

Annotations to *Ada* (15)

Part I Chapter 33

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The Kyoto Reading Circle

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Page and line references are to the Vintage International edition.

Part I Chapter 33

207.10: the battered anthology he had given her four years ago: In her last note to Van, Lucette confesses that the memory of this anthology was never lost on her: "I kept for years – it must be in my Ardis nursery – the anthology you once gave me...." (146). Its battered state perhaps suggests how hard she tried to memorize a little poem as Van ordered her to do.

208.15: She sat with a book in her lap: Probably the same book of poems by Brown that Van had given to Lucette.

208.24: "I have never clasped a wetter, limper, nastier forelimb": In the previous chapter at the pool, Rack has been described as "amphibious" (202.3) and like a "corpse" (202.32). There are frequent water images in this chapter (W.C., tap, "ripple" of Ada's laughter).

209.26: her hurrying up with her candlestick on the night of the Burning Barn: Cf. "Ada in her long nightgown passing by with a lighted candle in one hand and a shoe in the other as if stealing after the belated ignicolists." (116)

209.13: her "ideal peel, a yellow-red spiral which Lucette watched with ritual fascination: The spiral shape is echoed in the "cochlea" stairs with the yellow wall by which Van returns from the library, linking Van's memory to the night of the burning barn.

209.27: he with his dancing light behind her hurdies and calves and mobile shoulders and streaming hair, and the shadows in huge surges of black geometry overtaking them, in their winding upward course, along the yellow wall: A fabricated memory. In Chapter 19, the chapter of the Night of the Burning Barn, Van first follows Ada down the spiral stairs to the library and after their first love-making, they go back probably the same

way, but the scene is described only scantily and not at all with the power of the passage here: "Our two naked children, grabbing lap robe and nightdress, and giving the couch a parting pat, pattered back with their candlesticks to their innocent bedrooms" (121:33-122:1). The image of huge shadows overtaking them is symbolic and ominous.