Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle

In February 1959, Nabokov was thinking about the mystery of time and making notes on its qualities and its texture (VNTAY 379–380), meditations that became Van Veen’s “The Texture of Time” section of Ada. Later that year, in November, he considered several titles for the novel that was developing: Dear Terra, Terra Incognita, Letters from Luna. For the time, he settled on Letters to Terra (VNTAY 401).

Years later, he pointed out in his 1969 interview with Time that “Ada was physically harder to compose than my previous novels because of its greater length. In terms of the index cards on which I write and rewrite my stuff in pencil, it made, in the final draft, some 2,500 cards which Mme. Callier, my typist since Pale Fire, turned into more than 850 pages. I began working on the Texture-of-Time section some ten years ago, in Ithaca, upstate New York, but only in February, 1966, did the entire novel leap into the kind of existence that can and must be put into words. Its springboard was Ada’s telephone call (in what is now the penultimate part of the book).”

By November 1967 part 1 was “more or less copied out in presentable form (but still many little chapters unfinished or missing)” (VNTAY 528). It was completed in February 1968. Véra wrote that month to Edward E. Booher, the president of McGraw-Hill, “…there now exist 500 pages typed and corrected which make up the first part of the book. VN believes that the rest of the book will make up another three hundred pages” (VNSL 427). By early August 1968, it was 671 pages typed and nearing the end of part 3. Nabokov finished part 4 on 5-Oct-1968 and part 5 on 16-Oct-1968. Final score: 2500 index cards, 880 typed pages. “I feel very empty and fragile,” he wrote to Frank E. Taylor, the editor-in-chief of McGraw-Hill’s trade book division (VNTAY 533, 534).


Edition Summary

A40.1 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle First edition (McGraw-Hill), 5-May-1969, 5 issues
A40.3 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle New book club edition (McGraw-Hill), date unknown, 1 issue
A40.4 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle First British edition (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), 2-Oct-1969, 2 issues
A40.5 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle First wrappers edition (Fawcett), May-1970, 5 issues
A40.6 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle First augmented edition (Penguin), 1970, 7 issues
A40.8 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle First American augmented edition (Vintage), Feb-1990, 1 issue
A40.9 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle New British augmented edition (Penguin), 2000, 2 issues
A40.10 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle New American library-bound augmented edition (Vintage), 2009, 3 issues
A40.11 Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle New British edition (Penguin), 2012, 1 issue
Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle

A40.1 First printing, 1969, cover, front

**First edition (McGraw-Hill)**

¶ First printing, 5-May-1969


**Title page:** VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | ADA | OR ARDOR: | A FAMILY | CHRONICLE | McGraw-Hill Book Company • New York • Toronto

**Copyright page:** ADA | Copyright © 1969 by McGraw-Hill International, Inc. | All Rights Reserved. | Printed in the United States of America. | No part of this publication may be | reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, | or transmitted, in any form or by any means, | electronic, mechanical, | photocopying, | recording or otherwise, without the prior | written permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc. | FIRST EDITION 45720 | Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 71-79763

**Typography/Paper:** Paper bulks 47 mm

**Binding:** Black cloth over boards with headband. Yellow endpapers. Top and bottom edges trimmed, fore-edge untrimmed. **Front cover:** all blind stamping VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | ADA | OR ARDOR: | A FAMILY | CHRONICLE. **Back cover:** gilt stamping 45720. **Spine:** running across all gilt stamping VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | fancy border | ADA | double fancy border | McGRAW-HILL.

**Covering:** White dust jacket with all black background. **Front cover:** yellow VLADIMIR | yellow NABOKOV | green ADA | white A New Novel | white by the white Author of LOLITA. **Back cover:** photo of author by Halsman white 45720. **Spine:** running across green ADA | running down yellow NABOKOV | running across white McGraw-Hill. **Front flap:** all white lettering $8.95 | VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | ADA | OR ARDOR: | A FAMILY | CHRONICLE | A LITERARY GUILD SELECTION. **Back flap:** list of novels by Nabokov | photo credit | publisher information.


**Price:** $8.95

**Description:** The copyright page of the Fawcett Crest edition gives a publishing date for this McGraw-Hill first edition of 5-May-1969 and a first printing date of Apr-1969.

**Works:**

1) Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle
¶ Second printing, 5-May-1969
As first printing, except
Copyright page: … | Second Printing, 1969 45720 | …

¶ Third printing, 5-May-1969
As first printing, except
Copyright page: … | Third Printing, 1969 45720 | …
Description: At Nabokov’s requests, this printing changed p. 120, line 4
from “Stanley” to “Speke” (VNSL 446) and changed p. 588, line 7 from
“described” to “descried” (VNSL 445).

¶ Fourth printing, Jul-1969
As first printing, except
Copyright page: … | Fourth Printing 45720 | …

¶ Fifth printing, Oct-1969
Unexamined
Description: Possibly an incorrect citation from the copyright-page of the
Fawcett Crest wrappers edition. I have not been able to find a copy of the
fifth printing.

A40.2 FIRST BOOK CLUB EDITION (MCGRAW-HILL)
¶ First printing, May-1969
As first edition, except
Collation: (20.8 X 13.7 cm), [1–20]^4, 320 leaves, pp. [i–xiv] [1–2] 3–345
603–626
Copyright page: \without the last two lines\
Typography/Paper: Paper bulks 45–47 mm.
Binding: Black cloth over boards with headband. Yellow-printed endpapers.
Top and bottom edges trimmed, fore-edge untrimmed. Top edge stained
green. Front cover: \all blind stamping\ VLADIMIR | NABOKOV | ADA
| OR ARDOR: | A FAMILY | CHRONICLE. Back cover: \No book club
blind stamp on back cover\.
Spine: \running across\ \all gilt stamping\ VLADIMIR | NABOKOV
| fancy border\ | ADA | double fancy border\ |
McGRAW-HILL.
Covering: White dust jacket with black background on front, back, and
spine. Front cover: \yellow\ VLADIMIR | \yellow\ NABOKOV | \green\ ADA
| \white\ A New Novel | \white\ by the | \white\ Author of LOLITA.
Back cover: \photo of author by Halsman\.
Front flap: \books by author\ | Photo by
Halsman | PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. | 1813
Contents: [i] half-title, [iii] blank, [iii] list of author’s books, [iv] blank, [v]
section heading, 3–345 text, [346] blank, [347] section heading,
Both book club editions were completely reset and, according to one observer, are full of errors.

Both book club editions were probably issued by the Literary Guild. According to the copyright-page of the Fawcett Crest edition, the Literary Guild edition was published in May-1969.

A40.3 NEW BOOK CLUB EDITION (McGRAW-HILL)
¶ First printing, date unknown

As first book club edition, except

Typography/Paper: Pages bulk about 37 mm.


Covering: Front flap: ‘without the number at the foot’. Back flap: ‘blank’.

A40.4 FIRST BRITISH EDITION (WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON)
¶ First printing, 2-Oct-1969

As first edition, except

Collation: (21.3 X 13.8 cm)

Title page: … | Weidenfeld and Nicolson | 5 Winsley Street London W1


Price: 42s, £2.10

Description: The last line of Part 1, p. 325, incorrectly has “…she was pregnant.” It should be “…he was pregnant.”
¶ Second printing, Nov-1969

As first printing, except

Copyright page: … | Second impression November 1969 | …

**A40.5 First wrappers edition (Fawcett)**

¶ First printing, May-1970

**Collation:** (17.8 X 10.6 cm), 448 pages

**Title page:** VLADIMIR NABOKOV | ADA | or Ardor: | A FAMILY CHRONICLE | A FAWCETT CREST BOOK | Fawcett Publications, Inc., Greenwich, Conn. | Member of the American Book Publishers Council, Inc.


**Binding:** White wrappers with black background. Cover design of butterfly decorated with erotic images.


**Series and Number:** P1409

**Price:** $1.25

**Works:**

1) Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle

¶ First Canadian printing, May-1970

As first printing, except

Copyright page: … | Printed in Canada |

**Binding:** Back cover: … | LITHO'D IN CANADA

¶ Second printing, Jun-1970

As first printing, except

Copyright page: … | Second Fawcett Crest printing, June 1970 | …

¶ Unknown printing, date unknown

As first printing, except

Copyright page: No date or printing number.

¶ Unknown printing, date unknown

As first printing, except

Copyright page: No date or printing number.

**Binding:** Cover design of butterfly decorated with erotic images on a white background.

**A40.6**

**First augmented edition (Penguin)**

- **First printing, 1970**
  
  **Collation:** (18.1 X 10.9 cm), 480 pages
  
  **Title page:** Vladimir Nabokov | Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle | Penguin Books
  
  **Copyright page:** … | Published in Penguin Books 1970 | … | Notes copyright © Vladimir Nabokov, 1970 | …
  
  **Binding:** White wrappers with cover art of a pink orchid. Back cover: … |
  
  Cover design by David Pelham | …
  
  
  **Price:** 40p 8/-
  
  **Description:** The last line of Part 1, p. 257 incorrectly is “she was pregnant.”
  
  The penultimate line of the book correctly has “descried”.

**Works:**

1) Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle
2) Notes to Ada

- **Second printing, 1971**
  
  **As first printing, except**
  
  **Copyright page:** … | Published in Penguin Books for sale outside the United Kingdom 1970 | … | Published in Penguin Books for sale within the United Kingdom 1971 | …
  
  **Description:** The misprint in the last line of Part 1, p. 257, is corrected to “he was pregnant.”

- **Third printing, 1980**
  
  **As first printing, except**
  
  **Collation:** (19.8 X 12.7 cm)
  
  **Copyright page:** … | Reprinted 1980 | …
  
  **Binding:** White wrappers with art of a detail from Untitled No. 1, 1962 by Richard Lindner
  
  **Price:** £2.25
Fourth printing, 1981

As third printing, except

Copyright page: … | Reprinted 1980, 1981 | …

Price: £3.95

Fifth printing, 1983

As fourth printing, except


Price: £4.95

Description: The copyright page claims that the date of the fourth printing was 1982, not 1981.

Sixth printing, date unknown

Unexamined

Seventh printing, date unknown

Title page: Vladimir Nabokov | Ada | or Ardor: | A Family Chronicle | \publisher’s device\ | Penguin Books

Copyright page: … | 10 9 8 7 | …

Binding: White wrappers with cover art of Sunset Reflection by Victor Borisov-Musatov.


Price: £7.99

NEW AMERICAN WRAPPERS EDITION (McGraw-Hill)

First printing, Nov-1980

As first edition, except

Collation: (20.3 X 13.3 cm), 600 pages

Copyright page: … | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 FGFG 8 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 | First Paperback edition, 1981 | … | ISBN 0-07-045723-9

Binding: White wrappers with rust background and white and black lettering.


Series and Number: McGraw-Hill Paperbacks

Price: $6.95

Description: Distributed in the last quarter of 1980.

FIRST AMERICAN AUGMENTED EDITION (Vintage/Random House, USA)

First printing, Feb-1990

Collation: (20.4 X 13.0 cm), 624 pages

Title page: Ada | or Ardor: | A Family Chronicle | VLADIMIR NABOKOV | VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL | VINTAGE BOOKS | A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE, INC. | NEW YORK

Copyright page: ‘publisher’s device’ | FIRST VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL EDITION, FEBRUARY 1990 | … | ISBN 0-679-72522-9 | … | 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Binding: White wrappers with cover photograph by Barnaby Hall.


Price: $12.95

Description: The typesetting of the first edition in 1969, A40.1, spawned two
Nabokov’s corrections of that typesetting were incorporated into the text of this edition and published for the first time:

- p. 8, line 20 – added closing quotation marks at end of line.
- p. 8, line 33 – added closing quotation marks after “like this”.
- p. 17, line 19 – changed “tending,” to “tending”.
- p. 17, line 19 – changed “no longer vicious” to “no-longer-vicious”.
- p. 19, line 11 – changed “Aqua Veen” to “Aqua Durmanov”.
- p. 20, line 7 – changed “libellula long” to “libellula-long”.
- p. 23, line 9 – changed “expensive,” to “expensive”.
- p. 24, line 4 – changed “ardor—to” to “ardor to”.
- p. 26, line 1 – changed “Sex” to “Sex (Scex)”.
- p. 37, line 6 – changed “parasol;” to “parasol,”.
- p. 46, line 25 – changed “dinner over” to “dinner was over”.
- p. 61, line 4 – changed “secretely” to “secretely”.
- p. 68, line 11 – changed “lirodendron” to “lirodendron”.
- p. 79, line 7 – changed “arrived to” to “arrived at”.
- p. 92, line 32 – changed “ins’t?” to “isn’t it?”.
- p. 104, line 27 – changed “almost,” to “almost”.
- p. 113, line 10 – changed “to Ardis,” to “at Ardis.”.
- p. 114, line 19 – changed “Exshco” to “Exshchyo”.
- p. 134, line 11 – changed “even” to “ever”.
- p. 140, line 19 – changed “dark,” to “dark”.
- p. 157, line 30 – changed “xlic” to “xlic”.
- p. 161, line 7 – changed “If the description” to “If he approaches the description”.
- p. 161, line 31 – marked for change “letter in second” to “letter in… second” but not changed.
- p. 190, line 24 – changed “stairs Ada!” to “stairs, Ada!”.
- p. 192, line 8 – changed “acrobatics” to “acrobatics”.
- p. 206, line 4 – changed “She” to “she”.
- p. 211, line 10 – changed “foliage” to “foliage,”.
- p. 218, line 11 – changed “paler” to “pallor”.
- p. 224, line 17 – changed “of raising” to “to raise”.
- p. 224, line 19 – changed “shows” to “show”.
- p. 224, line 23 – changed “carved,” to “carved”.
- p. 227, line 7 – changed “cies”), but the” to “cies”), the”.
- p. 227, line 21 – changed “ORHIDEYA” to “ORHIDEYa”.
- p. 227, line 31 – changed “Scrabbler.” to “Scrabbler.”.
- p. 245, line 34 – changed “rubbed” to “rubbed.”
- p. 246, line 1 – changed “fiercely” to “rubbed”.
- p. 253, line 2 – changed “Praslin’s” to “Praslins”.
- p. 259, line 27 – changed “gout” to “gout”.
- p. 259, line 29 – changed “politicians,” to “politicians,”.
- p. 279, line 4 – changed “asssez” to “asssez”.
- p. 292, line 24 – changed “‘T is” to “‘Tis”.
- p. 312, line 3 – changed “reason of” to “reason for”.
- p. 334, line 6 – changed “of having” to “for having”.
- p. 340, line 34 – marked for change “experimentators” to “experimenters” but not changed.
- p. 342, line 13 – changed “mirages,” to “mirages”.
- p. 342, line 15 – changed “terrace,” to “terrace”.
- p. 379, line 13 – changed “au monde” to “du monde”.
- p. 386, line 3 – changed “dren not” to “dren, not”.
- p. 392, line 26 – changed “taps,” to “taps”.
- p. 395, line 6 – changed “Strassburg.” to “Strasburg.”.
- p. 398, line 29 – changed “Châ.t.” to “Chat.”.
- p. 401, line 27 – changed “bruegelish” to “brueghelish”.
- p. 403, line 8 – changed “daughter) happens” to “daughter), happens”.
- p. 413, line 18 – changed “zernistay a” to “zernistaya”.

Further edition, A40.4 and A40.7.
In addition, there are corrections made to “Notes to Ada” as it first appeared in the first augmented edition, Penguin, 1970. The page numbers here are those of the page references in the notes, the first one for Penguin, the second for McGraw-Hill:

- p. 421, line 7 – changed “follows;” to “follows:”.
- p. 429, line 9 – changed “Permanent” to “Permanent,”.
- p. 430, line 14 – changed “matovay a” to “matovaya”.
- p. 431, line 18 – changed “nonentity,” to “nonentity:”.
- p. 431, line 22 – changed “sins:” to “sins,”.
- p. 431, line 23 – changed “soulless”; therefore to “soulless” and therefore”.
- p. 433, line 25 – changed “P.M.” to “A.M.”.
- p. 433, line 27 – changed “Avenue, an” to “Avenue—an”.
- p. 438, line 25 – changed “affascinati” to “affascinati”.
- p. 441, line 5 – changed “when” to “until”.
- p. 450, line 6 – changed “den, were” to “den were”.
- p. 451, line 32 – changed “stayed) his” to “stayed), his”.
- p. 461, line 27 – changed “than Queen” to “than the Queen”.
- p. 467, line 22 – changed “tone.”” to “tone,””.
- p. 469, line 5 – changed “make” to “makes”.
- p. 471, line 32 – changed “donations,” to “donations”.
- p. 473, line 1 – changed “Estotskiy a” to “Estotskiya”.
- p. 476, line 24 – changed “pozharskiy a” to “pozharskiya”.
- p. 477, line 31 – changed “konkie” to “donskiya”.
- p. 477, line 34 – changed “lay” to “lay,“.
- p. 479, line 19 – changed “sya” to “sya”.
- p. 480, line 29 – changed “hoty a” to “hotyva”.
- p. 498, line 4 – changed “pokonchila soboy” to “pokonchila s soboy”.
- p. 509, line 29 – changed “Sex Noir,” to “Sex (Scex) Noir,“.
- p. 510, line 30 – changed “contents,” to “contents”.
- p. 513, line 16 – changed “korrektiniy,” to “korrektini”.
- p. 515, line 1 – changed “hour” to “hour’s”.
- p. 515, line 32 – changed “1893,” to “1892,”
- p. 516, line 19 – changed “marks” to “marks”.
- p. 517, line 3 – changed “(what’s” to “(forget it, what’s”.
- p. 517, line 10 – changed “sel'skozyaystvenniy a” to “sel'skozyaystvennaya”.
- p. 517, line 12 – changed “kolleksiya” to “kolleksiya”.
- p. 523, line 7 – changed “‘I will not cheat the poor grubs!’” to “‘I will not cheat the poor grubs!’”.
- p. 524, line 19 – changed “wondered” to “wondered,.”
- p. 525, line 28 – changed “path” to “path,”.
- p. 525, line 29 – changed “staunchily” to “staunchly”.
- p. 526, line 18 – changed “neopravdannay a” to “neopravdannaya”.
- p. 540, line 12 – changed “temper,” to “temper”.
- p. 543, line 2 – marked for change “swapped” to “swatted” but not changed.
- p. 549, line 17 – changed “Synesthesia,” to “Synesthesia,”.
- p. 562, line 30 – changed “positions,” to “positions,”.
- p. 569, line 17 – changed “to sleep” to “on sleeping”.
- p. 577, line 20 – changed “detumify” to “detumefy”.
- p. 588, line 9 – changed “born” to “borne”.
- p. 588, line 7 – changed “described” to “described” (originally corrected in the third printing of the first edition).

In addition, there are corrections made to “Notes to Ada” as it first appeared in the first augmented edition, Penguin, 1970. The page numbers here are those of the page references in the notes, the first one for Penguin, the second for McGraw-Hill:

- p. 11/5 – changed “Phieeas” to “Phileas”.
- p. 20/17 – changed “braques” to “Braques”.
- p. 112/140 – changed “vendage” to “vendange”.
- p. 179/228 – changed “que” to “que”.
- p. 182/232 – changed “is dangerous” to “is a dangerous”.
- p. 228/288 – changed “sais” to “sail”.
- p. 237/300 – changed “marais noir” to “marée noire”.
**Works:**
1) Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle
2) Notes to Ada

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**A40.9**

**NEW BRITISH AUGMENTED EDITION (PENGUIN)**

¶ First printing, 2000

**Title page:** VLADIMIR NABOKOV | Ada or Ardor: | A Family Chronicle | 
Afterword by Brian Boyd | publisher’s device | PENGUIN BOOKS

**Copyright page:** … | Reprinted in Penguin Classics with a new Afterword, 2000 | 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 | …

**Binding:** White wrappers with cover photograph of a nude by Tony Stone overlaid with a photograph of bug wings by Sarah McGibbon

**ISBN/ISBN-13/SBN:** 0-14-118187-7

**Series and Number:** Penguin Classics

**Price:** £8.99

**Description:** Includes an afterword by Brian Boyd and “Further Reading”.

**Works:**
1) Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle
2) Notes to Ada

¶ Tenth printing, 3-Feb-2011

**Collation:** (19.8 X 12.8 cm), 496 pages

**Title page:** VLADIMIR NABOKOV | Ada or Ardor: | A Family Chronicle | 
publisher’s device | PENGUIN BOOKS

**Copyright page:** PENGUIN CLASSICS | … | Reissued in Penguin Classics 2011 | 10 | … | 978-0-141-18187-5 | …

**Binding:** White wrappers. *Front cover*: art by Agnès Decourchelle of two children and a scrabble set against a patterned background.


**Series and Number:** Penguin Classics/Modern Classics

**Price:** £15.00

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**A40.10**

**NEW AMERICAN AUGMENTED EDITION (VINTAGE/RANDOM HOUSE, USA)**

¶ First printing, 2009

As *Vintage 1990 edition, except*

**Copyright page:** … | 13579C8642

**Binding:** White wrappers. *Front cover*: art of a specimen box filled with the cutout letters of the title, and the author’s name, by Chip Kidd, cover photograph by Alison Gootee.


**Price:** $18.00

¶ Second printing, date unknown

As *first printing, except*

**Copyright page:** … | 3579C8642 | …

¶ Library-bound second printing, 2009

As *second printing, except*

**Binding:** Pictorial boards. Compared to a second printing of the trade wrappers issue, the back cover has a different ISBN, there is no price, and
the logo is that of “Paw Prints”, a distribution imprint of Baker & Taylor.


Description: The contents of this library-bound issue are exactly the same as for a second printing of the trade wrappers issue. Only the pictorial boards binding is different, particularly on the back cover. There may be other printings in the same library binding.

NEW BRITISH EDITION (PENGUIN)

First printing, 2012

Collation: (19.0 X 11.7 cm), 712 pages

Title page: VLADIMIR NABOKOV | Ada or Ardor | A Family Chronicle | publisher’s device | PENGUIN | rule | CLASSICS


Binding: Pale gray paper over boards with black stamping

Covering: White dust jacket with pale blue borders and black and pale blue lettering


Series and Number: Penguin Classics, 14

Price: £20.00

Description: One of 22 hardcover volumes in a uniform set of Nabokov editions published by Penguin Classics, an imprint of Penguin Books.

Works:

1) Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle
2) Notes to Ada

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(Draft of 19 Dec 2012)