

THE ROMANTIC, THE GOTHIC, AND THE VISUAL

Three Narratives about Amalia von Krüdener and the Russian Poet Fedor Tiutchev

[ABSTRACT]

One poem by the nineteenth-century Russian poet Fedor Tiutchev begins with the line ‘Я помню время золотое’ (or ‘la pomniu vremia zolotoe’) [I remember a golden time]. It is about the poet’s early youth, a meeting with a young woman, a spring outing to castle ruins on the Danube. The poem has led to many attempts to determine the exact time and place of this moment and the identity of the young woman. The aim of the article is to show the complex relationship that exists between fiction, reality, and the scholars’ or critics’ meta-level narrative about fiction and reality. I will attempt to demonstrate how three distinct narratives (a romantic, a Gothic, and a visual) can originate in this poem, thereby illuminating and perhaps changing our aesthetic appreciation of the poem. The first two narratives have been established by literary historians. The third and last narrative emerges from a compilation of the paintings and photographs preserved by the woman presumed to be the subject of the poem.

PER-ARNE BODIN

.....
KEYWORDS *Russian Literature, Biography, Aesthetics, Love, Nineteenth Century.*

Я помню время золотое

Я помню время золотое,
Я помню сердцу милый край.
День вечерел; мы были двое;
Внизу, в тени, шумел Дунай.

И на холму, там, где, белея,
Руина замка в дол глядит,
Стояла ты, младая фея,
На мшистый опершись гранит,

Ногой младенческой касаясь
Обломков груди вековой;
И солнце медлило, прощаясь
С холмом, и замком, и тобой.

JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF ROMANTICISMS

И ветер тихий мимолетом
Твоей одеждою играл
И с диких яблонь цвет за цветом
На плечи юные свевал.

Ты беззаботно вдаль глядела...
Край неба дымно гас в лучах;
День догорал; звучнее пела
Река в померкших берегах

И ты с веселостью беспечной
Счастливый провожала день:
И сладко жизни быстротечной
Над нами пролетала тень.

[I remember a golden time. / I remember a country my heart loved well. / Day became dusk. We were together. / Below us in shadow the Danube sang. // Where, white upon a hill, / a ruined castle stared into the distance, / you stood, young elfin creature, / leaning on the mossy granite. / Your young leg touched / the age-old keep's remains / while the sun dallied in its farewells / to the castle, the hill and to you. // A quiet, passing breeze / playing with your dress, / and from wild apples, flower after flower / strewn lightly around your shoulders ... // Without a care, you stared into the distance, / the skyline dimmed in hazy beams. / The day burned out; the song called louder / from the river in its darkening banks. // In carefree joy you spent the happy day. / Sweetly the shade of swiftly-flowing life / passed over us and flew away].¹

One of the best-known and loved poems by the nineteenth-century Russian poet Fedor Tiutchev begins with the line 'Я помню время золотое' (or 'Ja pomniu vremia zolotoe') [I remember a golden time]. It was composed in 1836 and is about the poet's early youth in the past, a meeting with a young woman, a spring outing to castle ruins on the Danube. The text itself tells us this much, and it almost seems to be a translation of a German romantic poem.² The Russian Formalist Iurii Tynianov has pointed out that it also contains a grammatical error: 'Мы были двое' [we were two] sounds like a direct translation from German: 'Wir waren zwei'. It should read 'Нас было двое' [of us it was a couple].³ The very language in the first line suggests German poetry, romanticism, and German romantic scenery.

This first line, however, can also be viewed as a variant on the beginning of one of the Russian national poet Aleksandr Pushkin's best known poems: 'Я помню чудное мгновенье' [I remember a wonderful moment]. Tiutchev's work continues in the fourth stanza with a poetic detailing that transforms it into a unique momentary impression. Every word comes from the stock of romantic poetry, but together they create a clear visual impression and at the same time a strong feeling of momentariness:

И ветер тихий мимолетом
Твоей одеждою играл
И с диких яблонь цвет за цветом
На плечи юные свевал.

[A quiet, passing breeze / playing with your dress, / and from wild apples, flower after flower / strewn lightly around your shoulders.]

This special momentariness and detailing enhance the originality of the poem and elevates it from a cliché to a remarkable work of art that expresses an intense awareness of a fleeting moment of happiness, love, and nature. The experience becomes a past memory that belongs to 'a golden time'. The poem continues:

И ты с веселостью беспечной
Счастливый провожала день:
И сладко жизни быстротечной
Над нами пролетала тень.

[In carefree joy you spent the happy day. / Sweetly the shade of swiftly-flowing life / passed over us and flew away.]

The close, even intimate relationship with the landscape is a feature that connects the poem with romanticism, as is the notion of the fleeting moment.⁴ The Tiutchev scholar (and the poet's great grandson) Kirill Pigarev aptly notes that despite the element of romantic cliché in the poems, they also reflect actual personal experiences.⁵

Written in 1836, the poem has led many students of Tiutchev to attempt to determine the exact time and place of this moment of bliss and the identity of the young woman to whom it is addressed. Thus the interesting question is not when the poem was written, but what inspired it – an event and a moment that according to the poem happened long ago in another time, a golden time in the past. Only a few scholars have concluded that this moment and the young woman existed only in the poem.

The purpose of the present article is to show the complex relationship that exists or can exist between fiction, reality, and the scholar's meta-level narrative about fiction and reality. I will attempt to demonstrate how three distinct stories can originate in this poem, thereby illuminating and perhaps changing our aesthetic appreciation of the work. The first two narratives have been established by literary historians and others who have written about the persons concerned. The third and last narrative emerges from a compilation of the paintings and photographs preserved by the woman presumed to be the subject of the poem. The background facts, which in this case come from letters and concrete information about meetings and trips, are used in different ways in the three stories. Perhaps more than any other poet, Tiutchev has inspired Russian literary schol-

ars to try to discover connections between his life and his poetry. Several of his biographers are also his blood relatives. I want to show that these three stories influence a reading of the poem regardless of whether or not they are factually true, and I will also demonstrate how scholars and interpreters have themselves transformed and altered the aesthetic content of the work.

Tiutchev's Biography

Four years Pushkin's junior, Tiutchev was born in 1803. Like Pushkin, he was from an aristocratic family of landowners.⁶ He left Russia at the age of 19 to serve in the diplomatic corps, first in Munich 1822–1837 and then several years in Turin. In Munich he became acquainted with both Heine and Schelling. Thus already as a young man he found himself in the very centre of German romanticism, which would leave a profound mark on his poetry and outlook. It is uncertain whether he had any extensive knowledge of the romantic thinkers, however, for he was too interested in the life around him to dedicate himself to the academic study of philosophy.

Tiutchev was dismissed from his position in Turin in 1839 for having abandoned his post as *chargé d'affaires*, which was considered a serious offense for a diplomat. After 22 years in the West he returned to Russia in 1844, where he was appointed Chairman of the Foreign Censorship Committee. He was never happy in his native country, nor did he long to go back to his birthplace, which is otherwise a common sentiment and motif in the works of romantic poets. He did, on the other hand, look back fondly on his youth in southern Germany, which for him would always be a golden time. He died eight years before Dostoevskii in 1873, not quite seventy years old – a considerable age for a Russian poet. Pushkin died at the age of 37, Lermontov at 26.

In 1826 in Munich Tiutchev married a young widow, Emilia Eleonora Peterson. She already had three children of her own, and they would have three more together. Soon he fell in love with another woman, Ernestine Dörnberg, who became his wife after Eleonora died of tuberculosis. That marriage also produced three children. Tiutchev also had several extramarital liaisons, the most enduring of which with Elena Deniseva began when he finally returned to Russia and lasted 15 years. She also bore him three children. During these years he lived a double life, and love, especially forbidden love, with its pleasures and suffering, is among the most important themes in both his life and his poetry.

The Romantic Narrative

Let us return to our poem. Tiutchev's first biographer, Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov, a relative of his, writes that the poem is about a meeting between the poet and a sixteen-year-old woman whom he does not name, but who was later identified as Amalia (or Amalie, Amelie) von Lerchenfeld (1808–1888), of high noble German birth.⁷ She married Alexander von Krüdener, a colleague of Tiutchev's who



III. 1 [The castle ruins in Donaustauf. Photo: Christoph Neumüller]

worked as a secretary at the Russian legation in Munich. It is clear that Tiutchev knew and met with Amalia in Munich. She was a celebrated beauty whom Heinrich Heine, for example, mentions in his letters. Her portrait was also displayed in Ludwig I's Gallery of Beauties at his castle in the city, which featured 36 of the most beautiful women in Munich at the time.⁸

Attempts have thus been made to determine the exact place and time one spring day where the meeting with the young woman described in the poem happened. The place is presumed to be the ruins of Stauff Castle outside of Regensburg, the time May 1824 (ill. 1). A recent examination of the Lerchenfeld family archive has failed to provide any definite proof, however, and questions about the real background of the poem remain unanswered.⁹ Apparently no letters or other documents written by Amalia herself have been preserved. The ruins do seem to be a perfect backdrop for a romantic poem.

Tiutchev sent his poems with Amalia to Pushkin for publication in his journal *Sovremennik*, and 'I remember a golden time' was among them. This special courier mission between two of Russia's best known nineteenth-century poets is an important component of the narrative about her, for she is cast not only as the muse of Tiutchev's poetry, but also as its intermediary. As is clear from his correspondence, the von Krüdeners met him on several occasions later in life. He asked Amalia to use her influence with Count Benckendorff, the head of the Third Section, to reinstate him in the position from which he had been dismissed. In one letter to a friend he wonders whether she is happy, and he speaks of her as follows in another from 1840:

Vous connaissez l'attachement que je porte à Mad. de Krüdener et vous pouvez facilement vous représenter le plaisir que j'ai eu à la revoir. Après la Russie c'est ma plus ancienne affection. Elle avait 14 ans quand je l'ai vue pour la première fois, et aujourd'hui, le 2/14 juillet, son fils aîné vient d'accomplir sa quatorzième année. Elle est toujours bien belle, et notre amitié heureusement n'a pas plus changé que sa personne.

[You know my devotion to Madame Krüdener, and you can easily imagine how pleasant it was to see her again. After Russia she is my oldest love. She was fourteen when I first saw her. And today, July 2/14, [1840], her oldest son turned fourteen. She is still very attractive, and fortunately our friendship has not changed any more than has her appearance.]¹⁰

This letter is probably the strongest evidence that 'Ja pomniu vremena zolotoe' really is about her. Tiutchev also mentions her in one of his last letters, written to his daughter Dariia in April 1873, the year that he died. Amalia had visited him to give him a farewell kiss. Both of them are now old. Amalia has remarried count Nikolai Adlerberg in 1855 but had already born him an illegitimate son in 1848:

Вчера я испытал минуту жгучего волнения вследствие
моего свидания с графиней Адлерберг, моей доброй
Амалией Крюденер, которая пожелала в последний раз
повидать меня на этом свете и приезжала проститься со
мною. В ее лице прошлое лучших моих лет явилось дать
мне прощальный поцелуй

[Yesterday I experienced a moment of intense emotion due to my meeting with Countess Adlerberg, my dear Amalia Krüdener, who wished to see me one last time on this earth and came to bid me goodbye. In her person the best of my years from the past appeared to give me a farewell kiss.]¹¹

In this passage we seem to see the same idea as in 'Ja pomniu vremena zolotoe': 'прошлое лучших моих лет' [my best years from the past] – or, if you will, 'a golden time'. Besides this poem, scholars have attributed two others to Tiutchev and Amalia's relationship. The first, early poem from 1824 has been interpreted as a depiction of Tiutchev's marriage proposal, which Amalia declined under pressure from her family, who did not approve of him.¹² Thus 'KN', as the poem is enigmatically entitled, is said to reflect Amalia's feelings at not being able to marry her poet.

Твой милый взор, невинной страсти полный,
Златой рассвет небесных чувств твоих
Не мог — увы! — умиловить их —
Он служит им укором безмолвной.

Сии сердца, в которых правды нет,
Они, о друг, бегут, как приговора,
Твоей любви младенческого взора,
Он страшен им, как память детских лет.

Но для меня сей взор благодаянье;
Как жизни ключ, в душевной глубине
Твой взор живет и будет жить во мне:
Он нужен ей, как небо и дыханье.

Таков горе духов блаженных свет,
Лишь в небесах сияет он, небесный;
В ночи греха, на дне ужасной бездны,
Сей чистый огонь, как пламень адский, жжет.

[Your dear gaze, with innocent passion filled, / the golden dawn of your heavenly feelings / serve as a silent reproach to them, / at propitiation it is unskilled. // These hearts in which there is no truth / flee, my friend, as they would flee a judgement, / fearing as they fear childhood memories / the loving gaze of your youth. // What is good for me are your eyes, / like the water of life, in the depths of my being, / your living gaze which lives in me - / deep down I need it, like breath, like the sky. // Heavenly, shining only in the skies, / such is the light of souls in bliss, / During nights of sin, this pure flame / burns in a fearsome abyss.]¹³

Literary historian G. I. Chulkov has attributed this poem to the story about Tiutchev and Amalia. There is in the end of the poem a tinge of the awesome, of the strength of a passion beyond every measure, pointing to another and more ominous interpretation and another narrative, which we will return to later in this article.¹⁴

The second work that has been associated with their relationship is the retrospective poem 'Ja vstretil vas' [I met you], written in Karlsbad in 1870. It is as though the mere expression 'remembering a golden time' has encouraged both literary scholars and relatives to try to find a clear biographical background to these poems. Several researchers have pointed out, however, that this work cannot be related to Amalia, since she and Tiutchev never met at that point in time. Rightly or wrongly, scholars weave the poems and the author's biography into a story about Amalia and the poet:

К. Б.

Я встретил вас — и все былое
В отжившем сердце ожило;
Я вспомнил время золотое —
И сердцу стало так тепло...

Как поздней осени порою
Бывают дни, бывает час,
Когда повеет вдруг весною
И что-то встрепенется в нас, –

Так, весь обвеян дуновеньем
Тех лет душевной полноты,
С давно забытым упоеньем
Смотрю на милые черты...

Как после вековой разлуки,
Гляжу на вас, как бы во сне, –
И вот – слышнее стали звуки,
Не умолкавшие во мне...

Тут не одно воспоминанье,
Тут жизнь заговорила вновь, –
И то же в вас очарованье,
И та ж в душе моей любовь!

[К.В.

*I met you and the past / came back to life in my dead heart. / Remembering a golden time,
/ my heart became so warm. // Just as in late autumn / there are days, the transient hour,
/ when suddenly spring wafts again / and something stirs within us, // so, winnowed
within by the breath / of fullness my soul knew in those years, / with a rapture I thought
I'd forgotten, / I stare into your dear face. // As if we'd been apart for ages / I stare at you
and think I'm dreaming, / and suddenly sounds unsilenced in me / could be heard within
me, but louder! // That was more than reminiscence: / my life began to talk once more, /
as did in you that very same charm, / as did in my soul that very same love!]*¹⁵

Although the initials 'K.B.' in this tale of unfulfilled love have been interpreted as standing for Krüdener, Baronessa, the use of a surname and title seems an odd way to dedicate a poem.¹⁶ Amalia, moreover, had remarried long ago and now had a different surname. Another and more plausible explanation offered by Tiutchev's biographers is that the initials refer to Clothilde von Bothmer, the sister of Tiutchev's first wife, whom he met around the time the poem was written.

The narrative about Amalia and the poet has to a great extent been constructed outside the poems and on the basis of sketchy biographical facts.¹⁷ The romantic narrative about unfulfilled love is nothing more than a collective creation of the literary scholars. If we follow Tiutchev's biographers and read this poem together with 'Ja pomniu vremena zolotoe', the associations I mentioned earlier with Pushkin's poem 'I remember a wonderful moment' become even stronger. All three poems tell of a meeting with a former sweetheart that rekindles extin-

guished feelings. Pushkin's poem has also been interpreted biographically in the same spirit as 'Ia pomniu vremia zolotoe'.

The connection between the poem and Amalia is based on several sources. One is a subsequently lost letter from Tiutchev's servant N. A. Khlopov to Tiutchev's mother describing a love affair that commentators have interpreted as referring to Amalia. Family traditions also appeal to her in the context of the poem, and she is mentioned in a letter from Ernestine, Tiutchev's second wife, to her stepdaughter Daria, on learning that Amalia had recently died.¹⁸ Thus facts, conjectures, hypotheses, and fabrications have been transformed into a romantic tale of eternal love that does not lead to marriage, but lasts throughout the lovers' lifetime.

The positive romantic aura of the ruins is similar to what can be found in Heine's poetry, and he as well uses the image of apple blossoms.¹⁹ Thus Tiutchev's poem blends personal experiences with many of the poetic conventions of the period.

The Gothic Narrative

Thus far we have followed a romantic tale of lifelong love that never leads to marriage and perhaps not even to a relationship between the man and woman. The focus of this narrative is on the man – the poet – while the woman is the object of love, worship, and memory. An excerpt from the memoirs of Tsar Nicholas I's daughter Ol'ga Nikolaevna, however, provides a different portrait of Amalia. Here it is the woman who is at the centre. She is strong, cunning, and calculating, and she takes advantage of Benckendorff's love for her to help Tiutchev in his career. She also exploits the Russian royal family, from whom she receives expensive gifts. The Tsar as well may have taken a fancy to her:

Деловые качества Бенкендорфа страдали от влияния, которое оказывала на него /она/. Она пользовалась им холодно, расчетливо: распоряжалась его особой, его деньгами, его связями где и как только ей это казалось выгодным, – а он и не замечал этого. Странная женщина! Под добродушной внешностью, прелестной, часто забавной натурой скрывалась хитрость высшей степени.

[Benckendorff's professional qualities suffered from the influence that [she] exerted on him ... She exploited him coldly, calculatedly: took charge of him, his money, his connections wherever and whenever she pleased – and he didn't even notice. A strange woman! Her outward geniality and a charming, often amusing nature concealed a high degree of cunning.]²⁰

The fairy in 'Ia pomniu vremia zolotoe' (Стояла ты, младая фея [you stood there, young elfin creature]) is perhaps in fact the evil fairy. This motif of a

young fairy who bewitches the young man was familiar at the time from Jean Schneitzhoeffter's popular ballet *La Sylphide*, which had its premiere in 1832, four years before the poem was written, and in the Russian context from Vladimir Odoevskii's story 'Sil'fida' from 1837.

There is something slightly alarming in Ol'ga Nikolaevna's depiction of Amalia. This note is even stronger in a description of the Krüdeners from the time they lived in Stockholm, where her husband was the Russian envoy 1843–1852. The account is in a gossip column dealing with the inhabitants of several buildings on Blasieholmen in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The von Krüdeners lived first in the Bååtska Palace and then in the Fersen Palace located there:

The Krüdener home was to some extent the centre of elegant social life in Stockholm in the 1840s. Contemporaries describe Baroness Krüdener as the incarnation of beauty, wit, and taste, and note that she was moreover enveloped in a poetic aura arising from all the stories about her mysterious lineage, her love for a man who unbeknownst to her was her own brother, and the homage paid to her by a very important person in one of our neighbouring countries.

In addition, we are told that the Baron had lost an arm in a duel fought for the sake of the Baroness. All this would have sufficed to make her a heroine in our salons, but, as I mentioned earlier, her qualities, her manner, and above all her appearance were such that she was immediately bound to take one of the foremost places in the society in which she appeared.²¹

The Russian envoy, Baron Krüdener was said to be a harsh man, taciturn, and reserved, and he was not well liked. He is said to have governed his household as befits the representative of an autocrat. One event associated with his death can be cited here.

In one of the halls in Fersen's Palace *chappelle ardente* had been arranged, in which the Baron's body was to be displayed to the public. Hundreds of candles had been lit, and the corpse in an elegant coffin was set upon a catafalque. The legation officials and the many servants were busy making the final arrangements, when suddenly the foundations of the old building were shaken by a boom as though from a thousand thunderbolts. The doors of the room with the coffin burst open, the windows were shattered, and all the candles were blown out. The superstitious Russian servants, believing that the final judgment was at hand and that the devil himself had come to fetch their strict master, rushed headlong in to the courtyard.

The explanation, however, was quite simple. When the initial fright had passed it was learned that the powder tower in the Kaknäs forest had exploded. It was in fact the explosion familiar to older Stockholm residents that on January 24, 1852 caused so much destruction in Stockholm, affecting almost all of Norrmalm and to some extent even the Royal Palace and the city between the bridges.²²

In this case we get a glimpse of another narrative based on other facts and assumptions, and the tale becomes a different form of romanticism – namely the Gothic, containing a horror story about a woman of illegitimate origin ('mysterious lineage'), over whom her husband has fought a duel, perhaps with none other than Tiutchev. Thus there is a hint of an incestuous relationship, and the story also contains the illicit connection with the head of the Russian secret police. In addition, Amalia's Catholicism is presented as a special danger. Ol'ga Nikolaevna notes in her memoirs that she 'wove Catholic intrigues'. She becomes a *femme fatale*, a heroine out of one of Dumas' novels. Her husband is perceived as a monster fit for any Gothic novel – 'one-armed', 'harsh', and ruling his household 'as befits the representative of an autocrat'.

The depiction of von Krüdener on *lit de parade* with allusions to the supernatural that are later repudiated also links the story with nineteenth-century Gothic literature. These two narratives actually problematize different tendencies in romanticism or, if you will, the interrelationship of romanticism and the Gothic.

The Gothic narrative, however, was created not by any single writer but by various participants jointly. The most important source here consists of intimate gossip related in letters, in the work of the Stockholm commentator and the literary scholars, but as in the case of the first narrative in which the poet's love was never fulfilled, but lasted fifty years, these rumours are based on a number of verifiable facts. Literary historians, biographers, and readers all want to tell stories even where stories are hard to find, as for example in a poetry collection.

Returning now to 'Ia p'komniu vremia zolotoe', we discover that the poem as well hints at a Gothic milieu that could serve as the starting point for a Gothic tale. It tells of 'love among ruins' familiar to us, for example, from the romantic writer Regina Maria Roche's Gothic novel *The Children of the Abbey* from 1796.²³

As in the poem, the young lovers meet near a ruin, where the moss-covered stones, the setting sun, approaching shadows, and the passage of time are all details associated with the Gothic. The ruin and the sinking sun could serve as motifs in one of Caspar David Friedrich's paintings. The Gothic element is not realized in the poem, however, for these details are negated and the moment of fragile love endures. The couple never enters the ruin itself. Nor does Tiutchev – or the poet – ever become part of the Gothic tale. It is instead Amalia, who is cast in that role. If we compare the finished poem with an earlier variant it is apparent that more emphasis is given to the castle and ruins in the final text, thus reinforcing the Gothic component and suggesting a possible development that remained unrealized.

The second narrative moves farther away from Tiutchev and closer to Amalia. Tiutchev visited Stockholm, while the von Krüdeners were living in the city, but he was there only one day, and the family was away at the time.²⁴ Otherwise, Blasieholmen might have witnessed an interesting meeting suitable for both the love story and the Gothic.



III. 2 [Joseph Karl Stieler, *Porträtgemälde, Amalie Freiin von Kruedener (aus der Schönheitsgalerie Ludwigs I.)*, 1828 © Nymphenburg, Hauptschloß.]

The Visual Narrative

I also want to explore a third narrative, but now I will expand my materials from the text to the visual. This narrative is based on the passage of time, apple blossoms, and the pictures of Amalia that have been preserved. It is a tale that she and those around her may have influenced, for she perhaps determined the circumstances in which the pictures were made and the clothes in which she wanted

III. 3 [Maria Röhl,
*The Countess von
Krüdener*, 1846. Royal
Library, Stockholm.]



to be represented. The first in chronological order is the painting in the Gallery of Beauties in Nymphenburg Castle in Munich (ill. 2). Other paintings followed that show both her beauty and the passage of time (ills. 3-4). In several of these her dress is embellished not with an apple blossom but with a rose. A drawing made while she was living in Sweden by the well-known portraitist Maria Röhl shows a woman who is still beautiful but whose face is tense. Time is passing, but she seems to want to continue to be a young girl.

Amalia may have modelled her later style on the poem. The full, white, semi-transparent dresses seem to suggest this as much, as does the flower in two of the paintings depicting her. The ballet-dancer Fanny Ellster is also depicted in contemporary pictures with a flower in her bosom dancing her most famous role in *La Sylphide* (ill. 5). Amalia herself may have wanted to identify with a fairy, or a sylph, and perhaps that is what Tiutchev had in mind in his poem, or was it the other way round? Perhaps Amalia came to identify herself with the poem and dressed like a fairy for her portraits. The sylph in the ballet represents both delight and danger, and both these elements are present in our different narratives.



III. 4 [A. Zebens, *The Countess Amalia Adlerberg*, 1865. © Svartå Gård, Finland, photo: Mikael Kaplar/studio PoiNT.]



III. 5 [Fanny Ellster dancing La Sylphide. © Dansmuseet, Stockholm.]



III. 6 [C. Graf, Photo of The Countess Amalia Adlerberg, 1867–1868. The Museum in Muranovo.]



III. 7 [Photo of Amalia Adlerberg from the last year of her life 1888.]

The last two pictures are photographs of Amalia late in life. In one she sits reading a book, while the other depicts a bundled-up old woman. The rose that was such an important detail in the earlier pictures is now absent. In contrast to the springtime setting in the poem and the inner and outer warmth emanating from the paintings and drawing, the last picture appears to have been taken in winter. The cape in the first photo seems to have more to do with fashion than with the temperature. We can similarly trace Amalia's floral accessories. The evidently real flower in the first portrait later becomes an artificial corsage and then a cloth rosette, and finally a cloth brooch in the last photograph of her (ill. 6–7). This series of pictures is a narrative depicting the passage of time, as is also apparent in the contrast between the paintings and the photographs. Returning to the poem with this in mind, the same motif there becomes even stronger. In the final picture we are far from its early summer day, falling apple blossoms, and amorous moment. The flower in the final picture might perhaps be seen as Amalia's nostalgic yearning back to the first portrait and the time of the poem, or perhaps it is our juxtaposition of the pictures that produces this impression. The pictures of Amalia with the flower on her bosom lend more depth and seriousness to especially the concluding lines of the poem:

Sweetly the shade of swiftly-flowing life
passed over us and flew away.

Conclusion

As poetry readers and literary scholars, then, should we care at all about these three narratives? After all, it is the scholars, who have created perhaps all three. Actually, there are two reasons why we should. First, viewing the poem against this background lends it an additional aesthetic dimension. Second, we have shown, how literary scholars participate in creating narratives that ultimately become more or less a part of the work of art. Although they do not solve the issue of the relationship between literature and reality, the three stories do problematize it. The naïve question of whether it ‘really happened’ in this case gives the poem a special emotional quality that is reinforced by the different narratives. Together they create what the aesthetic theoretician Nelson Goodman calls *a multiple and complex reference* that enhances what he terms the *symptoms of the aesthetic*, or artistic value, of the poem.²⁵

With the exception of the third narrative, where there may be a trace of her own voice and will, Amalia’s perspective is largely absent from these narratives. But perhaps the poem is not at all about her in any respect save in the tale as told by literary history. That brings us back to the first of the three narratives called into question here – that is, the story about a young girl and her unhappy love affair with one of Russia’s outstanding poets. In my view these three tales change and augment the aesthetic content of the poem in spite of or perhaps because of the fact that we still have not answered the question of who the young woman standing by the ruin and the wild apple tree actually was.

Notes

- 1 Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev, *The Complete Poems of Tyutchev*, trans. Jude Durham (Durham, 2000), accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.tyutchev.ru/Works/poems/Jude.html>, Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem: v 6 tomakh. T. 1, Stikhotvoreniia: 1813–1849* [*Complete Works and Letters*: in 6 volumes. Vol. 1, *Poems: 1813–1849*], (Moskva: Klassika) 2002, 12.
- 2 Richard A. Gregg notes this flavour of translation in some of the poems in Richard A. Gregg, *Fedor Tiutchev: The Evolution of a Poet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).
- 3 Iurii N. Tynianov, 'Tiutchev i Geine', accessed December 31, 2013, [Philology.ru](http://www.philology.ru/literature2/tynyanov-77c.htm), <http://www.philology.ru/literature2/tynyanov-77c.htm>.
- 4 Bruno Hillebrand, *Ästhetik des Augenblicks: der Dichter als Überwinder der Zeit – von Goethe bis heute* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999). On the relationship between romanticism and nature in Tiutchev see, for example, B. Ia. Bukhstab, 'Tiutchev', *Tiutcheviana*. Sait rabochei gruppy po izucheniiu tvorchestva F. I. Tiutcheva, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.ruthenia.ru/tiutcheviana/publications/bukhshtab.html>.
- 5 Kirill V Pigarev, 'Poëticheskoe nasledie Tiutcheva', in *F.I. Tiutchev. Lirika* (Moskva: Nauka, 1928), 273–84.
- 6 For the most comprehensive biography of Tiutchev see: John Dewey, *Mirror of the Soul: A Life of the Poet Fyodor Tyutchev* (Shaftesbury: Brimstone Press, 2010).
- 7 Ivan S. Aksakov, *Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev, Biograficheskii ocherk*, accessed May 2, 2014, [Lib.ru/Klassika](http://az.lib.ru/a/aksakow_i_s/text_0050.shtml), http://az.lib.ru/a/aksakow_i_s/text_0050.shtml.
- 8 *Schönheitengalerie im Festsaalbau der Münchner Residenz (um 1937)*, Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, accessed December 31, 2013, http://www.hdbg.eu/koenigreich/web/index.php/objekte/index/herrscher_id/2/id/860.
- 9 John Dewey, 'Tiutchev and Amalie von Lerchenfeld: Some Unpublished Documents', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 79, no. 1 (2001): 15–30.
- 10 Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem: v 6 tomakh. T. 4, Pis'ma: 1820–1849* [*Complete Works and Letters*: in 6 volumes. Vol. 4, *Letters: 1820–1949*] (Moscow: Klassika, 2004), 141–5.
- 11 Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev, 'Pis'mo Tiutchevoi D. F., 1 apreliia', in Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. T. 6*, 416.
- 12 Svetlana A. Dolgoplova, 'Ia pomniu vremia zolotoe', accessed May 2, 2014, tyutchev.ru/t16.html. Compilers of Tiutchev's collected works maintain that we do not know to whom the poem is addressed.
- 13 Tiutchev, *The Complete Poems*; Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. T. 1*, 46.
- 14 Georgii Ivanovich Chulkov, *Posledniaia liubov' Tiutcheva: (Elena Aleksandrovna Denis'eva)* [Last love of Tiutchev] (Moscow: M. i S. Sabashnikovy, 1928), 14.
- 15 Tiutchev, *The Complete Poems*; Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, T. 2*, 219.
- 16 Chulkov, *Posledniaia liubov' Tiutcheva*, 14; For a discussion of this see Dewey, *Mirror of the Soul*, 517, note 216.
- 17 Dewey shows awareness of this in his book. He retells the story but uses words like 'perhaps', 'may well' or 'apparently' to mark the lack of any hard-core evidence, *Mirror of the Soul*, 63–9.
- 18 Tat'iana Georgievna Dinesman, ed., *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F. I. Tiutcheva. Kn. 1, 1803–1884* [Annals of life and work of Tiutchev] (Moskva: Litograf, 1999), 1822.

- 19 Im Anfang war die Nachtigall
 Und sang das Wort: Züküht! Züküht!
 Und wie sie sang, sproß überall
 Grüngras, Violen, Apfelblüt.
 Heinrich Heine, 'Neuer Frühling. IX', in *Neue Gedichte* (Hamburg, Paris: 1844).
- 20 In 'Vospominaniia velikoi kniazhny Ol'gi Nikolaevny 1825–1846, Son junosti' [Recollections of great duchess Ol'ga Nikolaevna 1825–1846, Dream of youth], accessed December 31, 2013, http://www.dugward.ru/library/olga_nick.html.
- 21 Fredrik Ulrik Wrangel, *Blasieholmen och dess inbyggare*, 2nd ed., (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1914), 21.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 23 For a discussion of the gothic see, for example, Mattias Fyhr, *De mörka labyrinterna: gotiken i litteratur, film, musik och rollspel*, Ellerström, diss. (Lund: Lund University, 2003).
- 24 I. N. and E. L. Tiutchev, 1/13 oktiabria 1843. Munich. 'Ce 1/13 octobre 1843. Enfin, chers papa et maman, me voilà à Munich, où je suis arrivé, sain et sauf, dimanche dernier, c'était le 26 septembre (vieux style). Vous savez par ma lettre de Réval que j'ai dû m'embarquer le 4 sept<embre> pour Helsingfors, de là je me suis rendu par Abo, à Stockholm, où je n'ai pu m'arrêter qu'un jour. [1/13 October 1843. Finally dear Papa and Mama, here I am in Munich, where I arrived safe and sound last Sunday, September 26 (Old Style) You know from my Letter from Réval that I had to leave on Sept. 4 for Helsinki, from there I traveled via Turku to Stockholm, where I was able to stop only one day']. Fedor Tiutchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij i pisem: v 6 tomakh. T. 6, Pis'ma: 1860–1873* (Moscow: Klassika, 2004), 272.
- 25 'Goodman's Aesthetics', in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed December 31, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/goodman-aesthetics/>.