According to Van Veen (the narrator and main character in VN’s novel *Ada*, 1969), he partly derived the name of the main character in his novel *Letters from Terra* from the name of Aqua’s last doctor:

Poor Van! In his struggle to keep the writer of the letters from Terra strictly separate from the image of Ada, he gilt and carmined Theresa until she became a paragon of banality. This Theresa maddened with her messages a scientist on our easily maddened planet; his anagram-looking name, Sig Leymanksi, had been partly derived by Van from that of Aqua’s last doctor. When Leymanski’s obsession turned into love, and one’s sympathy got focused on his enchanting, melancholy, betrayed wife (née Antilia Glems), our author found himself confronted with the distressful task of now stamping out in Antilia, a born brunette, all traces of Ada, thus reducing yet another character to a dummy with bleached hair.

After beaming to Sig a dozen communications from her planet, Theresa flies over to him, and he, in his laboratory, has to place her on a slide under a powerful microscope in order to make out the tiny, though otherwise perfect, shape of his minikin sweetheart, a graceful microorganism extending transparent appendages toward his huge humid eye. Alas, the testibulus (test tube — never to be confused with *testiculus,* orchid), with Theresa swimming inside like a micromermaid, is ‘accidentally’ thrown away by Professor Leyman’s (he had trimmed his name by that time) assistant, Flora, initially an ivory-pale, dark-haired funest beauty, whom the author transformed just in time into a third bromidic dummy with a dun bun.

(Antilia later regained her husband, and Flora was weeded out. Ada’s addendum.) (2.2)

Describing Aqua’s madness and suicide, Van calls her last doctor, Sig Heiler, ‘papa Fig:’

In less than a week Aqua had accumulated more than two hundred tablets of different potency. She knew most of them — the jejune sedatives, and the ones that knocked you out from eight p.m. till midnight, and several varieties of superior soporifics that left you with limpid limbs and a leaden head after eight hours of non-being, and a drug which was in itself delightful but a little lethal if combined with a draught of the cleansing fluid commercially known as Morona; and a plump purple pill reminding her, she had to laugh, of those with which the little gypsy enchantress in the Spanish tale (dear to Ladore schoolgirls) puts to sleep all the sportsmen and all their bloodhounds at the opening of the hunting season. Lest some busybody resurrect her in the middle of the float-away process, Aqua reckoned she must procure for herself a maximum period of undisturbed stupor elsewhere than in a glass house, and the carrying out of that second part of the project was simplified and encouraged by another agent or double of the Isère Professor, a Dr Sig Heiler whom everybody venerated as a great guy and near-genius in the usual sense of near-beer. Such patients who proved by certain twitchings of the eyelids and other semiprivate parts under the control of medical students that Sig (a slightly deformed but not unhandsome old boy) was in the process of being dreamt of as a ‘papa Fig,’ spanker of girl bottoms and spunky spittoon-user, were assumed to be on the way to haleness and permitted, upon awakening, to participate in normal outdoor activities such as picnics. (1.3)

‘Papa Fig’ brings to mind Pig Pigment (as Ada calls Paul J. Gigment, an eminent painter):

Two other phenomena that she had observed even earlier proved ridiculously misleading. She must have been about nine when that elderly gentleman, an eminent painter whom she could not and would not name, came several times to dinner at Ardis Hall. Her drawing teacher, Miss Wintergreen, respected him greatly, though actually her natures mortes were considered (in 1888 and again 1958) incomparably superior to the works of the celebrated old rascal who drew his diminutive nudes invariably from behind — fig-picking, peach-buttocked nymphets straining upward, or else rock-climbing girl scouts in bursting shorts —

‘I know exactly,’ interrupted Van angrily, ‘whom you mean, and would like to place on record that even if his delicious talent is in disfavor today, Paul J. Gigment had every right to paint schoolgirls and poolgirls from any side he pleased. Proceed.’

Every time (said unruffled Ada) Pig Pigment came, she cowered when hearing him trudge and snort and pant upstairs, ever nearer like the Marmoreal Guest, that immemorial ghost, seeking her, crying for her in a thin, querulous voice not in keeping with marble.

‘Poor old chap,’ murmured Van. (1.18)

*Sig* is Russian for “whitefish.” In a letter of Oct. 4-6, 1888, to Suvorin Chekhov says that the editors of *Russkaya mysl’* (a literary magazine, 1880-1918) are *kopchyonye sigi* (the smoked whitefish) who have as much taste for literature as a pig has for oranges:

Что же касается «Русской мысли», то там сидят не литераторы, а копчёные сиги, которые столько же понимают в литературе, как свинья в апельсинах. К тому же библиографический отдел ведёт там дама. Если дикая утка, которая летит в поднебесье, может презирать свойскую, которая копается в навозе и в лужах и думает, что это хорошо, то так должны презирать художники и поэты мудрость копчёных сигов...

*Apel’siny* (oranges) mentioned by Chekhov bring to mind Ronald Oranger (old Van’s secretary). In Ilf and Petrov’s novel *Zolotoy telyonok* (“The Golden Calf,” 1931) Koreyko (a secret Soviet millionaire) receives a telegram from brothers Karamazov: *Gruzite apel’siny bochkakh* (“Load oranges barrels”). *Brat’ya Karamazovy* (“Brothers Karamazov,” 1880) is a novel by Dostoevski. The characters in Dostoevski’s novel *Bednye lyudi* (“Poor Folk,” 1846), written in an epistolary form, include Theresa, a servant woman who brings Makar Devushkin’s letters to Varenka Dobrosyolov and Varenka’s letters to Makar. In the old Russian alphabet *lyudi* (people) was the name of the letter L. The Antiterran L disaster in the *beau milieu* of the 19th century seems to correspond to the mock execution of Dostoevski and the Petrashevskians on Jan. 3, 1850, in our world. Van’s and Ada’s half-sister Lucette was born on January 3, 1876 (1.1).

Fig (Russian *figa* or *kukish*) being a gesture of derision and contempt, “papa Fig” brings to mind *kukish v karmane* (make a long nose on the sly), a phrase used by von Koren in Chekhov’s story *Duel’* (“The Duel,” 1891):

- Не знаю, что ты хочешь! - сказал Самойленко, зевая. - Бедненькой по простоте захотелось поговорить с тобой об умном, а ты уж заключение выводишь. Ты сердит на него за что-то, ну и на неё за компанию. А она прекрасная женщина!

- Э, полно! Обыкновенная содержанка, развратная и пошлая. Послушай, Александр Давидыч, когда ты встречаешь простую бабу, которая не живёт с мужем, ничего не делает и только хи-хи да ха-ха, ты говоришь ей: ступай работать. Почему же ты тут робеешь и боишься говорить правду? Потому только, что Надежда Фёдоровна живёт на содержании не у матроса, а у чиновника?

- Что же мне с ней делать? - рассердился Самойленко. - Бить её, что ли?

- Не льстить пороку. Мы проклинаем порок только за глаза, а это похоже на кукиш в кармане. Я зоолог, или социолог, что одно и то же, ты - врач; общество нам верит; мы обязаны указывать ему на тот страшный вред, каким угрожает ему и будущим поколениям существование госпож вроде этой Надежды Ивановны.

- Фёдоровны. - поправил Самойленко. - А что должно делать общество?

- Оно? Это его дело. По-моему, самый прямой и верный путь, это - насилие. Manu militari {Военною силою (лат.).} ее следует отправить к мужу, а если муж не примет, то отдать ее в каторжные работы или какое-нибудь исправительное заведение.

- Уф; - вздохнул Самойленко; он помолчал и спросил тихо: - Как-то на днях ты говорил, что таких людей, как Лаевский, уничтожать надо... Скажи мне, если бы того... положим, государство или общество поручило тебе уничтожить его, то ты бы... решился?

- Рука бы не дрогнула.

"I don't know what you want," said Samoylenko, yawning; "the poor thing, in the simplicity of her heart, wanted to talk to you of scientific subjects, and you draw a conclusion from that. You're cross with him for something or other, and with her, too, to keep him company. She's a splendid woman."

"Ah, nonsense! An ordinary kept woman, depraved and vulgar. Listen, Aleksandr Davidych; when you meet a simple peasant woman, who isn't living with her husband, who does nothing but giggle, you tell her to go and work. Why are you timid in this case and afraid to tell the truth? Simply because Nadezhda Fyodorovna is kept, not by a sailor, but by an official."

"What am I to do with her?" said Samoylenko, getting angry. "Beat her or what?

"Not flatter vice. We curse vice only behind its back, and that's like making a long nose at it round a corner. I am a zoologist or a sociologist, which is the same thing; you are a doctor; society believes in us; we ought to point out the terrible harm which threatens it and the next generation from the existence of ladies like Nadezhda Ivanovna."

"Fyodorovna," Samoylenko corrected. "But what ought society to do?"

"Society? That's its affair. To my thinking the surest and most direct method is--compulsion. *Manu militari* she ought to be returned to her husband; and if her husband won't take her in, then she ought to be sent to penal servitude or some house of correction."

"Ouf!" sighed Samoylenko. He paused and asked quietly: "You said the other day that people like Laevsky ought to be destroyed. . . . Tell me, if you . . . if the State or society commissioned you to destroy him, could you . . . bring yourself to it?"

"My hand would not tremble." (chapter VIII)

In Chekhov’s story Laevsky mentions *klok zemli* (a plot of ground):

Боже мой, - вздохнул Лаевский, - до какой степени мы искалечены цивилизацией! Полюбил я замужнюю женщину; она меня тоже... Вначале у нас были и поцелуи, и тихие вечера, и клятвы, и Спенсер, и идеалы, и общие интересы... Какая ложь! Мы бежали, в сущности, от мужа, но лгали себе, что бежим от пустоты нашей интеллигентной жизни. 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.

"My God!" sighed Laevsky; "how distorted we all are by civilisation! I fell in love with a married woman and she with me. . . . To begin with, we had kisses, and calm evenings, and vows, and Spencer, and ideals, and interests in common. . . . What a deception! We really ran away from her husband, but we lied to ourselves and made out that we ran away from the emptiness of the life of the educated class. We pictured our future like this: to begin with, in the Caucasus, while we were getting to know the people and the place, I would put on the Government uniform and enter the service; then at our leisure we would pick out a plot of ground, would toil in the sweat of our brow, would have a vineyard and a field, and so on.” (chapter I)

In her suicide note Aqua mentions Herr Doktor Sig and uses a phrase *klok of* a *chelovek* (a piece of man):

*Aujourd’hui (heute-*toity!) I, this eye-rolling toy, have earned the psykitsch right to enjoy a landparty with Herr Doktor Sig, Nurse Joan the Terrible, and several ‘patients,’ in the neighboring *bar* (piney wood) where I noticed exactly the same skunk-like squirrels, Van, that your Darkblue ancestor imported to Ardis Park, where you will ramble one day, no doubt. 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. I, poor *Princesse Lointaine, très lointaine* by now, do not know where I stand. Hence I must fall. So adieu, my dear, dear son, and farewell, poor Demon, I do not know the date or the season, but it is a reasonably, and no doubt seasonably, fair day, with a lot of cute little ants queuing to get at my pretty pills.

[Signed] My sister’s sister who *teper’ iz ada* (‘now is out of hell’) (1.3)

Chekhov’s story *Zhenshchina s tochki zreniya p’yanitsy* (“Woman as Seen by a Drunkard,” 1885), in which girls under sixteen are compared to *aqua distillatae* (distilled water), was signed *Brat moego brata* (My brother’s brother). In a letter of Apr. 13, 1895, to Suvorin Chekhov mentions *kukish v karmane*:

Одолеваю «Семью Поланецких» Сенкевича. Это польская творожная пасха с шафраном. Если к Полю Бурже прибавить Потапенку, попрыскать варшавским одеколоном и разделить на два, то получится Сенкевич. «Поланецкие» несомненно навеяны «Космополисом» Бурже, Римом и женитьбой (Сенкевич недавно женился); тут и катакомбы, и старый чудак-профессор, вздыхающий по идеализме, и иже во святых Лев XIII с неземным лицом, и совет возвратиться к молитвеннику, и клевета на декадента, который умирает от морфинизма, поисповедавшись и причастившись, т. е. раскаявшись в своих заблуждениях во имя церкви. Семейного счастья и рассуждений о любви напущена чёртова пропасть, и жена героя до такой степени верна мужу и так тонко понимает «сердцем» бога и жизнь, что становится в конце концов приторно и неловко, как после слюнявого поцелуя. Сенкевич, по-видимому, не читал Толстого, не знаком с Нитче, о гипнотизме он толкует, как мещанин, но зато каждая страница у него так и пестрит Рубенсами, Боргезе, Корреджио, Боттичели — и это для того, чтобы щегольнуть перед буржуазным читателем своею образованностью и показать кукиш в кармане материализму. Цель романа: убаюкать буржуазию в ее золотых снах. Будь верен жене, молись с ней по молитвеннику, наживай деньги, люби спорт — и твое дело в шляпе и на том и на этом свете. Буржуазия очень любит так называемые «положительные» типы и романы с благополучными концами, так как они успокаивают ее на мысли, что можно и капитал наживать и невинность соблюдать, быть зверем и в то же время счастливым.

I am sick of Sienkiewicz’s “The Family of the Polonetskys.” It’s the Polish Easter cake with saffron. Add Potapenko to Paul Bourget, sprinkle with Warsaw eau-de-Cologne, divide in two, and you get Sienkiewicz. “The Polonetskys” is unmistakably inspired by Bourget’s “Cosmopolis,” by Rome and by marriage (Sienkiewicz has lately got married). We have the catacombs and a queer old professor sighing after idealism, and Leo XIII, with the unearthly face among the saints, and the advice to return to the prayer-book, and the libel on the decadent who dies of morphinism after confessing and taking the sacrament — that is, after repenting of his errors in the name of the Church. There is a devilish lot of family happiness and talking about love, and the hero’s wife is so faithful to her husband and so subtly comprehends “with her heart” the mysteries of God and life, that in the end one feels mawkish and uncomfortable as after a slobbering kiss. Sienkiewicz has evidently not read Tolstoy, and does not know Nietzsche, he talks about hypnotism like a shopman; on the other hand every page is positively sprinkled with Rubens, Borghese, Correggio, Botticelli — and that is done to show off his culture to the bourgeois reader and make a long nose on the sly at materialism. The object of the novel is to lull the bourgeoisie to sleep in its golden dreams. Be faithful to your wife, pray with her over the prayer-book, save money, love sport, and all is well with you in this world and the next. The bourgeoisie is very fond of so-called practical types and novels with happy endings, since they soothe it with the idea that one can both accumulate capital and preserve innocence, be a beast and at the same time be happy. . . .

In a letter of May 7, 1889, to Suvorin Chekhov speaks of Bourget’s “Disciple” and compares psychology to alchemy:

Я прочёл «Ученика» Бурже в Вашем изложении и в русском переводе («Северный вестник»). Дело мне представляется в таком виде. Бурже талантливый, очень умный и образованный человек. Он так полно знаком с методом естественных наук и так его прочувствовал, как будто хорошо учился на естественном или медицинском факультете. Он не чужой в той области, где берётся хозяйничать, — заслуга, которой не знают русские писатели, ни новые, ни старые. Что же касается книжной, учёной психологии, то он её так же плохо знает, как лучшие из психологов. Знать её всё равно, что не знать, так как она не наука, а фикция, нечто вроде алхимии, которую пора уже сдать в архив.

I have read Bourget’s “Disciple” in the Russian translation. This is how it strikes me. Bourget is a gifted, very intelligent and cultured man. He is as thoroughly acquainted with the method of the natural sciences, and as imbued with it as though he had taken a good degree in science or medicine. He is not a stranger in the domain he proposes to deal with — a merit absent in Russian writers both new and old. As to the bookish, scientific psychology, he knows it as badly as the best among the psychologists. To know it is the same as not to know, because it is not a science but a fiction, something like alchemy which it is time to leave out of account.

*Pora sdat’ v arkhiv* (it is time to leave out of account), a phrase used by Chekhov, brings to mind *arkhivy ada* (the archives of hell) mentioned by Pushkin at the end of his poem *O vy, kotorye lyubili…* (“O you, who loved…” 1821):

Картины, думы и рассказы  
Для вас я вновь перемешал,  
Смешное с важным сочетал  
И бешеной любви проказы  
В архивах ада отыскал...

For you I mixed up again

pictures, thoughts and stories,

combined the funny with the serious

and in the archives of hell

discovered the pranks of frenzied love.

It seems that C. G. Jung, the author of *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944), has not read Chekhov. In his novel *Pnin* (1957) VN mentions the so-called mandala and Dr Jung:

Nothing of the slightest interest to therapists could Victor be made to discover in those beautiful, beautiful Rorschach ink blots, wherein children see, or should see, all kinds of things, seascapes, escapes, capes, the worms of imbecility, neurotic tree trunks, erotic galoshes, umbrellas, and dumb-bells. Nor did any of Victor's casual sketches represent the so-called mandala--a term supposedly meaning (in Sanskrit) a magic ring, and applied by Dr Jung and others to any doodle in the shape of a more or less fourfold spreading structure, such as a halved mangosteen, or a cross, or the wheel on which egos are broken like Morphos, or more exactly, the molecule of carbon, with its four valences--that main chemical component of the brain, automatically magnified and reflected on paper. (Chapter Four, 3)

In his review of Van’s *Letters from Terra* Max Mispel (member of the German Department at Goluba University) wonders if the author’s real name is not Mandalatov:

The only other compliment was paid to poor Voltemand in a little Manhattan magazine *(The Village Eyebrow)* by the poet Max Mispel (another botanical name — ‘medlar’ in English), member of the German Department at Goluba University. Herr Mispel, who liked to air his authors, discerned in *Letters from Terra* the influence of Osberg (Spanish writer of pretentious fairy tales and mystico-allegoric anecdotes, highly esteemed by short-shift thesialists) as well as that of an obscene ancient Arab, expounder of anagrammatic dreams, Ben Sirine, thus transliterated by Captain de Roux, according to Burton in his adaptation of Nefzawi’s treatise on the best method of mating with obese or hunchbacked females (*The Perfumed Garden,* Panther edition, p. 187, a copy given to ninety-three-year-old Baron Van Veen by his ribald physician Professor Lagosse). His critique ended as follows: ‘If Mr Voltemand (or Voltimand or Mandalatov) is a psychiatrist, as I think he might be, then I pity his patients, while admiring his talent.’ (2.2)

In Ilf and Petrov’s *Dvenadtsat’ stuliev* (“The Twelve Chairs,” 1928) Ostap Bender calls Varfolomey Korobeynikov (the compiler of “The Mirror of Life Index”) *goluba* (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: *Alfavit – zerkalo zhizni*, “The Mirror of Life Index”)

alfavit = Flavita

Sig Leymanksi = Kingsley Amis

Mandalatov + Ardis/Sidra = mandala + avtor/tovar + Dis

Antilia Glems + Gerald + vesna + Ada = gitanilla Esmeralda + navsegda

alfavit – alphabet

Flavita – the Antiterran name of Russian Scrabble (1.36)

Kingsley Amis – a waggish British novelist (1922-95) keenly interested in physics fiction

Ardis – Daniel Veen’s family estate

Sidra – Gulf of Sidra; Ivan Veen is the author of *Reflections in Sidra* (3.7)

avtor – author

tovar – goods; wares; article; commodity

Dis – city in Dante's *Inferno*

Gerald – Maurice Gerald, the main character in Captain Mayne Reid’s *Headless Horseman* (on Antiterra *The Headless Horseman* is a poem by Pushkin, 1.28)

vesna – spring

gitanilla Esmeralda – a gypsy girl in Victor Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831)

navsegda – forever

The name Sig Heiler (a play on the Nazi salute *Sieg heil!* and *Heiler*, German for “healer”) seems to hint at Carl Jung.

Alexey Sklyarenko