In VN’s novel *Look at the Harlequins!* (1974) Gerry Adamson (Louise’s husband) mentions a critic who called Vadim’s novel *Dr. Olga Repnin* (1946) *chute complète* (a complete comedown):

Her husband sat in a deep armchair, reading a London weekly bought at the Shopping Center. He had not bothered to take off his horrible black raincoat--a voluminous robe of oilskin that conjured up the image of a stagecoach driver in a lashing storm. He now removed however his formidable spectacles. He cleared his throat with a characteristic rumble. His purple jowls wobbled as he tackled the ordeal of rational speech:

GERRY *Do you ever see this paper, Vadim* (accenting "Vadim" incorrectly on the first syllable)? *Mister* (naming a particularly lively criticule) *has demolished your* *Olga* (my novel about the *professorsha*; it had come out only now in the British edition).

VADIM *May I give you a drink? We'll toast him and roast him.*

GERRY *Yet he's right, you know. It is your worst book.* Chute complète*, says the man. Knows French, too.*

LOUISE *No drinks. We've got to rush home. Now heave out of that chair. Try again. Take your glasses and paper. There.* Au revoir*, Vadim*. I'll bring you those pills *tomorrow morning after I drive him to school*. (4.1)

In his review in the *Northern Bee* (Mar. 22, 1830) of Chapter Seven of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* Bulgarin calls this chapter of EO “*chute complète*:”

Ни одной мысли в этой водянистой VII главе, ни одного чувствования, ни одной картины, достойной воззрения! Совершенное падение, chute complète…

Not one idea in this watery Chapter Seven, not one sentiment, not one picture worthy of contemplation! A complete comedown, *chute complete…*

In Chapter Seven of EO Tatiana leaves her dear countryside and goes to Moscow, “to the mart of brides.” In Moscow Tatiana and her mother visit their relatives:

И вот: по родственным обедам  
Развозят Таню каждый день  
Представить бабушкам и дедам  
Её рассеянную лень.  
Родне, прибывшей издалеча,  
Повсюду ласковая встреча,  
И восклицанья, и хлеб-соль.  
«Как Таня выросла! Давно ль  
Я, кажется, тебя крестила?  
А я так на руки брала!  
А я так за уши драла!  
А я так пряником кормила!»  
И хором бабушки твердят:  
«Как наши годы-то летят!»

And now, on rounds of family dinners

Tanya they trundle daily to present

to grandsires and to grandams

her abstract indolence.

For kin come from afar

there's everywhere a kind reception,

and exclamations, and good cheer.

“How Tanya's grown! Such a short while

It seems since I godmothered you!”

“And since I bore you in my arms!”

“And since I pulled you by the ears!”

“And since I fed you gingerbread!”

And the grandmothers keep repeating

in chorus: “How our years do fly!” (Seven: XLIV)

The stanza’s last line, *“Kak nashi gody-to letyat!*” (“How our years do fly!”), was used by Apollon Maykov as the epigraph to his poem in octaves *Knyazhna* (“The Princess,” 1878). Maykov is the author of *Arlekin* (“The Harlequin,” 1854). Maykov’s narrative poem *Mashen’ka* (“Mary,” 1846) has the same title as VN’s first novel. VN’s *Mashen’ka* (1926) corresponds to Vadim’s *Tamara* (1925). Showing to Vadim a lending library in the house that he rents for his business, Oks (Osip Lvovich Oksman) mentions Vadim’s *Tamara*:

He led me to a distant corner and triumphantly trained his flashlight on the gaps in *my* shelf of books.

"Look," he cried, "how many copies are out. All of *Princess Mary* is out, I mean *Mary*--damn it, I mean *Tamara*. I love *Tamara*, I mean your *Tamara*, not Lermontov's or Rubinstein's. Forgive me. One gets so confused among so many damned masterpieces." (2.4)

*Knyazhna Mery* (“Princess Mary”) is a novella in Lermontov’s *Geroy nashego vremeni* (“A Hero of Our Time,” 1840). The first novella in “A Hero of Our Time” is *Bela*. The heroine’s name brings to mind Vadim’s daughter Bel. Since Vadim is a Russian Prince, his daughter is *knyazhna* (a Princess). During their first meeting Bel tells her father that she and her mother (Annette Blagovo, Vadim’s second wife) had spent most of last summer with *babushka* (grandmother):

She and her mother (whom she mentioned as casually as if Annette were in the next room copying something for me on a soundless typewriter) had spent most of last summer at Carnavaux with *babushka*. I would like to have learned what room exactly Bel had occupied in the villa, but an oddly obtrusive, though irrelevant-looking, recollection somehow prevented me from asking: shortly before her death Iris had dreamed one night that she had given birth to a fat boy with dusky red cheeks and almond eyes and the blue shadow of mutton chops: "A horrible Omarus K." (4.2)

Describing a hurricane that killed Bel’s mother, Vadim mentions *Dr. Olga Repnin*:

The mad scholar in *Esmeralda and her Parandrus* wreathes Botticelli and Shakespeare together by having Primavera end as Ophelia with all her flowers. The loquacious lady in *Dr. Olga Repnin* remarks that tornadoes and floods are really sensational only in North America. On May 17, 1953, several papers printed a photograph of a family, complete with birdcage, phonograph, and other valuable possessions, riding it out on the roof of their shack in the middle of Rosedale Lake. Other papers carried the picture of a small Ford caught in the upper branches of an intrepid tree with a man, a Mr. Byrd, whom Horace Peppermill said he knew, still in the driver’s seat, stunned, bruised, but alive. A prominent personality in the Weather Bureau was accused of criminally delayed forecasts. A group of fifteen schoolchildren who had been taken to see a collection of stuffed animals donated by Mrs. Rosenthal, the benefactor’s widow, to the Rosedale Museum, were safe in the sudden darkness of that sturdy building when the twister struck. But the prettiest lakeside cottage got swept away, and the drowned bodies of its two occupants were never retrieved. (ibid.)

Among the flowers mentioned in *Hamlet* by mad Ophelia is rosemary:

Look at my flowers. There’s rosemary, that’s for remembering. Please remember, love. And there are pansies, they’re for thoughts. (4.5)

As she speaks to her father, Bel mentions the aroma of rosemary:

Oh yes, said Bel, she had loved it. Especially the path down, down to the sea and the aroma of rosemary (*chudnyy zapakh rozmarina*). I was tortured and charmed by her "shadowless" *émigré* Russian, untainted, God bless Annette, by the Langley woman's fruity Sovietisms. (4.2)

In the fourth poem of Marina Tsvetaev’s cycle *Marina* (1921) Grigoriy Otrepiev (the Impostor) tells Marina Mnishek that her breast is as sweet-smelling as *rozmarinovyi larchik* (a small box with rosemary):

— Грудь Ваша благоуханна,  
Как розмариновый ларчик…  
Ясновельможна панна…  
— Мой молодой господарчик…  
  
— Чем заплачу за щедроты:  
Тёмен, негромок, непризнан…  
Из-под ресничного взлёту  
Что-то ответило: — Жизнью!  
  
В каждом пришельце гонимом  
Пану мы Иезусу — служим…  
Мнёт в замешательстве мнимом  
Горсть неподдельных жемчужин.  
  
Перлы рассыпались, — слёзы!  
Каждой ресницей нацелясь,  
Смотрит, как в прахе елозя,  
Их подбирает пришелец.

Grigoriy Otrepiev and Marina Mnishek are the characters in Pushkin’s tragedy *Boris Godunov* (1825). In Pushkin’s tragedy Otrepiev quotes the saying *Vot tebe, babushka, i Yuriev den’!* (“Here's a pretty mess!”; literally: “That’s all of St. George’s day for you, grandma!”):

ГРИГОРИЙ (хозяйке) Куда ведет эта дорога?

ХОЗЯЙКА В Литву, мой кормилец, к Луёвым горам.

ГРИГОРИЙ А далече ли до Луёвых гор?

ХОЗЯЙКА Недалече, к вечеру можно бы туда поспеть, кабы не заставы царские да сторожевые приставы.

ГРИГОРИЙ Как, заставы! что это значит?

ХОЗЯЙКА Кто-то бежал из Москвы, а велено всех задерживать да осматривать.

ГРИГОРИЙ (про себя) Вот тебе, бабушка, Юрьев день.

GRIGORIY. (To HOSTESS.) Whither leads this road?

HOSTESS. To Lithuania, my dear, to the Luyov mountains.

GRIGORIY. And is it far to the Luyov mountains?

HOSTESS. Not far; you might get there by evening, but for the tsar's frontier barriers, and the captains of the guard.

GRIGORIY. What say you? Barriers! What means this?

HOSTESS. Someone has escaped from Moscow, and orders have been given to detain and search everyone.

GRIGORIY. (Aside.) Here's a pretty mess! (TAVERN ON THE LITHUANIAN FRONTIER)

Vadim’s flight from Russia is a parody of a scene in “Boris Godunov” when Otrepiev crosses the Lithuanian border. According to Vadim, a Red Army soldier at the frontier called him *yablochko* (little apple):

I thought I had crossed the frontier when a bare-headed Red Army soldier with a Mongol face who was picking whortleberries near the trail challenged me: "And whither," he asked picking up his cap from a stump, "may you be rolling (*kotishsya*), little apple (*yablochko*)? *Pokazyvay-ka dokumentiki* (Let me see your papers)."

I groped in my pockets, fished out what I needed, and shot him dead, as he lunged at me; then he fell on his face, as if sunstruck on the parade ground, at the feet of his king. None of the serried tree trunks looked his way, and I fled, still clutching Dagmara's lovely little revolver. Only half an hour later, when I reached at last another part of the forest in a more or less conventional republic, only then did my calves cease to quake. (1.2)

At the end of “Boris Godunov” an incidental character quotes the saying *yabloko ot yabloni nedaleko padaet* (“like parents, like children;” literally: “an apple falls not far from the apple-tree”):

Один из народа

Брат да сестра! бедные дети, что пташки в клетке.

Другой

Есть о ком жалеть? Проклятое племя!

Первый

Отец был злодей, а детки невинны.

Другой

Яблоко от яблони недалеко падает.

One of the people

Brother and sister! Poor children, like birds in a cage.

Second person

Are you going to pity them? Goddamned family!

First person

Their father was a villain,

But the children are innocent.

Second person

Like parents, like children.

Vadim’s and his daughter’s surname seems to be Yablonski. It comes from *yablonya* (apple-tree). As to the name Oks, it seems to blend the Oka (a river that flows through Marina Tsvetaev’s poetry and memoir prose) with *Krasnyi bychok* (“A Red Bull-Calf,” 1928), Marina Tsvetaev’s poemwhose title brings to mind the proverbial *Skazka pro belogo bychka* (“Tale about White Bull-Calf”). Marina Tsvetaev is the author of *Babushke* (“To my Grandmother,” 1914) and *Babushka* (“Grandmother,” 1919), a cycle of two poems. In the early 1910s Marina Tsvetaev addressed several poems to V. Ya. Bryusov. In a canceled variant of a stanza in EO (Two: XLI: 1) Pushkin mentions *Bryusov Kalendar’* (Bruce’s Calendar) compiled under the auspices of Count Yakov Bryus, one of Peter I’s generals who was reputed to be an alchemist (actually, he was an excellent astronomer and mathematician). Among “the fledglings of Peter’s nest” mentioned by Pushkin in Canto Three of *Poltava* (1828) are Bryus and Repnin:

За ним вослед неслись толпой  
Сии птенцы гнезда Петрова —  
В пременах жребия земного  
В трудах державства и войны  
Его товарищи, сыны:  
И Шереметев благородный,  
И Брюс, и Боур, и Репнин,  
И, счастья баловень безродный,  
Полудержавный властелин.

The fledglings of the Petrine nest

Surged after him, a loyal throng—

Through all the shifts of worldly fate,

In trials of policy and war,

These men, these comrades, were like sons:

The noble Sheremetev,

And Bryus, and Bour, and Repnin,

And, fortune’s humble favorite,

The mighty, quasi-sovereign.

(tr. Ivan Eubanks)

Vadim’s novel *Dr. Olga Repnin* corresponds to VN’s *Pnin* (1957). *Na smert’ I. P. Pnina* (“On the Death of I. P. Pnin,” 1805) is a poem by Batyushkov. At the end of Pushkin’s poem *Ten’ Fonvizina* (“The Shade of Fonvizin,” 1815) Fonvizin mentions Batyushkov:

Я слышал, будто бы с досады  
Бранил он русских без пощады  
И вот изволил что сказать:  
«Когда Хвостов трудиться станет,  
А Батюшков спокойно спать,  
Наш гений долго не восстанет,  
И дело не пойдёт на лад».

I heard that, disappointed beyond measure,

he [Fonvizin] scolded the Russians without mercy

and this is what he deigned to say:

“If Khvostov keeps working

and Batyushkov quietly sleeps,

our genius won’t rise up long

and things won’t be going well.”

At the end of LATH old Vadim falls asleep:

"That's all very well," I said, as I groped for the levers of my wheelchair, and you helped me to roll back to my room. "And I'm grateful, I'm touched, I'm cured! Your explanation, however, is merely an exquisite quibble--and you know it; but never mind, the notion of trying to twirl time is a *trouvaille*; it resembles (kissing the hand resting on my sleeve) the neat formula a physicist finds to keep people happy until (yawning, crawling back into bed) until the next chap snatches the chalk. I had been promised some rum with my tea--Ceylon and Jamaica, the sibling islands (mumbling comfortably, dropping off, mumble dying away)--" (7.4)

In the last stanza of his poem *Dorozhnye zhaloby* (“The Road Complaints,” 1830) Pushkin mentions a wine-glass of rum and tea:

То ли дело рюмка рома,  
Ночью сон, поутру чай;  
То ли дело, братцы, дома!..  
Ну, пошёл же, погоняй!..

Alexey Sklyarenko