In VN’s novel *Ada* (1969) Demon Veen tells Van that, when he was Van’s age, his father allowed him Lilletovka and that Illinois Brat:

‘Van…,’ began Demon, but stopped — as he had begun and stopped a number of times before in the course of the last years. Some day it would have to be said, but this was not the right moment. He inserted his monocle and examined the bottles: ‘By the way, son, do you crave any of these aperitifs? My father allowed me Lilletovka and that Illinois Brat — awful bilge, *antranou svadi,* as Marina would say. I suspect your uncle has a cache behind the solanders in his study and keeps there a finer whisky than this *usque ad Russkum.* Well, let us have the cognac, as planned, unless you are a *filius aquae?’* (1.38)

“Lilletovka” seems to blend Lille (a city in France) with *taburetovka* (moonshine made of *taburet*, a stool) mentioned by Ostap Bender in Ilf and Petrov’s novel *Zolotoy telyonok* (“The Little Golden Calf,” 1931):

- В таком случае заседание продолжается, - промолвил Бендер. - Сколько дадут ваши шефы за рецепт? Полтораста дадут? - Дадут двести, - зашептал переводчик. - А у вас, в самом деле, есть рецепт? - Сейчас же вам продиктую, то есть сейчас же по получении денег. Какой угодно: картофельный, пшеничный, абрикосовый, ячменный, из тутовых ягод, из гречневой каши. Даже из обыкновенной табуретки можно гнать самогон. Некоторые любят табуретовку. А то можно простую кишмишовку или сливянку. Одним словом-любой из полутораста самогонов, рецепты которых мне известны. Остап был представлен американцам. В воздухе долго плавали вежливо приподнятые шляпы. Затем приступили к делу. Американцы выбрали пшеничный самогон, который привлёк их простотой выработки. Рецепт долго записывали в блокноты. В виде бесплатной премии Остап сообщил американским ходокам наилучшую конструкцию кабинетного самогонного аппарата, который легко скрыть от посторонних взглядов в тумбе письменного стола. Ходоки заверили Остапа, что при американской технике изготовить такой аппарат не представляет никакого труда. Остап со своей стороны заверил американцев, что аппарат его конструкции дает в день ведро прелестного ароматного первача.
— О! — закричали американцы. Они уже слышали это слово в одной почтенной семье из Чикаго. И там о «pervatsch'e» были даны прекрасные референции. Глава этого семейства был в свое время с американским оккупационным корпусом в Архангельске, пил там «pervatsch» и с тех пор не может забыть очаровательного ощущения, которое он при этом испытал.

"In that case, our deliberations continue," declared Ostap. "How much will your bosses pay for a recipe? 150, perhaps?" "They'll pay two hundred," whispered the interpreter. "Do you really have a recipe?" "I can give it to you this very moment-I mean, the moment I get the money. Made from anything you want: potatoes, wheat, apricots, barley, mulberry, buckwheat. One can even brew moonshine from an ordinary chair. Some people enjoy the chair brew. Or you can have a simple raisin or plum brew. In other words, any of the 150 kinds of moonshine known to me." Ostap was introduced to the Americans. Their politely raised hats floated in the air for a long time. Then they got down to business. The Americans chose the wheat moonshine-the simplicity of the brewing process appealed to them. They painstakingly recorded the recipe in their notebooks. As a bonus, Ostap sketched out a design for a compact still that could be hidden in an office desk. The seekers assured Ostap that, given American technology, making such a still would be a breeze. For his part, Ostap assured the Americans that the device he described would produce two gallons of beautiful, fragrant pervach per day. "Oh!" cried the Americans. They had already heard this word in a very respectable home in Chicago, where pervach was highly recommended. The man of the house had been in Archangel, with the American expeditionary force. He drank pervach there and never forgot the alluring sensation that it gave him. (Chapter 7 “The Sweet Burden of Fame”)

Chicago is a city in Illinois. *Brat* is Russian for “brother.” Evgeniy Kataev (Petrov’s real name) had an elder brother Valentin, a writer who wanted to become “the Soviet Dumas père:”

Как случилось, что мы с Ильфом стали писать вдвоём? Назвать это случайностью было бы слишком просто. Ильфа нет, и я никогда не узнаю, что думал он, когда мы начинали работать вместе. Я же испытывал по отношению к нему чувство огромного уважения, а иногда даже восхищения. Я был моложе его на пять лет, и хотя он был очень застенчив, писал мало и никогда не показывал написанного, я готов был признать его своим метром. Его литературный вкус казался мне в то время безукоризненным, а смелость его мнений приводила меня в восторг. Но у нас был ещё один метр, так сказать, профессиональный метр. Это был мой брат, Валентин Катаев. Он в то время тоже работал в "Гудке" в качестве фельетониста и подписывался псевдонимом Старик Собакин. И в этом качестве он часто появлялся в комнате четвёртой полосы. Однажды он вошёл туда со словами:

- Я хочу стать советским Дюма-отцом.

Это высокомерное заявление не вызвало в отделе особенного энтузиазма. И не с такими заявлениями входили люди в комнату четвертой полосы.

- Почему же это, Валюн, вы вдруг захотели стать Дюма-пером? - спросил Ильф.

- Потому, Илюша, что уже давно пора открыть мастерскую советского романа,- ответил Старик Собакин,- я буду Дюма-отцом, а вы будете моими неграми. Я вам буду давать темы, вы будете писать романы, а я их потом буду править. Пройдусь раза два по вашим рукописям рукой мастера - и готово. Как Дюма-пер. Ну? Кто желает? Только помните, я собираюсь держать вас в чёрном теле. (E. Petrov, “From the Reminiscences about Ilf,” 1939, chapter 3).

The characters of Alexandre Dumas père’s novel “The Three Musketeers” (1844) include the executioner of Lille who branded Milady de Winter and who beheads her. Athos’ former wife, Milady poisoned de Winter’s brother and d’Artagnan’s lover. It seems that Demon’s wife Aqua went mad because she was poisoned by her twin sister Marina. Describing Demon’s duel with Baron d’Onsky, Van mentions an amusing Douglas d’Artagnan arrangement:

The challenge was accepted; two native seconds were chosen; the Baron plumped for swords; and after a certain amount of good blood (Polish and Irish — a kind of American ‘Gory Mary’ in barroom parlance) had bespattered two hairy torsoes, the whitewashed terrace, the flight of steps leading backward to the walled garden in an amusing Douglas d’Artagnan arrangement, the apron of a quite accidental milkmaid, and the shirtsleeves of both seconds, charming Monsieur de Pastrouil and Colonel St Alin, a scoundrel, the latter gentlemen separated the panting combatants, and Skonky died, not ‘of his wounds’ (as it was viciously rumored) but of a gangrenous afterthought on the part of the least of them, possibly self-inflicted, a sting in the groin, which caused circulatory trouble, notwithstanding quite a few surgical interventions during two or three years of protracted stays at the Aardvark Hospital in Boston — a city where, incidentally, he married in 1869 our friend the Bohemian lady, now keeper of Glass Biota at the local museum. (1.2)

In “The Golden Calf” Ilf and Petrov mention the postcards with portraits of Douglas Fairbanks (a Hollywood actor who played d’Artagnan in a film version) with a black half-mask on his fat samovar face:

Зато в здании типографии комиссия застала работу в полном разгаре. Сияли лиловые лампы, и плоские печатные машины озабоченно хлопали крыльями. Три из них выпекали ущелье в одну краску, а из четвёртой, многокрасочной, словно карты из рукава шулера, вылетали открытки с портретами Дугласа Фербенкса в чёрной полумаске на толстой самоварной морде, очаровательной Лиа де Путти и славного малого с вытаращенными глазами, известного под именем Монти Бенкса.

In the print shop, however, the commission saw the work going full-speed ahead. Purple lights shone; flat printing presses busily flapped their wings. Three of them produced the gorge in black-and-white, while the fourth, a multi-color machine, spewed out postcards: portraits of Douglas Fairbanks with a black half-mask on his fat samovar face, the charming Lya de Putti, and a nice bulgy-eyed guy named Monty Banks. Portraits flew out of the machine like cards from a sharper's sleeve. (Chapter 5 “The Underground Kingdom”)

*Iz-pod tainstvennoy, kholodnoy polumaski…* (“From beneath a mysterious and ice-cold half-mask…” 1841) is a poem by Lermontov, the author of “The Demon” (1829-40). At Ardis Ada greets Demon, quoting Lowden’s version of Lermontov’s poem:

Here Ada herself came running into the room. Yes-yes-yes-yes, here I come. Beaming!

Old Demon, iridescent wings humped, half rose but sank back again, enveloping Ada with one arm, holding his glass in the other hand, kissing the girl in the neck, in the hair, burrowing in her sweetness with more than an uncle’s fervor. ‘Gosh,’ she exclaimed (with an outbreak of nursery slang that affected Van with even more *umilenie, attendrissement,* melting ravishment, than his father seemed to experience). ‘How lovely to see you! Clawing your way through the clouds! Swooping down on Tamara’s castle!’

(Lermontov paraphrased by Lowden). (1.38)

As a boy of ten, Van puzzles out the allusions to his father’s volitations and loves in another life in Lermontov’s diamond-faceted tetrameters:

The year 1880 (Aqua was still alive — somehow, somewhere!) was to prove to be the most retentive and talented one in his long, too long, never too long life. He was ten. His father had lingered in the West where the many-colored mountains acted upon Van as they had on all young Russians of genius. He could solve an Euler-type problem or learn by heart Pushkin’s ‘Headless Horseman’ poem in less than twenty minutes. With white-bloused, enthusiastically sweating Andrey Andreevich, he lolled for hours in the violet shade of pink cliffs, studying major and minor Russian writers — and puzzling out the exaggerated but, on the whole, complimentary allusions to his father’s volitations and loves in another life in Lermontov’s diamond-faceted tetrameters. (1.28)

Demon Veen perishes in a mysterious airplane disaster above the Pacific. In “The Three Musketeers” Milady de Winter persuades John Felton, a Puritan, to kill Duke of Buckingham. It seems that Ada managed to persuade a pilot to destroy his machine in midair. Van learns about the catastrophe in which his father died from a newspaper (3.7). Ilf and Petrov were journalists who worked in a newspaper. In his “Reminiscences about Ilf” Evgeniy Petrov (who died in an airplane crash in 1942) quotes the words of Ilf (who died of tuberculosis in 1937) who said that it would be good if he and Petrov perished together in some car or plane catastrophe, then neither of them would be present at their own funeral:

Я не помню, кто из нас произнёс эту фразу:

- Хорошо, если бы мы когда-нибудь погибли вместе, во время какой-нибудь авиационной или автомобильной катастрофы. Тогда ни одному из нас не пришлось бы присутствовать на собственных похоронах.

Кажется, это сказал Ильф. Я уверен, что в эту минуту мы подумали об одном и том же. Неужели наступит такой момент, когда один из нас останется с глазу на глаз с пишущей машинкой? В комнате будет тихо и пусто, и надо будет писать. (1)

Ninety-seven-year-old Van and ninety-five-year-old Ada whom Dr Lagosse made the last merciful injection of morphine die simultaneously, so neither of them is present at their own funeral (5.6). Nor was Van present at Marina’s funeral, when Demon and d’Onsky’s son, a man with only one arm, wept *comme des fontaines* (3.8). The name d’Onsky seems to hint at Onegin’s *donskoy zherebets* (Don stallion) mentioned by Pushkin in Chapter Two (V: 4) of *Eugene Onegin*. In Chapter Ten (IX: 3-4) of EO Pushkin mentions *bezrukiy knyaz’* (the one-armed Prince) who to the friends of Morea from Kishinev already winked. The author of *Bakhchisarayskiy fontan* (“The Fountain of Bakhchisaray,” 1823), Pushkin is paired with Dumas by Van’s tutor Aksakov:

In 1880, Van, aged ten, had traveled in silver trains with showerbaths, accompanied by his father, his father’s beautiful secretary, the secretary’s eighteen-year-old white-gloved sister (with a bit part as Van’s English governess and milkmaid), and his chaste, angelic Russian tutor, Andrey Andreevich Aksakov (‘AAA’), to gay resorts in Louisiana and Nevada. AAA explained, he remembered, to a Negro lad with whom Van had scrapped, that Pushkin and Dumas had African blood, upon which the lad showed AAA his tongue, a new interesting trick which Van emulated at the earliest occasion and was slapped by the younger of the Misses Fortune, put it back in your face, sir, she said. (1.24)

In his memoir essay about Ilf (see the quote above) Petrov quotes the words of his brother, Valentin Kataev, who said that Ilf and Petrov would be his *negry* (*nègres littéraires*, ghost writers). Van’s tutor has the same name and patronymic as Ada’s husband, Andrey Andreevich Vinelander (whom Ada calls “my patient Valentinian”). Like Ilf, Ada’s husband dies of tuberculosis. Andrey Vinelander calls Demon (son of Dedalus Veen) Dementiy Labirintovich (3.8). A character in Greek myths, Daedalus created the labyrinth on Crete in which the Minotaur was kept and made wings for his son Icarus. Icarus’s wings made of wax melted because he ignored his father’s instructions not to fly too close to the sun. Reading Van’s palm, Demon seems to predict his own death in an airplane disaster:

‘I say,’ exclaimed Demon, ‘what’s happened — your shaftment is that of a carpenter’s. Show me your other hand. Good gracious’ (muttering:) ‘Hump of Venus disfigured, Line of Life scarred but monstrously long…’ (switching to a gipsy chant:) ‘You’ll live to reach Terra, and come back a wiser and merrier man’ (reverting to his ordinary voice:) ‘What puzzles me as a palmist is the strange condition of the Sister of your Life. And the roughness!’

‘Mascodagama,’ whispered Van, raising his eyebrows.

‘Ah, of course, how blunt (dumb) of me. Now tell me — you like Ardis Hall?’

‘I adore it,’ said Van. ‘It’s for me the *château que baignait la Dore.* I would gladly spend all my scarred and strange life here. But that’s a hopeless fancy.’ (1.38)

In Ilf and Petrov’s novel *Dvenadtsat’ stuliev* (“The Twelve Chairs,” 1928) Elena Stanislavovna Bour (Vorobyaninov’s former mistress) reads Mme Gritsatsuev’s palm:

Набело гадали по руке. Линии руки вдовы Грицацуевой были чисты, мощны и безукоризненны. Линия жизни простиралась так далеко, что конец ее заехал в пульс, и если линия говорила правду, вдова должна была бы дожить до страшного суда. Линия ума и искусства давали право надеяться, что вдова бросит торговлю бакалеей и подарит человечеству непревзойденные шедевры в какой угодно области искусства, науки или обществоведения. Бугры Венеры у вдовы походили на маньчжурские сопки и обнаруживали чудесные запасы любви и нежности. Все это гадалка объяснила вдове, употребляя слова и термины, принятые в среде графологов, хиромантов и лошадиных барышников.

A fair copy of the prediction was made from the widow's hand. The lines of her hand were clean, powerful, and faultless. Her life line stretched so far that it ended up at her pulse and, if it told the truth, the widow should have lived till doomsday. The head line and line of brilliancy gave reason to believe that she would give up her grocery business and present mankind with masterpieces in the realm of art, science, and social studies. Her Mounts of Venus resembled Manchurian volcanoes and revealed incredible reserves of love and affection. The fortune-teller explained all this to the widow, using the words and phrases current among graphologists, palmists, and horse-traders. (Chapter 10 “The Mechanic, the Parrot and the Fortune-Teller”)

“The Sister of your Life” that puzzles Demon hints at Pasternak’s collection *Sestra moya zhizn’* (“My Sister Life,” 1922) that opens with a poem entitled *Pamyati Demona* (“In Memory of the Demon”). In “The Twelve Chairs” Bender and Vorobyaninov visit the Columbus Theater and watch Nik. Sestrin’s stage version of Gogol’s play *Zhenit’ba* (“The Marriage,” 1835). The name Sestrin comes from *sestra* (sister).

According to Van, the fabulous ancestor of Ada’s husband “discovered our country” (5.6). Ilf and Petrov are the authors of *Kolumb prichalivaet k beregu* (“Columbus’ Ship is Mooring,” 1936), a satire on Hollywood in which Dumas is mentioned:

Они не стали терять времени на любезности и сразу приступили к делу. Публисити начало оказывать свое магическое действие: Колумба пригласили в Голливуд.

— Понимаете, мистер Колумб, — втолковывали новые посетители, — мы хотим, чтобы вы играли главную роль в историческом фильме "Америго Веспуччи." Понимаете, настоящий Христофор Колумб в роли Америго Веспуччи — это может быть очень интересно. Публика на такой фильм пойдёт. Вся соль в том, что диалог будет вестись на бродвейском жаргоне. Понимаете? Не понимаете? Тогда мы вам сейчас всё объясним подробно. У нас есть сценарии. Сценарий сделан по роману Александра Дюма "Граф Монте-Кристо", но это не важно, мы ввели туда элементы открытия Америки.

Christopher Columbus is invited to Hollywood to play Amerigo Vespucci in a historical movie based on Alexandre Dumas’ novel “The Count of Monte Cristo.”

AAA is the American Automobile Association. In 1935-36 Ilf and Petrov crossed the USA from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back to the Atlantic in a Ford car and described their trip in *Odnoetazhnaya Amerika* (“Single-Storied America,” 1937), a book also known as “Little Golden America.” Demon’s *usque ad Russkum* seems to hint at *A Mari Usque Ad Mare* (“From Sea to Sea”), the Canadian national motto. In “The Golden Calf” one of the chapters is entitled *Na sushe i na more* (“On Land and by Sea”). Demon’s wife Aqua (Marina’s mad twin sister) saw giant flying sharks with lateral eyes taking barely one night to carry pilgrims through black ether across an entire continent from dark to shining sea:

Poor Aqua, whose fancies were apt to fall for all the fangles of cranks and Christians, envisaged vividly a minor hymnist’s paradise, a future America of alabaster buildings one hundred stories high, resembling a beautiful furniture store crammed with tall white-washed wardrobes and shorter fridges; she saw giant flying sharks with lateral eyes taking barely one night to carry pilgrims through black ether across an entire continent from dark to shining sea, before booming back to Seattle or Wark. She heard magic-music boxes talking and singing, drowning the terror of thought, uplifting the lift girl, riding down with the miner, praising beauty and godliness, the Virgin and Venus in the dwellings of the lonely and the poor. The unmentionable magnetic power denounced by evil lawmakers in this our shabby country — oh, everywhere, in Estoty and Canady, in ‘German’ Mark Kennensie, as well as in ‘Swedish’ Manitobogan, in the workshop of the red-shirted Yukonets as well as in the kitchen of the red-kerchiefed Lyaskanka, and in ‘French’ Estoty, from Bras d’Or to Ladore — and very soon throughout both our Americas, and all over the other stunned continents — was used on Terra as freely as water and air, as bibles and brooms. Two or three centuries earlier she might have been just another consumable witch. (1.3)

On Demonia (aka Antiterra, Earth’s twin planet on which *Ada* is set) electricity was banned after the L disaster in the middle of the 19th century. In “The Golden Calf” *nich’ya babushka* (no one’s grandmother, one of the inhabitants of the Crow’s Nest) is afraid of electricity and uses a kerosene lamp in her entresol apartment. At a game of Flavita (Russian Scrabble) Ada’s seven letters form the word *kerosin* (kerosene):

Lots had been cast, Ada had won the right to begin, and was in the act of collecting one by one, mechanically and unthinkingly, her seven ‘luckies’ from the open case where the blocks lay face down, showing nothing but their anonymous black backs, each in its own cell of flavid velvet. She was speaking at the same time, saying casually: ‘I would much prefer the Benten lamp here but it is out of *kerosin.* Pet (addressing Lucette), be a good scout, call her — Good Heavens!’

The seven letters she had taken, S,R,E,N,O,K,I, and was sorting out in her *spektrik* (the little trough of japanned wood each player had before him) now formed in quick and, as it were, self-impulsed rearrangement the key word of the chance sentence that had attended their random assemblage. (1.36)

Flavita is an anagram of *alfavit* (alphabet). In “The Twelve Chairs” one of the chapters is entitled *Alfavit –* *zerkalo zhizni* (“The Mirror of Life Index”). The name of the compiler of the Mirror of Life Index, Varfolomey Korobeynikov, brings to mind *Varfolomeevskaya noch’* (the St.Bartholomew's Day massacre) and Nekrasov’s poem *Korobeyniki* (“The Peddlers,” 1861). In his novel *Le Reine Margot* (“Queen Margot,” 1845) Dumas père describes the St.Bartholomew's Day massacre. During his trip to Russia in the late 1850s Dumas visited Nekrasov.

Alexey Sklyarenko