According to Kinbote (in VN’s novel *Pale Fire*, 1962, Shade’s commentator who imagines that he is Charles the Beloved, the last self-exiled king of Zembla), he was nicknamed “the great beaver” because of his brown beard:

One day I happened to enter the English Literature office in quest of a magazine with the picture of the Royal Palace in Onhava, which I wanted my friend to see, when I overheard a young instructor in a green velvet jacket, whom I shall mercifully call Gerald Emerald, carelessly saying in answer to something the secretary had asked: "I guess My Shade has already left with the great beaver." Of course, I am quite tall, and my brown beard is of a rather rich tint and texture; the silly cognomen evidently applied to me, but was not worth noticing, and after calmly taking the magazine from a pamphlet-cluttered table, I contented myself on my way out with pulling Gerald Emerald's bow-tie loose with a deft jerk of my fingers as I passed by him. (Foreword)

*Gimn borode* (“A Hymn to the Beard,” 1757) is a poem by Lomonosov. Lomonosov is the author of *Pis’mo o pol’ze stekla* (“Letter on the Use of Glass,” 1752). According to Kinbote, Gradus (Shade’s murderer) was in the glass business:

Gradus never became a real success in the glass business to which he turned again and again between his win-eselling and pamphlet printing jobs. He started as a maker of Cartesian devils--imps of bottle glass bobbing up and down in methylate-filled tubes hawked during Catkin Week on the boulevards. He also worked as a teazer, and later as a flasher, at governmental factories--and was, I believe, more or less responsible for the remarkably ugly red-and-amber windows in the great public lavatory at rowdy but colorful Kalixhaven where the sailors are. He claimed to have improved the glitter and rattle of the so-called feuilles-d'alarme used by the grape growers and orchardmen to scare the birds. I have staggered the notes referring to him in such a fashion that the first (see [note to line 17](http://www.shannonrchamberlain.com/commentary.html#comline17) where some of his other activities are adumbrated) is the vaguest while those that follow become gradually clearer as gradual Gradus approaches in space and time. (note to Line 171)

In his Commentary and Index to PF Kinbote mentions Sudarg of Bokay, a mirror maker of genius:

He awoke to find her standing with a comb in her hand before his - or rather, his grandfather's - cheval glass, a triptych of bottomless light, a really fantastic mirror, signed with a diamond by its maker, Sudarg of Bokay. She turned about before it: a secret device of reflection gathered an infinite number of nudes in its depths, garlands of girls in graceful and sorrowful groups, diminishing in the limpid distance, or breaking into individual nymphs, some of whom, she murmured, must resemble her ancestors when they were young - little peasant garlien combing their hair in shallow water as far as the eye could reach, and then the wistful mermaid from an old tale, and then nothing. (note to Line 80)

Sudarg of Bokay, a mirror maker of genius, the patron saint of Bokay in the mountains of Zembla, [80](http://www.shannonrchamberlain.com/commentary.html#comline80); life span not known. (Index)

Sudarg of Bokay is Jakob Gradus in reverse. On the other hand, Sudarg suggest *gosudar’* (sovereign) and its feminine form, *gosudarynya*. Lomonosov is the author of *Oda na den’ vosshestviya na prestol eyo velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny 1748 goda* (“Ode on the Anniversary of the Ascent to the Throne of her Majesty Empress Elizaveta Petrovna of the Year 1748”). In *Eugene Onegin* (Five: XXV: 1-4) Pushkin parodies the opening lines of Lomonosov’s poem:

Но вот багряною рукою 34

Заря от утренних долин

Выводит с солнцем за собою

Весёлый праздник именин.

But lo, with crimson hand 34

Aurora from the morning dales

leads forth, with the sun, after her

the merry name-day festival.

Pushkin’s note 34: Пародия известных стихов Ломоносова:

Заря багряною рукою
От утренних спокойных вод
Выводит с солнцем за собою, — и проч.

a parody of Lomonosov’s well-known lines:

Aurora with a crimson hand

from the calm morning waters

leads forth with the sun after her, etc.

In Chapter One of EO Pushkin describes Onegin’s day in St. Petersburg and (in One: XVI: 4) mentions Onegin’s *bobrovyi vorotnik* (beaver collar):

Уж тёмно: в санки он садится.
"Пади, пади!" - раздался крик;
Морозной пылью серебрится
Его бобровый воротник.

К Talon4 помчался: он уверен,
Что там уж ждёт его Каверин.

Вошёл: и пробка в потолок,
Вина кометы брызнул ток,
Пред ним roast-beef окровавленный,
И трюфли, роскошь юных лет,
Французской кухни лучший цвет,
И Стразбурга пирог нетленный
Меж сыром Лимбургским живым
И ананасом золотым.

It’s already dark. He gets into a sleigh.

The cry “Way, way!” resounds.

With frostdust silvers

his beaver collar.

To Talon's[4](http://www.rulit.me/books/kommentarii-k-evgeniyu-oneginu-aleksandra-pushkina-read-343746-361.html#puskin_en_4) he has dashed off: he is certain

that there already waits for him [Kaverin];

has entered – and the cork goes ceilingward,

the flow of comet wine has spurted,

a bloody roast beef is before him,

and truffles, luxury of youthful years,

the best flower of French cookery,

and a decayless Strasbourg pie

between a living Limburg cheese

and a golden ananas.

Pushkin’s note 4: Well-known restaurateur.

In his Foreword to Shade’s poem Kinbote says that he is a strict vegetarian and likes to cook his own meals:

A few days later, however, namely on Monday, February 16, I was introduced to the old poet at lunch time in the faculty club. "At last presented credentials," as noted, a little ironically, in my agenda. I was invited to join him and four or five other eminent professors at his usual table, under an enlarged photograph of Wordsmith College as it was, stunned and shabby, on a remarkably gloomy summer day in 1903. His laconic suggestions that I "try the pork" amused me. I am a strict vegetarian, and I like to cook my own meals. Consuming something that had been handled by a fellow creature was, I explained to the rubicund convives, as repulsive to me as eating any creature, and that would include--lowering my voice--the pulpous pony-tailed girl student who served us and licked her pencil. Moreover, I had already finished the fruit brought with me in my briefcase, so I would content myself, I said, with a bottle of good college ale. My free and simple demeanor set everybody at ease. The usual questions were fired at me about eggnogs and milkshakes being or not being acceptable to one of my persuasion. Shade said that with him it was the other way around: he must make a definite effort to partake of a vegetable. Beginning a salad, was to him like stepping into sea water on a chilly day, and he had always to brace himself in order to attack the fortress of an apple.

According to Kinbote, he became a vegetarian after reading a story about an Italian despot:

When the fallen tyrant is tied, naked and howling, to a plank in the public square and killed piecemeal by the people who cut slices out, and eat them, and distribute his living body among themselves (as I read when young in a story about an Italian despot, which made of me a vegetarian for life), Gradus does not take part in the infernal sacrament: he points out the right instrument and directs the carving. (note to Line 171)

In VN’s story *Krug* (“The Circle,” 1936) Tanya mentions the despot who feasts in his rich palace:

Беседа не ладилась; Таня, что-то спутав, уверяла, что он её когда-то учил революционным стихам о том, как деспот пирует, а грозные буквы давно на стене уж чертит рука роковая. "Другими словами, первая стенгазета",-- сказал Кутасов, любивший острить. Ещё выяснилось, что танин брат живёт в Берлине, и Елизавета Павловна принялась рассказывать о нём...

The Leshino topic was falling apart; Tanya, getting it all wrong, insisted that he used to teach her the pre-Revolution songs of radical students, such as the one about “the despot who feasts in his rich palace hall while destiny’s hand has already begun to trace the dread words on the wall.” “In other words, our first *stengazeta*” (Soviet wall gazette), remarked Kutaysov, a great wit. Tanya’s brother was mentioned: he lived in Berlin, and the Countess started to talk about him.

Tanya’s brother, Fyodor Konstantinovich Godunov-Cherdyntsev, is the narrator and main character in VN’s novel *Dar* (“The Gift,” 1937). The novel’s characters include the Chernyshevski couple: Alexander Yakovlevich and Alexandra Yakovlevna. After the suicide of their son Yasha (who neatly defined the mutual relationship between him, Rudolf and Olya as “a triangle inscribed in a circle”) poor Alexander Yakovlevich went mad. After the tragic death of his daughter Nadezhda (Hazel Shade of Kinbote’s Commentary) Professor Vsevolod Botkin (an American scholar of Russian descent) went mad and became Shade, Kinbote and Gradus. There is a hope (*nadezhda*) that, when Kinbote completes his work on Shade’s poem and commits suicide, Botkin will be “full” again.

In his EO Commentary (note to One: XVI: 5-6) VN discusses the rhyme *uveren* (certain) – Kaverin and mentions the *consonne d’appui* (intrusive consonant):

As in French orthometry, the punctilious spangle of the *consonne d’appui* (reckoned tawdry in English) increases the acrobatic brilliance of the Russian rhyme.

In Canto Four of his poem Shade mentions his sensual love for the *consonne d’appui*, Echo’s fey child:

Maybe my sensual love for the *consonne*
*D'appui*, Echo's fey child, is based upon
A feeling of fantastically planned,
Richly rhymed life. (ll. 967-970)

In Pushkin’s poem *Rifma* (“Rhyme,” 1830) Rhyme is the daughter of Phoebus (Apollo as the sun god) and Echo, a sleepless nymph:

Эхо, бессонная нимфа, скиталась по брегу Пенея.
        Феб, увидев её, страстию к ней воспылал.
Нимфа плод понесла восторгов влюблённого бога;
        Меж говорливых наяд, мучась, она родила
Милую дочь. Её прияла сама Мнемозина.
        Резвая дева росла в хоре богинь-аонид,
Матери чуткой подобна, послушна памяти строгой,

        Музам мила; на земле Рифмой зовётся она.

In an earlier poem, *Rifma, zvuchnaya podruga…* (“Rhyme, the sonorous friend…” 1828), Rhyme turns out to be the daughter of Apollo and Mnemosyne (who is the mid-wife in “Rhyme”). In one of his poems addressed to Zina Mertz (a character in “The Gift”) Fyodor calls her *polu-Mnemozina* (Half-Mnemosyne).

In the above quoted stanza of EO (One: XVI: 8) Pushkin mentions *vino komety* (*vin de la comète*, champagne of the comet year, 1811). There is *vino* (wine) in *vinograd* (grapes). *Vinograd* (1824) and *Vino* (1833) are poems by Pushkin. At the end of his note to Line 171 Kinbote calls Gradus “Vinogradus” and “Leningradus:”

All this is as it should be; the world needs Gradus. But Gradus should not kill things. Vinogradus should never, never provoke God. Leningradus should not aim his peashooter at people even in dreams, because if he does, a pair of colossally thick, abnormally hairy arms will hug him from behind and squeeze, squeeze, squeeze.

Lenin is the author of *Lev Tolstoy kak zerkalo russkoy revolyutsii* (“Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution,” 1908). A strict vegetarian, Leo Tolstoy had a beard. In Tolstoy’s novel *Voyna i mir* (“War and Peace,” 1869) Pierre Bezukhov watches the Great Comet of 1811-12.

In his poem *Portret* (“The Portrait,” 1828) Pushkin compares Agrafena Zakrevski (portrayed as “Cleopatra of the Neva” in Chapter Eight of EO) to *bezzakonnaya kometa v krugu raschislennom svetil* (a lawless cometin the circle of calculated planets):

С своей пылающей душой,
С своими бурными страстями,
О жёны Севера, меж вами
Она является порой
И мимо всех условий света
Стремится до утраты сил,
Как беззаконная комета
В кругу расчисленном светил.

With her ever burning soul,

with her ever stormy passions,

o northern women, amidst you,

she sometimes appears

and, spiting all world’s conditions,

she speeds until loss of strength,

like a lawless comet

in the circle of calculated planets.

A comet has a tail.  In his fragment *Rim* (“Rome,” 1842) Gogol mentions the Italian *sonnetto colla* *coda* (sonnet with the coda) and in a footnote explains that in Italian *coda* means “tail.” Chapter Four of “The Gift,” Fyodor’s book *Zhizn’* *Chernyshevskogo* (“The Life of Chernyshevski”), begins and ends with the sonnet. *Coda* rhymes with *oda* (“ode”) and with *goda* (Gen. of *god*, “year”). In the title of Lomonosov’s *Oda na den’ vosshestviya na prestol eyo velichestva gosudaryni imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny 1748 goda* the first word is *oda* and the last word is *goda*. Kinbote believes that, to be completed, Shade’s almost finished poem needs not only Line 1000 (identical to Line 1: “I was the shadow of the waxwing slain”). But it seems that Shade’s poem also a coda (Line 1001: “By its own double in the windowpane”).

Kinbote’s Foreword to Shade’s poem is dated Oct. 19, 1959 (on this day Kinbote completes his work on Shade’s poem and commits suicide). In a letter of October 19, 1836, to Chaadaev Pushkin says that the only difference between the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox priests is that the latter are bearded:

*Je conviens que notre clergé actuel est en retard. En voulez-vous savoir la raison? c’est qu’il est barbu; voilà tout.*

In a letter of August 24, 1831, to Pushkin Vyazemski wonders if he should write a treatise about the Greek faith of our old grammarians or botanists who attributed the rose to masculine gender:

При человеке известного вкуса хвалили одну девушку и говорили: она хороша как роза. Что Вы говорите, как роза, она даже хороша как розан, отвечал человек известного вкуса. Чтобы ты не подумал, что повторяю тебе анекдот, спешу заявить, что это моего сочинения. Не написать ли трактат и о греческом исповедании наших старинных граматеев или ботаников, которые отнесли розу к мужескому роду?

In the presence of a man of certain tastes a girl was praised: “she is as beautiful as *roza* (a rose).” The man of certain tastes replied: “she is even as beautiful as *rozan.*”

A masculine form of *roza*, *rozan* (accented on the second syllable) brings to mind Rozanov, the author of *Lyudi lunnogo sveta* (“People of the Moonlight,” 1912). By “people of the moonlight” Rozanov (who argues that Leo Tolstoy and the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, another bearded vegetarian, displayed the features of “urningists”) means homosexuals. Shade’s *alter ego*, Kinbote is gay.

In his review of Koncheyev’s *Communication* Christopher Mortus (a loathsome critic in “The Gift”) quotes Rozanov:

Не помню кто - кажется, Розанов, говорит где-то", - начинал, крадучись, Мортус; и, приведя сперва эту недостоверную цитату, потом какую-то мысль, кем-то высказанную в парижском кафе после чьей-то лекции, начинал суживать эти искусственные круги вокруг "Сообщения" Кончеева, причём до конца так и не касался центра, а только изредка направлял к нему месмерический жест с внутреннего круга - и опять кружился. Получалось нечто вроде тех чёрных спиралей на картонных кругах, которые, в безумном стремлении обратиться в мишень, бесконечно вращаются в витринах берлинских мороженников.

“I do not remember who said—perhaps Rozanov said it somewhere,” began Mortus stealthily; and citing first this unauthentic quotation and then some thought expressed by somebody in a Paris café after someone’s lecture, he began to narrow these artificial circles around Koncheyev’s *Communication;* but even so, to the very end he never touched the center, but only directed now and then a mesmeric gesture toward it from the circumference—and again revolved. The result was something in the nature of those black spirals on cardboard circles which are everlastingly spinning in the windows of Berlin ice-cream parlors in a crazy effort to turn into bull’s-eyes. (Chapter Three)

The Russian word *mortus* comes from Latin *mortuus* (dead) and denotes “a hospital attendant who took away corpses during the epidemics, particularly, during the plague.” Such an attendant appears at the end of Pushkin’s little tragedy *Pir vo vremya* *chumy* (“A Feast in Time of Plague,” 1830). In Pushkin's little tragedy "Mozart and Salieri" (1830) Salieri says that he cut up music like a corpse and Mozart uses the phrase *nikto b* (none would). *Nikto b* is Botkin (Shade's, Kinbote's and Gradus' "real" name) in reverse.

In Chapter Three of “The Gift” Fyodor describes his juvenile metromania and mentions his collection of rhymes:

Рифмы по мере моей охоты за ними сложились у меня в практическую систему несколько картотечного порядка. Они были распределены по семейкам, получались гнезда рифм, пейзажи рифм. "Летучий" сразу собирал тучи над кручами жгучей пустыни и неминучей судьбы. "Небосклон" направлял музу к балкону и указывал ей на клен. "Цветы" подзывали мечты, на ты, среди темноты. Свечи, плечи, встречи и речи создавали общую атмосферу старосветского бала, Венского конгресса и губернаторских именин. "Глаза" синели в обществе бирюзы, грозы и стрекоз - и лучше было их не трогать. "Деревья" скучно стояли в паре с "кочевья", - как в наборной игре "городов", Швеция была представлена только двумя городами (а Франция, та, - двенадцатью!). "Ветер" был одинок - только вдали бегал непривлекательный сеттер, - да пользовалась его предложным падежом крымская гора, а родительный - приглашал геометра. Были и редкие экземпляры - с пустыми местами, оставляемыми для других представителей серии, вроде "аметистовый", к которому я не сразу подыскал "перелистывай" и совершенно неприменимого неистового пристава. Словом, это была прекрасно размеченная коллекция, всегда у меня бывшая под рукой.

As my hunt for them progressed, rhymes settled down into a practical system somewhat on the order of a card index. They were distributed in little families—rhyme-clusters, rhymescapes. *Letuchiy* (flying) immediately grouped *tuchi* (clouds) over the *kruchi* (steeps) of the *zhguchey* (burning) desert and of *neminuchey* (inevitable) fate. *Nebosklon* (sky) let the muse onto the *balkon* (balcony) and showed her a *klyon* (maple). *Tsvety* (flowers) and *ty* (thou) summoned *mechty* (fancies) in the midst of *temnoty* (darkness). *Svechi, plechi, vstrechi*, and *rechi* (tapers, shoulders, meetings, and speeches) created the old-world atmosphere of a ball at the Congress of Vienna or on the town governor’s birthday. *Glaza* (eyes) shone blue in the company of *biryuza* (turquoise), *groza* (thunderstorm), and *strekoza* (dragonfly), and it was better not to get involved in the series. *Derevya* (trees) found themselves dully paired with *kochevya* (nomad encampments) as happens in the game in which one has to collect cards with the names of cities, with only two representing Sweden (but a dozen in the case of France!). *Veter* (wind) had no mate, except for a not very attractive setter running about in the distance, but by shifting into the genitive, one could get words ending in “meter” to perform *(vetra-geometra)*. There were also certain treasured freaks, rhymes to which, like rare stamps in an album, were represented by blanks. Thus it took me a long time to discover that *ametistovyy* (amethystine) could be rhymed with *perelistyvay* (turn the pages), with *neistovyy* (furioso), and with the genitive case of an utterly unsuitable *pristav* (police constable). In short, it was a beautifully labeled collection that I had always close to hand.

In Chapter Four of EO (XLII: 1-4) Pushkin rhymes *rozy* (roses) with *morozy* (frosts):

И вот уже трещат морозы
И серебрятся средь полей...
(Читатель ждёт уж рифмы *розы*;
На, вот возьми её скорей!)

And there the frosts already crackle

and silver midst the fields

(the reader now expects the rhyme “froze-rose –

here you are, take it quick!).

In his EO Commentary (vol. II, pp. 470-471) VN points out that *morozy – rozy* is a Russian example of what Pope calls (in his *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 349-351) “sure returns still-expected rhymes:”

Where-e’er you find *the cooling western breeze*,

In the next line, it *whispers thro’ the trees*…

Shade is an authority on Pope. In Canto Two of his poem Shade speaks of his daughter (who always nursed a small mad hope) and mentions his book on Pope:

I think she always nursed a small mad hope.

I'd finished recently my book on Pope. (ll. 383-384)

At the end of Shade’s poem the reader can expect not only a *consonne d'appui* (“lane – slain”), but also the return of the rhyme “slain – windowpane.”