

(1) Eversion: Reading Space and Time in *Ada, or Ardor*

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This paper takes up Roy Arthur Swanson's concept of "eversion" as a science-fictional trope in *Ada*, exploring its affordances as a spatio-temporal structure for the novel's historical and aesthetic dimensions. *Ada* takes place in Estotiland, Amerussia, where "the roubles rolled, and the dollars poured," as if, in Michael Wood's terms, "Nabokov's plight had become a nation." Constructed (anti-)historically but executed aesthetically, *Ada*'s eversion turns Terra inside out, revealing an Antiterra fractured by the same interstices.

Like the illicit act of incest around which *Ada* turns, the contemplation of the Cold War nuclear event is thrilling because its actualization is so inconceivable. The two warring personalities of Van and Ada's "cold game" stand in reactive tension to one another throughout the text, anodyne while separated, but, as Van himself observes, "in coming together, the harmless parts ma[k]e a lethal entity." Watching Ada scratch her bleeding bites, Van threatens to "slash [his] leg to match [hers]" in a kind of everted threat of nuclear annihilation, where the reactive equality of mutually assured destruction is invaginated, turned in upon itself.

While *Ada* seems to set up and insist upon its own binaries, its dualisms are multiplied beyond recognition through a metonymic chain of subjunctive possibilities in contact with the fabric of our own world. *Ada*'s speculative, alternative realities are structured along the complex intersections of its many aesthetic surfaces, and Ada, whose name means "ornament" or "decoration," figures as aesthetic proliferation itself (she is endlessly productive, even as her incest-borne sterility renders her utterly non-reproductive). "Staged in a dream-bright America," *Ada* actually explores the limitless universe of individual imagination, complicating its own seemingly dualistic Cold War imagery by positing aesthetic complexity as a fictional escape from the ideological paradigm of paranoia itself.