепещет Кло и плачет вместе с скрипкой...  
В тревоге замер шумный зал,  
И вот конец... Джо с дьявольской улыбкой  
Вонзает в Кло кинжал...  
В далекой знойной Аргентине,  
Где небо южное так сине,  
Где женщины поют, как на картине,  
Про Джо и Кло поют...  
Там знают огненные страсти,  
Там все покорны этой власти,  
Там часто по дороге к счастью  
Любовь и смерть идут...

Б. Савченко. *Эстрада ретро. Юрий Морфесси, Александр Вертынский, Иза Кремер, Петр Леценко, Вадим Козин, Изабелла Юрьева.* Москва: Искусство 1996. Стр. 202-203.

## Le Dernier tango (1914)

*Paroles* Armand Foucher – *Musique* Émile Doloire

R C'est sous le ciel de Argentine  
Où la femme est toujours devine  
Qu'au son des musiques câlines  
On danse le tango !  
Et dans la pampa qui se teint  
De mille feux la rude étreinte  
D'un amoureux n'est jamias feinte  
En dansant le tango ...  
Du Paraguay en parcourant le monde  
Un étranger vit un soir à Paris  
Dans un joyeux souper Rita la blonde  
Qui vint danser un tango du pays.  
Son coeur battit quand, souple comme l'onde,  
Elle tourna, perverse, en le frôlant.  
Et fou d'amour, il dit passionnément:  
Je t'aime ! et l'enlaça chantant :  
Refrain

Elle devint sa maîtresse chérie,  
Et, sans compter, pour ses moindres désirs,  
Semant son or, il lui donnait, folie !  
Tous les attraits du luxe et des plaisirs...  
Un jour, plus rien que le coeur de sa mie,  
En son amour il crut, le pauvre amant !...  
Comme il pleurait, elle dit en raillant :  
Si tu n'as plus d'argent, va-t'en !...

R Va sous ton ciel de l'Argentine  
Où les femmes sont si divines !...  
Au son des musiques câlines,  
Va danser ton tango !...  
Si tu trouves sur cette terre  
Une femme à l'amour sincère  
Tu me l'écriras ! (adieu ironique de la main)  
Je l'espère !...  
Bon sera !  
Beau danseur de tango !...

En plein Montmartre elle a repris sa vie  
Lorsqu'une nuit elle le revoit gueux ...  
Comme elle danse, il fait : Je t'en supplie,  
Un seul tango puis c'est fini nous deux ...  
Prends garde à toi, Rita ! souffle une amie ...  
Vois donc ses yeux ! Mais d'un air de défi  
Rita se livre et tous bas l'homme rit  
Disant parmi les chants, les cris :

R C'est sous le ciel de l'Argentine  
Qu'on sait se venger des félines !...  
Au son des musiques câlines,  
Danse donc le tango !...  
Tremble ! Enfin ! dans mes doigts de mâle  
Je tiens ton cou ! J'entends ton rôle  
Danse, danse ! Rita la pâle !...  
C'est ton dernier tango !! ...

Mémoire de la chanson : 1100 chansons du Moyen-Age à 1919.  
réunies par Martin Pénét. Paris: Omnibus, 1998.