The author of a review of Van’s novel *Letters from Terra*, the poet Max Mispel is a member of the German Department at Goluba University (2.2).In Ilf and Petrov’s novel *Dvenadtsat’ stuliev* (“The Twelve Chairs,” 1928) Ostap Bender calls Varfolomey Korobeynikov (the compiler of the Mirror of Life Index) *goluba* (“my dear, chum”):

— А деньги?  
— Какие деньги? — сказал Остап, открывая входную дверь. — Вы, кажется, спросили про какие-то деньги?  
— Да как же! За мебель! За ордера!  
— Голуба, — пропел Остап, — ей-богу, клянусь честью покойного батюшки. Рад душой, но нету, забыл взять с текущего счёта...

"What about the money?"

"What money?" said Ostap, opening the door. "Did I hear you say something about money? "

"Of course! For the furniture; for the orders!"

"Honestly, chum," crooned Ostap, "I swear by my late father, I'd be glad to, but I haven't any; I forgot to draw any from my current account." (Chapter 11: “The Mirror of Life Index”)

In the same conversation with Varfolomey Korobeynikov Ostap Bender mentions Maupassant:

– Ближе к телу, как говорит Мопассан. Сведения будут оплачены.

"Closer to the body, as Maupassant used to say. The information will be paid for." (ibid.)

Mlle Larivière’s story *La Rivière de Diamants* that she reads at the picnic on Ada’s twelfth birthday and publishes under the penname Guillaume de Monparnasse (the leaving out of the ‘t’ made it more *intime*, 1.31) corresponds to Maupassant’s story *La Parure* (1884). Describing the conversation on the return way from the picnic site, Van calls Mlle Larivière “Mlle Laparure:”

‘I can never get used *(m’y faire)’* said Mlle Laparure, ‘to the contrast between the opulence of nature and the squalor of human life. See that old moujik *décharné* with that rent in his shirt, see his miserable *cabane.* And see that agile swallow! How happy, nature, how unhappy, man! Neither of you told me how you liked my new story? Van?’

‘It’s a good fairy tale,’ said Van.

‘It’s a fairy tale,’ said careful Ada. (1.13).

*Alfavit – zerkalo zhizni* (“The Mirror of Life Index”), a chapter in “The Twelve Chairs,” brings to mind Flavita (the Russian Scrabble that Van, Ada and Lucette play in Ardis). *Alfavit* means in Russian “alphabet.” But, according to Van, *alfavit* is an old Russian game of chance and skill:

That was why she [Ada] admitted ‘Flavita.’ The name came from *alfavit,* an old Russian game of chance and skill, based on the scrambling and unscrambling of alphabetic letters. It was fashionable throughout Estoty and Canady around 1790, was revived by the ‘Madhatters’ (as the inhabitants of New Amsterdam were once called) in the beginning of the nineteenth century, made a great comeback, after a brief slump, around 1860, and now a century later seems to be again in vogue, so I am told, under the name of ‘Scrabble,’ invented by some genius quite independently from its original form or forms. (1.36)

1860 is the year of Chekhov’s birth. A set of Flavita was given to Marina’s children by Baron Klim Avidov (anagram of Vladimir Nabokov):

The set our three children received in 1884 from an old friend of the family (as Marina’s former lovers were known), Baron Klim Avidov, consisted of a large folding board of saffian and a boxful of weighty rectangles of ebony inlaid with platinum letters, only one of which was a Roman one, namely the letter J on the two joker blocks (as thrilling to get as a blank check signed by Jupiter or Jurojin). It was, incidentally, the same kindly but touchy Avidov (mentioned in many racy memoirs of the time) who once catapulted with an uppercut an unfortunate English tourist into the porter’s lodge for his jokingly remarking how clever it was to drop the first letter of one’s name in order to use it as a *particule,* at the Gritz, in Venezia Rossa. (ibid.)

Gritz hints at the luxurious Ritz hotels but also brings to mind Madame Gritsatsuev, “a passionate woman, a poet’s dream” whom Ostap Bender marries in Stargorod.

*Goluba* (and its more tender form *golubka*) comes from *golub’* (pigeon, dove). *Columbus* being Latin for “pigeon, dove,” the Antiterran Goluba University seems to correspond to Columbus University in our world. Btw., it seems that Christopher Columbus did not exist on Antiterra (aka Demonia, Earth’s twin planet on which *Ada* is set). In a conversation in Paris (also known as Lute on Antiterra) Greg Erminin asks Van if Ada married Christopher Vinelander or his brother (3.2). According to Van, the fabulous ancestor of Ada’s husband (Andrey Vinelander, an Arizonian cattle-breeder) “discovered our country.” (5.6)

In his poem *Nyane* (“To my Nurse,” 1826) Pushkin calls his nurse Arina Rodionovna *golubka dryakhlaya moya* (my senile dove):

Подруга дней моих суровых,  
Голубка дряхлая моя!  
Одна в глуши лесов сосновых  
Давно, давно ты ждешь меня.  
Ты под окном своей светлицы  
Горюешь, будто на часах,  
И медлят поминутно спицы  
В твоих наморщенных руках.  
Глядишь в забытые вороты  
На черный отдаленный путь:  
Тоска, предчувствия, заботы  
Теснят твою всечасно грудь.  
То чудится тебе...

The senile dove of my first days and nights,  
Affectionate playmate in severe days of mine!  
You are alone these days and so lonely,  
While waiting for so very long time for me.  
While sitting near a small window among pine woods, indoor’s,  
You are so sad, your knitting’s not being done,  
That knitting-pins are always slowing in   
In your decrepit hands being stopped in dream  
One second and another as if it were in a hope to meet  
At the forgotten gate one day the one to come,  
Got lost forever the dark way, was gone on them,  
As if it were not just your knitting-pins,  
But something that’s alive and animated one.  
You are so sad and missing me in ever troubles,  
That your dote soul is full of grievous thoughts,  
A feeling of an endless sadness…

(tr. Trofim Kvn)

Van’s black wet-nurse, Ruby Black, seems to blend Pushkin (who had Ethiopian blood) with his nurse Arina Rodionovna. In Moscow Bender and Vorob’yanonov stay at “the Brother Berthold Schwarz Hostel” (as Bender calls the Semashko hostel). *Schwarz* is German for “black.” Berthold Schwarz (also known as Berthold the Black) was a legendary German alchemist of the late 14th century who invented the gunpowder.

In his review of Van’s novel *Letters from Terra* Max Mispel wonders if Voltemand’s real name is Mandalatov. According to Van, Aqua’s “real destination was Terra the Fair and thither she trusted she would fly on libellula long wings when she died” (1.3). In Canto Three of his poem John Shade (the poet in VN’s novel *Pale Fire*, 1962) speaks of IPH (a lay Institute of Preparation for the Hereafter) and mentions “Terra the Fair, an orbicle of jasp.” Shade’s mad commentator, Kinbote imagines that he is Charles the Beloved, the last self-exiled king of Zembla.

Mandalatov + Zembla + um + Arina = mandala + Zembulatov + Marina/Armina/Mirana/Ariman

um – mind, intellect; wits; *Gore ot uma* (“Woe from Wit,” 1824) is a play in verse by Griboedov; in Pushkin’s poem *Ne day mne Bog soyti s uma…* (“The Lord Forbid my Going Mad…” 1833) the epithet *yarkiy* (bright) in the line *ne yarkiy golos solov’ya* (not a nightingale’s bright voice) signals Pushkin’s awareness of Batyushkov’s madness

Zembulatov – in a letter of the end of February, 1883, to his brother Chekhov mentions Zembulatov, his schoolmate and fellow student who, according to Chekhov, does not deserve a fool’s cap only because he is not familiar with Darwin’s theory. In the next sentence Chekhov cites letters of the Russian alphabet (A, B, V… Zh):

Хорош бы я был, если бы надел на Зембулатова дурацкий колпак за то, что он незнаком с Дарвином! Он, воспитанный на крепостном праве, враг крепостничества — за одно это я люблю его! А если бы я стал отрекаться от А, Б, В... Ж, от одного, другого, третьего, пришлось бы покончить одиночеством!

It seems that Vasiliy Semi-Bulatov, the name of the author of the letter in Chekhov’s story *Pis’mo k uchyonomu sosedu* (“A Letter to the Learned Neighbor,” 1880), hints at Vasiliy Zembulatov. In his letter Vasiliy Semi-Bulatov writes:

Вы изволили сочинить что человек произошёл от обезьянских племён мартышек орангуташек и т. п. Простите меня старичка, но я с Вами касательно этого важного пункта не согласен и могу Вам запятую поставить. Ибо, если бы человек, властитель мира, умнейшее из дыхательных существ, происходил от глупой и невежестпеннои обезьяны то у него был бы хвост и дикий голос. Если бы ми происходили от обезьян, то нас теперь водили бы по городам Цыганы на показ и мы платили бы деньги за показ друг друга, танцуя по приказу Цыгана или сидя за решеткой в зверинце. Разве мы покрыты кругом шерстью? Разве мы не носим одеяний, коих лишены обезьяны? Разве мы любили бы и не презирали бы женщину, если бы от нее хоть немножко пахло бы обезьяной, которую мы каждый вторник видим у Предводителя Дворянства? Если бы наши прародители происходили от обезьян, то их не похоронили бы на христианском кладбище; мой прапрадед например Амвросий, живший во время оно в царстве Польском, был погребен не как обезьяна, а рядом с абатом, католическим Иоакимом Шостаком, записки коего об умеренном климате и неумеренном употреблении горячих напитков хранятся еще доселе у брата моего Ивана (Маиора). Абат значит католический поп.

You deigned to make up a theory that man has his origins in monkey tribes, marmosets, orangutans etc. Forgive me as I am a little old man, but in regards of this Your very important point I can not agree with You and I would like to put a comma there. Because if a man, the ruler of the world, the smartest of the breathing creatures was originated from a stupid and ignorant monkey then he would have a tail and a wild voice. If we were originated from the monkeys then we would be walked and shown around the cities by Gypsies, and we would pay money to look at each other, dancing when Gypsies order us to or we would be sitting behind bars in menagerie. Are we covered in fur? Didn’t You ever think why humans have clothes and monkeys don’t? Do You really think that we would love and not despise a woman if she smelled even a little like the monkey which we see every Tuesday at the Marshal’s of Nobility? If our great-grandparents were originated from monkeys then they wouldn’t be buried at the Christian cemetery; my great-grandparent for example Amvrosiy who lived in Polish Kingdom wasn’t buried like a monkey, he was buried near catholic abbot Ioakim Shostak whose notes about moderate climate and abuse of hard liquor still kept at my brother’s Ivan (Major). Abbot means Catholic Pope.

In Ilf and Petrov’s “The Twelve Chairs” Kisa Vorob’yaninov (one of the three diamond hunters) is the former Marshal of Nobility. The surname Vorob’yaninov comes from *vorobey* (sparrow).

…Вы сочинили и напечатали в своём умном соченении, как сказал мне о. Герасим, что будто бы на самом величайшем светиле, на солнце, есть чёрные пятнушки. Этого не может быть, потому что этого не может быть никогда.

…You made up and printed in Your smart essay as Father Gerasim told me, that on the greatest luminary, the sun, there are small black spots. It cannot be true, because it never can be true.

In *Tayna tryokh. Egipet i Vavilon* (“The Secret of Three. Egypt and Babylon,” 1925) Merezhkovski quotes Goethe’s words quoted by Eckermann in his “Conversations with Goethe” (1836): “three will never be one.” The three main characters in *Pale Fire*, Shade, Kinbote and Gradus, seem to be one and the same person. The name Semi-Bulatov also brings to mind Semiramis (the legendary Assyrian queen) and her suspended gardens (one of the seven wonders of the world). *Sem’* is Russian for “seven.” In his book Merezhkovski mentions the Egyptian pyramids and Babylonian seven-storied tower, ziggurat, and quotes Schelling’s formula of the world: 4 + 3 = 7. On Antiterra Chekhov’s play “The Three Sisters” (1901) is known as *Four Sisters* (2.1, 2.9). The name of the fourth sister Varvara has seven letters.

In a letter of Feb. 6, 1891, to Suvorin Chekhov mentions Goethe and Eckermann:

Гёте и Эккерман легки на помине. Я недавно упоминал об их разговорах в своей великой повести. Называю её великою, потому что она в самом деле выходит великою, т. е. большою и длинною, так что даже мне надоело писать её. Пишу громоздко и неуклюже, а главное — без плана. Ну, да всё равно. Пусть Буренин получит ещё новое доказательство, что молодые писатели ни к чёрту не годятся.

According to Chekhov, he recently mentioned Goethe’s and Eckermann’s conversations in his novella *Duel’* (“The Duel,” 1891). In a conversation with Samoylenko (whose patronymic, Davidovich, brings to mind Baron Klim Avidov) Laevski (the main character in “The Duel”) mentions *klok zemli* (a piece of land):

Будущее наше рисовалось нам так: вначале на Кавказе, пока мы ознакомимся с местом и людьми, я надену вицмундир и буду служить, потом же на просторе возьмём себе клок земли, будем трудиться в поте лица, заведём виноградник, поле и прочее.

“We pictured our future like this: in the beginning, in the Caucasus, while we acquaint ourselves with the place and the people, I'll put on my uniform and serve, then, once we're free to do so, we'll acquire a piece of land, we'll labor in the sweat of our brow, start a vineyard, fields, and so on.” (Chapter I)

In her last note Aqua (Marina’s mad twin sister) mentions *klok* of a *chelovek*:

The hands of a clock, even when out of order, must know and let the dumbest little watch know where they stand, otherwise neither is a dial but only a white face with a trick mustache. Similarly, *chelovek* (human being) must know where he stands and let others know, otherwise he is not even a *klok* (piece) of a *chelovek,* neither a he, nor she, but ‘a tit of it’ as poor Ruby, my little Van, used to say of her scanty right breast. (1.3)

In Chekhov’s story *Chelovek v futlyare* (“The Man in a Case,” 1898) Belikov’s favorite word is *anthropos* (“human being” in Greek). According to Mlle Larivière, Ardis (Daniel Veen’s family estate) means in Greek “point of an arrow” (1.36). In a letter of January 8, 1887, to his brother Chekhov mentions a poisoned arrow in a woodcock’s back passage:

Я безденежен до мозга костей. Если у тебя есть человеколюбие в животе, то снизойди к моей унизительной просьбе: немедленно, со скоростью вальдшнепа, которому всунули в задний проход ядовитую стрелу, надевай шапку и мчись:

а) в контору «Нового времени» (Невский 38) и получи там гонорар за рассказ «На пути».

b) в «Петербургскую газету» (Симеоновский пер.) и получи 107 рублей по счету, который оною конторою уже получен.

Chekhov’s story *Tapyor* (“The Ballroom Pianist,” 1885) brings to mind Tapper, Van’s adversary in a pistol duel, a member of the Do-Re-La country club (1.42). The name of Tapper’s second, Arwin Birdfoot, seems to hint at Darwin. In Canto One of his poem Shade twice repeats the phrase “arrow pointed back” and mentions a pheasant’s feet:

And in the morning, diamonds of frost  
Express amazement: Whose spurred feet have crossed  
From  left to right the blank page of the road?  
Reading from left to right in winter's code:  
A dot, an arrow pointing back; repeat:  
Dot, arrow pointing back... A pheasant's feet!  
Torquated beauty, sublimated grouse,  
Finding your China right behind my house.  
Was he in *Sherlock Holmes*, the fellow whose  
Tracks pointed back when he reversed his shoes? (ll. 19-28)

Describing his first arrival at Ardis, Van mentions pheasants in a big cage that he saw ten years ago:

Some ten years ago, not long before or after his fourth birthday, and toward the end of his mother’s long stay in a sanatorium, ‘Aunt’ Marina had swooped upon him in a public park where there were pheasants in a big cage. She advised his nurse to mind her own business and took him to a booth near the band shell where she bought him an emerald stick of peppermint candy and told him that if his father wished she would replace his mother and that you could not feed the birds without Lady Amherst’s permission, or so he understood. (1.5)

Tresham (the artist mentioned by Van in one of the next paragraphs) is an anagram of Amherst:

Marina’s portrait, a rather good oil by Tresham, hanging above her on the wall, showed her wearing the picture hat she had used for the rehearsal of a Hunting Scene ten years ago, romantically brimmed, with a rainbow wing and a great drooping plume of black-banded silver; and Van, as he recalled the cage in the park and his mother somewhere in a cage of her own, experienced an odd sense of mystery as if the commentators of his destiny had gone into a huddle. Marina’s face was now made up to imitate her former looks, but fashions had changed, her cotton dress was a rustic print, her auburn locks were bleached and no longer tumbled down her temples, and nothing in her attire or adornments echoed the dash of her riding crop in the picture and the regular pattern of her brilliant plumage which Tresham had rendered with ornithological skill. (ibid.)

In Chekhov’s novel *Drama na okhote* (“The Shooting Party,” 1884) Kamyshev (the narrator and main character) investigates his own crime. In VN’s novel *Otchayanie* (“Despair,” 1934) Hermann Karlovich (the narrator and main character who killed Felix, a tramp whom Hermann believes to be his perfect double) regrets that Conan Doyle has missed the opportunity to make Sherlock Holmes investigate Dr Watson’s crime. It seems that, to be completed, Shade’s poem needs not only Line 1000 (“I was the shadow of the waxwing slain”), but also a coda (Line 1001: “By its own double in the windowpane”).

Armina – Demon Veen’s villa Armina on the Riviera (1.2, et passim)

Mirana – in VN’s novel *Lolita* (1955) the Hotel Mirana on the Riviera that belonged to Humbert Humbert’s father (1.2)

Ariman – Ahriman (the evil spirit in Zoroastrianism) in Russian spelling; in his story *Krasnyi tsvetok* (“A Red Flower,” 1883), in which the action takes place in a madhouse, Garshin mentions *Ariman*:

Цветок в его глазах осуществлял собою всё зло; он впитал в себя всю невинно пролитую кровь (оттого он и был так красен), все слёзы, всю желчь человечества. Это было таинственное, страшное существо, противоположность Богу, Ариман, принявший скромный и невинный вид.

The flower, as he saw it, ruled over evil; it absorbed in itself all innocently-shed blood (that is why it was so red), all tears and all the gall of humanity. It was an awful and mysterious being, the antithesis of God, an Ahriman presenting a most unassuming and innocent appearance. (Chapter V)

Garshin’s story is dedicated to the memory of Ivan Turgenev. In a letter of Oct. 15, 1889, to Suvorin Chekhov says that in the Russian medicine Dr. Botkin is what Turgenev is in literature:

Что с Боткиным? Известие о его болезни мне очень не понравилось. В русской медицине он то же самое, что Тургенев в литературе...

In March of 1888 Vsevolod Garshin committed suicide by throwing himself over the banisters. One of Van’s patients at Kingston Clinic, Mr. Arshin suffers from acrophobia (a fear of heights). In his Commentary Kinbote says that “of the note very many ways known of shedding one's body, falling, falling, falling is the supreme method, but you have to select your sill or ledge very carefully so as not to hurt yourself or others” (note to Line 493). Shade’s, Kinbote’s and Gradus’ “real” name seems to be Vsevolod Botkin. An American scholar of Russian descent, Professor Vsevolod Botkin went mad and became Shade, Kinbote and Gradus after the tragic death of his daughter Nadezhda (Hazel Shade of Kinbote’s Commentary). Garshin is the author of *Nadezhda Nikolaevna* (1885). In a letter of August 21, 1831, to Pushkin Gogol calls Pushkin’s wife Natalia Nikolaevna “Nadezhda Nikolaevna:”

Прощайте. Да сохранит вас бог вместе с Надеждою Николавною от всего недоброго и пошлёт здравие на веки. А также да будет его благословение и над Жуковским.

Gogol’s story *Nos* (“The Nose,” 1835) ends as follows:

А, однако же, при всём том, хотя, конечно, можно допустить и то, и другое, и третье, может даже... ну да и где ж не бывает несообразностей?.. А всё, однако же, как поразмыслишь, во всём этом, право, есть что-то. Кто что

ни говори, а подобные происшествия бывают на свете, - редко, но бывают.

Yet, even considering these things; even conceding this, that, and the other (for where are not incongruities found at times?) there may have, after all, been something in the affair. For no matter what folk say to the contrary, such affairs do happen in this world — rarely of course, yet none the less really.

If the nose of Major Kovalyov could leave his face and live a life of its own, why cannot Botkin fall apart and become three different men?

*Nos* is *son* (sleep; dream) in reverse. *Son* (“A Dream,” 1841) is a poem by Lermontov. Like Lermontov’s poem, VN’s *Ada* is a triple dream (a dream within a dream within a dream). One of the three dreamers in *Ada* is Eric Veen, the young author of an essay entitled “Villa Venus: an Organized Dream” (2.3). In memory of his grandson David van Veen (a wealthy architect of Flemish extraction) built one hundred floramors (palatial brothels) all over the world (except Tartary). Chekhov’s story *Pripadok* (“A Nervous Breakdown,” 1888) in which the hero visits several brothels in a row is dedicated to the memory of Garshin.

Alexey Sklyarenko