In VN’s novel *Look at the Harlequins!* (1974) Vadim (the narrator and main character) mentions the Rembrandt, a little hotel in London, and the two or three small diamonds that melted away faster than hailstones:

After a period of loafing through unremembered German and Dutch towns, I crossed over to England. The Rembrandt, a little hotel in London, was my next address. The two or three small diamonds that I kept in a chamois pouch melted away faster than hailstones. (1.2)

At the end of his essay *On Hodasevich* (1939) VN mentions a human image that melts like a hailstone on a window sill:

Что ж, ещё немного сместилась жизнь, ещё одна привычка нарушена -- своя привычка чужого бытия. Утешения нет, если поощрять чувство утраты личным воспоминанием о кратком, хрупком, тающем, как градина на  подоконнике, человеческом образе.

Well, so it goes, yet another plane of life has been slightly displaced, yet another habit — the habit (one's own) of (another person's) existence — has been broken. There is no consolation, if one starts to encourage the sense of loss by one's private recollections of a brief, brittle, human image that melts like a hailstone on a window sill.

Andrey Bely’s essay on Hodasevich is entitled *Rembrandtova pravda v poezii nashikh dney* (“The Rembrandt Truth in the Poetry of our Days,” 1922). In his essay on Hodasevich Andrey Bely mentions a still life of two apples:

Недавно увидел эскиз я: два яблока с червоточиной на краснейшей бумаге, фон синий и скомканный — только два яблока! Но захотелося мне подскочить и воскликнуть: «Да это ведь — чудо: яблоки, как живые (их взять бы да съесть)—вместе с тем—откровенье духовного мира они».

At the end of Pushkin’s drama *Boris Godunov* (1825) the second person 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.

One of the main characters in Pushkin’s drama, Grishka Otrepiev (the Impostor) flees from Russia, crossing the Lithuanian border. A Red Army soldier on the Polish border calls Vadim *yablochko* (“little apple”) and asks him whither is he rolling:

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)

There is Blok in *yabloko* (apple). In his poem *Skify* (“The Scythians,” 1918) Alexander Blok mentions “the Mongolian savage horde:”

Идите все, идите на Урал!
Мы очищаем место бою
Стальных машин, где дышит интеграл,
С монгольской дикою ордою!

Advance, advance to Ural’s crest,
We offer you a battleground so neat
Where your machines of steel in serried ranks abreast
With the Mongolian savage horde will meet.

Blok’s poem has the epigraph from Vladimir Solovyov: ‘Panmongolism – the word is fierce, but I love its sound.’ The philosopher and poet Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900) is the author of *Tri svidaniya* (“Three Meetings,” 1897), a narrative poem in which London is mentioned, and *Tri razgovora o voyne, progresse i kontse vsemirnoy istorii* (“Three Conversations about War, Progress, and the End of History,” 1899). At the beginning of LATH Vadim mentions his three or four successive wives:

I met the first of my three or four successive wives in somewhat odd circumstances, the development of which resembled a clumsy conspiracy, with nonsensical details and a main plotter who not only knew nothing of its real object but insisted on making inept moves that seemed to preclude the slightest possibility of success. Yet out of those very mistakes he unwittingly wove a  web, in which a  set of  reciprocal  blunders on my part caused me to get involved and fulfill the destiny that was the only aim of the plot. (1.1)

In exile Vadim discovers an unexpected patron in the person of Count Starov, a retired diplomat whose name comes from *staryi* (old):

On the gray eve of poverty, the author, then a self-exiled youth (I transcribe from an old diary), discovered an unexpected patron in the person of Count Starov, a grave old-fashioned Mason who had graced several great Embassies during a spacious span of international intercourse, and who since 1913 had resided in London. (ibid.)

According to Vadim, Count Starov offered him a permanent job in the White Cross (an organization that helped Russian Christians all over the world). The penname Bely means “white.” In the last lines of his poem *Ya ne predal beloe znamya*… (“I did not betray the white banner…” 1914) Blok compares his love to *zvezda Vifleema* (the star of Bethlehem):

Я не предал белое знамя,

Оглушённый криком врагов,

Ты прошла ночными путями,

Мы с тобой - одни у валов.

Да, ночные пути, роковые,

Развели нас и вновь свели,

И опять мы к тебе, Россия,

Добрели из чужой земли.

Крест и насыпь могилы братской,

Вот где ты теперь, тишина!

Лишь щемящей песни солдатской

Издали несётся волна.

А вблизи - всё пусто и немо,

В смертном сне - враги и друзья.

И горит звезда Вифлеема

Так светло, как любовь моя.

And the star of Bethlehem shines

As brightly, as my love.

At the beginning of Blok’s drama *Roza i krest* (“The Rose and the Cross,” 1912) Bertrand mentions *yabloni staryi stvol* (the old trunk of an apple-tree):

Яблони старый ствол,

Расшатанный бурей февральской!

Жадно ждёшь ты весны...

Тёплый ветер дохнёт, и нежной травою

Зазеленеет замковый вал...

Чем ты, старый, ответишь тогда

Ручьям и птицам певучим?

Лишь две-три бледно-розовых ветви протянешь

В воздух, омытый дождями,

Чёрный, бурей измученный ствол!

Vadim’s surname (never mentioned in LATH) that he forgets in his old age (but then remembers again) seems to be Yablonski. Vadim’s real father and the father of Vadim’s first three wives (Iris Black, Annette Blagovo and Louise Adamson) seems to be Count Starov. In his poem *Angel-khranitel’* (“The Guardian Angel,” 1903) addressed to his wife Lyubov’ Mendeleev Alexander Blok says that his wife is also his sister, bride and daughter:

За то, что связала нас тайна и ночь,
Что ты мне сестра, и невеста, и дочь.

За то, что нам долгая жизнь суждена,
О, даже за то, что мы - муж и жена!

Because we are bound by secrets and night.
Because you’re my sister, my daughter, my bride.

Because we are destined to live a long life,
And more so, because we are - husband and wife!

(tr. A. Kneller)

In 1960 Vadim’s daughter Bel marries Charlie Everett who changes his name to Karl Vetrov and takes his wife to the Soviet Russia. The surname Vetrov comes from *veter* (wind). Blok is the author of *O chyom poyot veter*… (“Of What the Wind Sings,” 1913), a cycle of six poems.

In the late 1960s Vadim visits Leningrad incognito in the hope to find his daughter. There is *grad* (obs., city) in Leningrad (St. Petersburg’s name in 1924-91) and in *gradina* (hailstone). According to Vadim, his and Morozov’s books are brought out by the “Bronze Horseman” publishing house:

The "Boyan" publishing firm (Morozov's and mine was the "Bronze Horseman," its main rival), with a bookshop (selling not only émigré editions but also tractor novels from Moscow) and a lending library, occupied a smart three-story house of the *hôtel particulier* type. (2.4)

In his Introduction to *Mednyi vsadnik* (“The Bronze Horseman,” 1833) Pushkin calls St. Petersburg *yunyi grad* (the young city) and compares Moscow to *porfironosnaya vdova* (a porphyry widow):

Прошло сто лет, и юный град,

Полнощных стран краса и диво,

Из тьмы лесов, из топи блат

Вознесся пышно, горделиво;

Где прежде финский рыболов,

Печальный пасынок природы,

Один у низких берегов

Бросал в неведомые воды

Свой ветхой невод, ныне там

По оживленным берегам

Громады стройные теснятся

Дворцов и башен; корабли

Толпой со всех концов земли

К богатым пристаням стремятся;

В гранит оделася Нева;

Мосты повисли над водами;

Темно-зелёными садами

Её покрылись острова,

И перед младшею столицей

Померкла старая Москва,

Как перед новою царицей

Порфироносная вдова.

Pushkin calls the Finnish fisherman *pasynok prirody* (nature’s stepson). In his poem *Ya rodilsya v Moskve…* (“I was born in Moscow…” 1923) Hodasevich calls himself “Russia’s stepson” and mentions Poland

Я родился в Москве. Я дыма
Над польской кровлей не видал,
И ладанки с землёй родимой
Мне мой отец не завещал.

России – пасынок, а Польше –
Не знаю сам, кто Польше я.
Но: восемь томиков, не больше, –
И в них вся родина моя.

Вам – под ярмо ль подставить выю
Иль жить в изгнании, в тоске.
А я с собой свою Россию
В дорожном уношу мешке.

Вам нужен прах отчизны грубый,
А я где б ни был – шепчут мне
Арапские святые губы
О небывалой стороне.

…You need the fatherland’s coarse dust,

And as to me, wherever I were,

The Moorish saintly lips whisper to me

About a fabulous land.

Alexey Sklyarenko