In VN’s novel *Ada* (1969) Van Veen (the narrator and main character) paraphrases the lines in Lermontov’s poem *The Demon* (1829-40), replacing “the summits of the Caucasus” with “the summits of the Tacit:”

Somehow, after the interchange occasioned by Lucette’s death such nonclandestine correspondence had been established with the tacit sanction of Demon:

And o’er the summits of the Tacit

He, banned from Paradise, flew on:

Beneath him, like a brilliant’s facet,

Mount Peck with snows eternal shone. (3.7)

In his ode *Exegi monumentum* (3.30) Horace mentions *virgo tacita* (the silent maiden) who accompanies *pontifex* (the high priest) as he climbs the Capitoline:

*Non omnis moriar multaque pars mei*

*vitabit Libitinam; usque ego postera*

*crescam laude recens, dum Capitolium*

*scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex.*

I shall not wholly die and a greater part of me

will evade Libitina; continually I,

newly arisen, may be strengthened with ensuing praise so long

as the high priest climbs the Capitoline with the silent maiden. (ll. 6-10)

Libitina is the Roman goddess of corpses and tombs. According to Ada, at Marina’s funeral Demon said that he would not cheat the poor grubs:

‘Oh, I like you better with that nice overweight — there’s more of you. It’s the maternal gene, I suppose, because Demon grew leaner and leaner. He looked positively Quixotic when I saw him at Mother’s funeral. It was all very strange. He wore blue mourning. D’Onsky’s son, a person with only one arm, threw his remaining one around Demon and both wept *comme des fontaines.* Then a robed person who looked like an extra in a technicolor incarnation of Vishnu made an incomprehensible sermon. Then she went up in smoke. He said to me, sobbing: *"I* will not cheat the poor grubs!" Practically a couple of hours after he broke that promise we had sudden visitors at the ranch — an incredibly graceful moppet of eight, black-veiled, and a kind of duenna, also in black, with two bodyguards. The hag demanded certain fantastic sums — which Demon, she said, had not had time to pay, for "popping the hymen" — whereupon I had one of our strongest boys throw out *vsyu* (the entire) *kompaniyu.’* (3.8)

Van’s and Ada’s father, Demon Veen perishes in a mysterious airplane disaster above the Pacific in the Gavaille (the Antiterran name of Hawaii) region and thus manages to evade Libitina. In the first stanza of his poem *Segodnya* (“Today,” 1922) Bryusov mentions *zelyonye sklony Gavayi* (the green slopes of Hawaii):

На пёстрых площадях Занзибара,

По зелёным склонам Гавайи,

Распахиваются приветливо бары,

Звонят, предупреждая, трамваи.

In the poem’s fourth stanza Bryusov mentions *nash Sovetskiy Ostrov* (our Soviet Island):

Этому морю одно – захлестнуть бы

Тебя, наш Советский Остров!

Твои, по созвездиям, судьбы

Предскажет какой Калиостро!

Shortly before his death Demon bought a small Pacific island:

The table talk dealt mainly with business matters. Demon had recently bought a small, perfectly round Pacific island, with a pink house on a green bluff and a sand beach like a frill (as seen from the air), and now wished to sell the precious little palazzo in East Manhattan that Van did not want. Mr Sween, a greedy practitioner with flashy rings on fat fingers, said he might buy it if some of the pictures were thrown in. The deal did not come off. (3.7)

Bryusov’s poem *Pamaytnik* (“Exegi Monumentum,” 1912) has the epigraph from Horace’s *Exegi monumentum*: *Sume superbiam* (accept the proud honor). In his essay *Tvorchestvo i remeslo* (“Creative Work and Apprenticeship,” 1917) G. Ivanov contrasts Bryusov with Blok and says that Bryusov’s *Pamyatnik* reminds one of Pushkin’s parody on Count Khvostov:

На одной из первых страниц книги мы читаем следующий «Памятник»:

Мой памятник стоит, из строф созвучных сложен.
Кричите, буйствуйте, — его вам не свалить!
Распад певучих слов в грядущем невозможен,
Я есмь и вечно должен быть.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

И станов всех бойцы, и люди разных вкусов,
В каморке бедняка и во дворце царя,
Ликуя, назовут меня — Валерий Брюсов,
О друге с дружбой говоря.

Как не вспомнить пародию Пушкина на графа Хвостова:

Он (Байрон) лорд, ты — граф, поэты оба,
Се, мнится, явно сходство есть.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Невольно кажется, что Брюсов принял эти строки всерьёз. Гораций и Пушкин в своё время написали по «Памятнику». Теперь, кажется, всё в порядке, всё как у великих поэтов, и кто же осмелится утверждать противное!

According to G. Ivanov, Bryusov seems to have taken in earnest the lines from Pushkin’s “Ode to Count Khvostov:”

He (Byron) is a Lord, you are a Count, both of you are poets,

thus, meseems, there is an obvious resemblance.

In Blok’s poem *Vozmezdie* (“Retribution,” 1910-21) the hero’s father was nicknamed Demon because Dostoevski (who appears in Blok’s poem as a character) remarked that he resembled Byron:

Раз (он гостиной проходил)

Его заметил Достоевский.

"Кто сей красавец? - он спросил

Негромко, наклонившись к Вревской:

Похож на Байрона". - Словцо

Крылатое все подхватили,

И все на новое лицо

Свое вниманье обратили.

На сей раз милостив был свет,

Обыкновенно - столь упрямый;

"Красив, умён" - твердили дамы,

Мужчины морщились: "поэт"...

Но, если морщатся мужчины,

Должно быть, зависть их берёт...

А чувств прекрасной половины

Никто, сам чорт, не разберёт...

И дамы были в восхищеньи:

"Он - Байрон, значит - демон..." - Что ж?

Он впрямь был с гордым лордом схож

Лица надменным выраженьем

И чем-то, что хочу назвать

Тяжёлым пламенем печали. (Chapter One)

In Chekhov’s play *Tri sestry* (“The Three Sisters,” 1901) known on Antiterra (aka Demonia, Earth’s twin planet on which *Ada* is set) as *Four Sisters* (2.1, *et passim*) Solyony (who kills Irina’s fiancé, Baron Tuzenbakh, in a pistol duel) imagines that he resembles Lermontov (actually, there is no resemblance at all). According to Kinbote (in VN’s novel *Pale Fire*, 1962, Shade’s mad commentator who imagines that he is Charles the Beloved, the last self-exiled king of Zembla), Zembla is a corruption not of the Russian *zemlya* (earth; land), but of Semberland, a land of reflections, of “resemblers:”

A visiting German lecturer from Oxford kept exclaiming, aloud and under his breath, that the resemblance was "absolutely unheard of," and when I negligently observed that all bearded Zemblans resembled one another – and that, in fact, the name Zembla is a corruption not of the Russian *zemlya*, but of Semberland, a land of reflections, of "resemblers" – my tormentor said: "Ah, yes, but King Charles wore no beard, and yet it is his very face! I had [he added] the honor of being seated within a few yards of the royal box at a Sport Festival in Onhava which I visited with my wife, who is Swedish, in 1956. We have a photograph of him at home, and her sister knew very well the mother of one of his pages, an interesting woman. Don't you see [almost tugging at Shade's lapel' the astounding similarity of features – of the upper part of the face, and the eyes, yes, the eyes, and the nose bridge?"

"Nay, sir" [said Shade, refolding a leg and slightly rolling his armchair as wont to do when about to deliver a pronouncement] "there is no resemblance at all. I have seen the King in newsreels, and there is no resemblance. Resemblances are the shadows of differences. Different people see different similarities and similar differences." (note line 894)

In the first stanza of his last poem, *On this Day I Complete my Thirty-Sixth Year* (1824), Byron says that he cannot be beloved:

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,

Since others it hath ceased to move:

Yet though I cannot be beloved,

Still let me love!

In the poem’s last stanza Byron mentions a Soldier’s Grave:

Seek out—less often sought than found—

A Soldier's Grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy Ground,

And take thy rest.

Lermontov’s poem *Net, ya ne Bayron, ya drugoy*… (“No, I’m not Byron, I’m another…” 1832) ends in the line: *Ya – ili Bog – ili nikto!* (Myself – or God – or none at all!)

Bog + nikto + ladon’ + Nabokov = Botkin + ogon’ + Aldanov + bok

Bog – God

nikto – nobody

ladon’ – palm (of a hand)

Botkin – Shade’s, Kinbote’s and Gradus’ “real” name

ogon’ – fire

Aldanov – Mark Aldanov (1886-1957), a writer; Byron is the main character in Aldanov’s novel *Mogila voina* (“A Soldier’s Grave,” 1938)

bok – side

In my previous post (“Joe Lavender, Villa Libitina & Hebe's Cup in *Pale Fire*; Sokolovski & Audace in LATH”) I forgot to mention Dora, a lame woman whom Vadim Vadimovich meets in Leningrad and who tells him that as a girl she dreamt of becoming a female clown, ‘Madame Byron,’ or ‘Trek Trek’ (5.2). ‘Trek Trek’ brings to mind network roulette that Sybil Shade (the poet’s wife) played in the night of Hazel’s death:

Eleven struck. You sighed. "Well, I'm afraid
There's nothing else of interest." You played
Network roulette: the dial turned and trk'ed.
Commercials were beheaded. Faces flicked.
An open mouth in midsong was struck out.
An imbecile with sideburns was about
To use his gun, but you were much too quick.
A jovial Negro raised his trumpet. Trk. (ll. 463-470)

According to Kinbote, Hazel Shade (the poet’s daughter who twisted words) resembled him in certain respects:

One of the examples her father gives is odd. I am quite sure it was I who one day, when we were discussing "mirror words," observed (and I recall the poet's expression of stupefaction) that "spider" in reverse is "redips," and "T.S. Eliot," "toilest." But then it is also true that Hazel Shade resembled me in certain respects. (note to Lines 347-348)

On Antiterra T. S. Eliot is represented by Milton Eliot, the real-estate man, and old Kithar K. L. Sween, the author of *Agonic Lines*, *The Waistline* (a satire in free verse on Anglo-American feeding habits) and *Cardinal Grishkin* (an overtly subtle yarn extolling the Roman faith). Van sees them together in the lobby of Alphonse Four (Lucette’s hotel in Paris):

The Bourbonian-chinned, dark, sleek-haired, ageless concierge, dubbed by Van in his blazer days ‘Alphonse Cinq,’ believed he had just seen Mlle Veen in the Récamier room where Vivian Vale’s golden veils were on show. With a flick of coattail and a swing-gate click, Alphonse dashed out of his lodge and went to see. Van’s eye over his umbrella crook traveled around a carousel of Sapsucker paperbacks (with that wee striped woodpecker on every spine): *The Gitanilla, Salzman, Salzman, Salzman, Invitation to a Climax, Squirt, The Go-go Gang, The Threshold of Pain, The Chimes of Chose, The Gitanilla —* here a Wall Street, very ‘patrician’ colleague of Demon’s, old Kithar K.L. Sween, who wrote verse, and the still older real-estate magnate Milton Eliot, went by without recognizing grateful Van, despite his being betrayed by several mirrors.

The concierge returned shaking his head. Out of the goodness of his heart Van gave him a Goal guinea and said he’d call again at one-thirty. He walked through the lobby (where the author of *Agonic Lines* and Mr Eliot, *affalés,* with a great amount of jacket over their shoulders, *dans des fauteuils,* were comparing cigars) and, leaving the hotel by a side exit, crossed the rue des Jeunes Martyres for a drink at Ovenman’s. (3.3)

Describing his visit to Paris (also known on Antiterra as Lute), Van mentions the Avenue Guillaume Pitt:

On a bleak morning between the spring and summer of 1901, in Paris, as Van, black-hatted, one hand playing with the warm loose change in his topcoat pocket and the other, fawn-gloved, upswinging a furled English umbrella, strode past a particularly unattractive sidewalk café among the many lining the Avenue Guillaume Pitt, a chubby bald man in a rumpled brown suit with a watch-chained waistcoat stood up and hailed him. (3.2)

In his “Ode to Count Khvostov” Pushkin mentions *lyutyi Pit* (ferocious Pitt) who is trembling in Styx:

Султан ярится[1](http://ilibrary.ru/text/551/p.1/index.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22fn1). Кровь Эллады
И резвоскачет[2](http://ilibrary.ru/text/551/p.1/index.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22fn2), и кипит.
Открылись грекам древни клады[3](http://ilibrary.ru/text/551/p.1/index.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22fn3),
Трепещет в Стиксе лютый Пит[4](http://ilibrary.ru/text/551/p.1/index.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22fn4).

In footnote 4 Pushkin says: “G. Pitt, the famous English minister and notorious enemy of freedom.” On Antiterra France was annexed by England in 1815.

Pushkin’s poem begins: *Sultan yaritsya* (The sultan is furious). Describing the catastrophe in which his father perished, Van compares himself to a sultan:

Idly, one March morning, 1905, on the terrace of Villa Armina, where he sat on a rug, surrounded by four or five lazy nudes, like a sultan, Van opened an American daily paper published in Nice. In the fourth or fifth worst airplane disaster of the young century, a gigantic flying machine had inexplicably disintegrated at fifteen thousand feet above the Pacific between Lisiansky and Laysanov Islands in the Gavaille region. (3.7)

Villa Armina brings to mind Villa Libitina visited by Gradus in *Pale Fire*. *Gradus* is Russian for “degree.” In his memoir essay “Bryusov” (1925) Hodasevich uses the phrase *na stol’ko-to gradusov* (to so and so many degrees):

А какая надежда на то, что в истории литературы будет сказано: "в таком-то году повернул русскую литературу на столько-то градусов".

And what hope that in the history of literature it will be said: “in the year so and so he [Bryusov] turned Russian Literature to so and so many degrees.”

Armina = Marina = Ariman = Mirana

Ariman – Ahriman (the evil spirit in Zoroastrianism) in Russian spelling

Mirana – Hotel Mirana where Humbert Humbert (the narrator and main character in VN’s novel *Lolita*, 1955) spent his childhood

In her memoir essay on Bryusov, *Geroy truda* (“The Hero of Toil,” 1925), Marina Tsvetaev calls Bryusov *trizhdy rimlyanin* (a triple Roman):

Три слова являют нам Брюсова: воля, вол, волк. Триединство не только звуковое - смысловое - и воля - Рим, и вол - Рим, и волк - Рим. Трижды римлянином был Валерий Брюсов: волей и волом - в поэзии, волком (homo homini lupus est) в жизни. И не успокоится моё несправедливое, но жаждущее справедливости сердце, покамест в Риме - хотя бы в отдаленнейшем из пригородов его - не встанет - в чём, если не в мраморе? - изваяние: СКИФСКОМУ РИМЛЯНИНУ РИМ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Alexey Sklyarenko