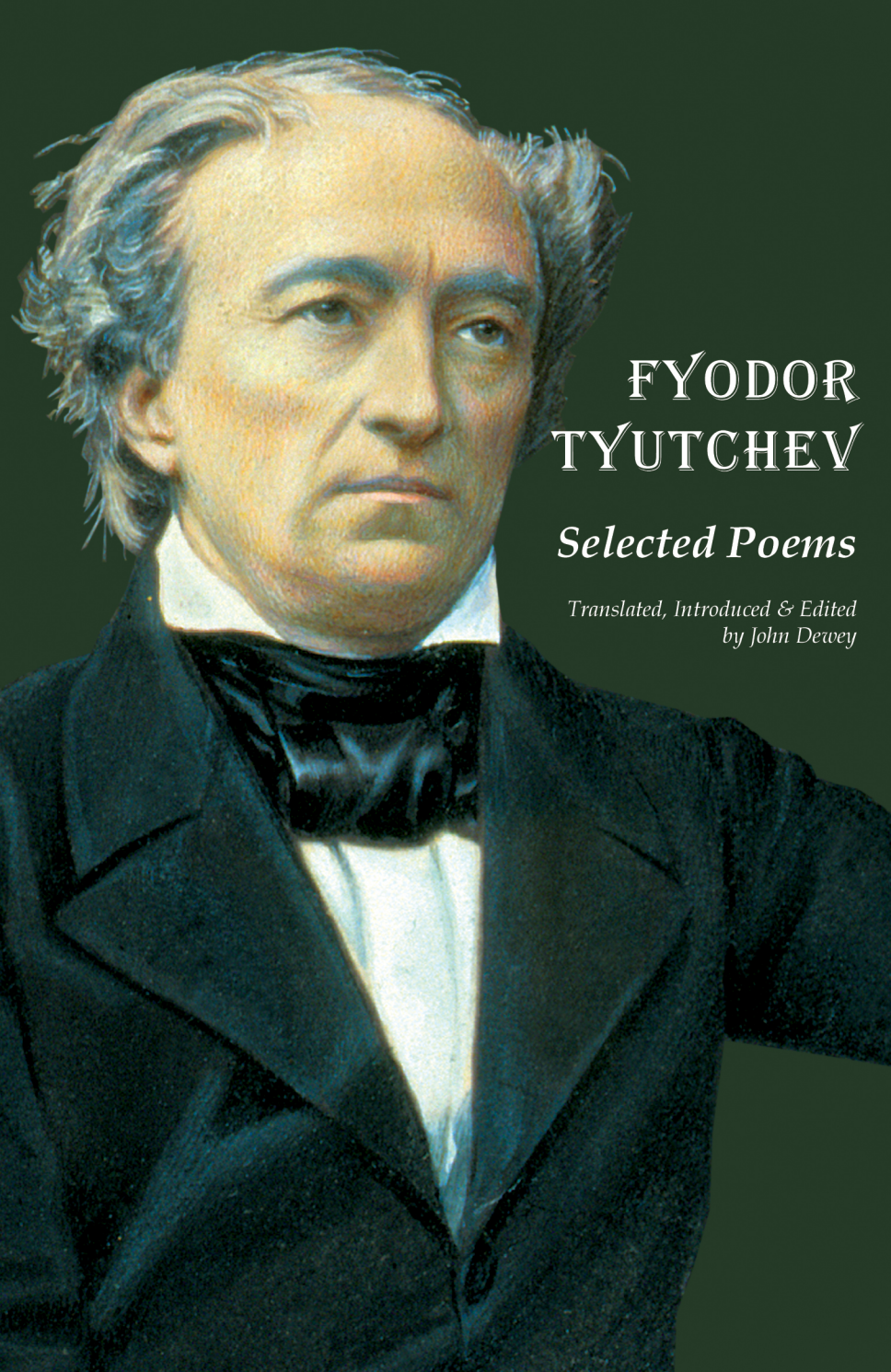

FYODOR TYUTCHEV

Selected Poems

Translated, Introduced & Edited by John Dewey

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Introduction

Asked to name a Russian poet, most non-Russian speakers able to do so would probably think first of Pushkin. Other names too might spring to mind: Lermontov, Pasternak, Yevtushenko, Brodsky, perhaps even Blok, Mandelstam or Akhmatova. Few if any are likely even to have heard of Tyutchev. This is perhaps surprising, given that Russians themselves have long recognised him to be one of their foremost lyric poets.

For testimonials to Tyutchev's stature we have only to turn to his fellow-writers. Pushkin admired his poems and was the first to publish them in any quantity in his journal *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*). Turgenev, who later saw Tyutchev's first volume of verse into print, thought him 'one of our most remarkable poets'. For Dostoyevsky too he was 'our great poet'. Leo Tolstoy acknowledged him to be his favourite poet, and declared: 'One cannot live without him'. For Afanasy Fet he was quite simply 'one of the greatest lyric poets ever to have existed on this earth'.[1]

What was it about Tyutchev's verse that so impressed these literary heavyweights? According to the philosopher and guru of the Romantic movement Friedrich Schelling, all great art affords unconscious intimations or glimpses of the ultimately unknowable reality (Kant's 'thing in itself', or noumenon) behind the world of appearances. 'The artist seems,' writes Schelling, 'quite apart from what he has put into his work with obvious intent, to have instinctively portrayed in it as it were an infinity which no finite intellect is capable of developing fully.' And as a direct consequence of this connection with the absolute and infinite, any great work of art is in Schelling's view susceptible to 'infinite

interpretation': indeed, that is for him one of the hallmarks of its greatness.[2]

The best of Tyutchev's verse certainly displays this quality. Like Blake, he shows us 'a world in a grain of sand'. His poems have the sense of a mysterious hinterland, an opening onto limitless depths; they take us on a journey into distant reaches of the world soul. The poet Afanasy Fet likened reading Tyutchev's short lyrics to viewing a section of the night sky through a narrow window aperture. At first only a few of the brighter stars are visible; then gradually, as our eyes adjust, ever fainter stars and nebulae swim into view; until at length, despite the restricted view, the heavens reveal themselves in all their eternal and infinite majesty.[3] The themes of Tyutchev's poetry are nature, man's place in the universe, love, the tyranny of time, death: in a word, the joy, terror and mystery of our being in the world.

In view of the 'infinite interpretation' of which Tyutchev's verse is indeed capable, it may be helpful to narrow our focus to just three possible approaches to it. Those new to the verse will inevitably begin by reading it as 'pure' poetry, appreciating each item as a text in its own right. This approach is not without its drawbacks, not least of course when, as here, the poems are being read in translation. The versions offered in this selection may perhaps be regarded as analogous to piano reductions of great orchestral works, giving at best no more than a reflection of the original creative vision. But there are in any case other, more serious limitations to a strictly textual approach as far as Tyutchev is concerned. Quite soon the reader will become uneasily aware that what he or she is dealing with is not 'just' poetry, but the preferred mode of expression of a deeply original thinker.

One critic has characterised Tyutchev's lyric verse as 'the reflection of a profound life, of a long interior journey: the discovery of self in the quest for being', comparing this 'ontological quest' to those undertaken in their different ways by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.[4] To regard Tyutchev's poetry as 'art for art's sake' is, the same critic points out, hopelessly reductive: it is if anything art for the sake of being (*'l'art pour l'être'*).[5] Yet art — and art of the highest order — it never ceases to be, the thought expressed vividly and concretely through metaphor and imagery, never as mere versified abstract disquisition.

Our second approach, then, must be to consider the philosophical world view informing Tyutchev's lyric verse. But even this is not enough. That world view, as embodied in the verse, is in turn firmly rooted in the life, both outward and inner, lived out by the poet. The poems can equally be read as an intimate diary ('the mirror of his soul', as a contemporary once described them), and are often only fully to be appreciated in the context of that life. And for this a third, biographical approach is indicated.

The following brief accounts of Tyutchev's life and of the world view of his poetry may help to provide the necessary context and background to the poems.[6] Numerical references in brackets are in each case to the poem on that page.

TYUTCHEV'S LIFE

Fyodor Ivanovich Tyutchev was born on his family's country estate at Ovstug on 23 November 1803 by the Julian calendar (5 December New Style). His parents were well-to-do members of the landowning gentry. At about the time of

his first birthday the family moved to Moscow, and it was here that Fyodor, his older brother Nikolay and younger sister Darya spent most of their childhood and youth. The one major exception was a period of nearly two years at Ovstug following the devastation caused by Napoleon's occupation of Moscow in 1812. Apart from that upheaval, Tyutchev could later look back on a happy childhood marked by parental affection and harmonious family life.

A sensitive and precociously gifted child, at the age of nine he was assigned a private tutor in the person of Semyon Raich, the son of a village priest who would go on to study at Moscow University and gain a modest reputation as a minor poet and translator of Latin and Italian verse. Teacher and pupil soon developed a close bond, and young Fyodor made rapid progress in his studies. It was under Raich's guidance that he took his first poetic steps, composing competent juvenile pieces marked by the neoclassical style and archaic poetic diction of Raich's literary hero Gavriil Derzhavin.

Just before his sixteenth birthday Tyutchev was enrolled as a full-time student in the Philological Faculty of Moscow University. During his time there he took the opportunity to read widely outside the official syllabus, much of which he appears to have found irksome. Fluent in French from an early age, he now also discovered a taste for German literature. Already before entering university he had attended lectures on an informal basis with Raich, by then himself a full-time student. During this time Tyutchev frequented literary groups run by Raich and one of the professors, Aleksey Merzlyakov, an established poet in his own right. He was also admitted to the prestigious Society of Lovers of Russian Literature.

At the end of his first year of full-time studies a lengthy ode by him, 'Urania', was read out as part of the university's formal end-of-year ceremony. While in a public piece such as this Tyutchev still draws on the grandiloquent and archaic diction of Derzhavin, in his more private verse he was coming increasingly under the influence of Pushkin's freer, more colloquial poetic style. Like most of his generation he also shared the latter's commitment to political freedom. A poem written at this time, unpublishable in view of its subject, welcomed the general ideals expressed in Pushkin's banned ode 'Liberty' but at the same time sounded a note of caution against what was felt to be its immoderately seditious tone. Tyutchev's position was to remain on the whole that of a liberal monarchist and supporter of enlightened absolutism.

Influential connections helped to ease his way into the wider world. After two years at university he was quite unusually permitted to graduate early, his earlier informal studies being cited as grounds. This appears to have been thanks to a powerful relative, Count Aleksandr Osterman-Tolstoy, who had the ear of Tsar Alexander I. Osterman-Tolstoy also facilitated Tyutchev's entry into the Foreign Service and arranged a first posting. In the summer of 1822 the young graduate, still only eighteen years old, set off to take up his not too onerous duties as an unpaid trainee diplomat attached to the Russian legation in Munich. He would live abroad for the next twenty-two years, apart from visits home on leave.

Tyutchev later remembered his early years in Germany as 'a golden time' (3), a 'great festival' of 'wondrous youth' (103), claiming in one of his letters that for him life had only truly begun then. He later recalled having arrived 'to the

strains of *Der Freischütz*', and indeed found himself at once immersed in the heady intellectual atmosphere of German Romanticism. It was in Germany that he developed the lyric verse form and found his individual voice as a poet.

Very soon after arriving in Munich he made friends with the young Bavarian Count Maximilian von Lerchenfeld, who like himself was training for a career in his country's diplomatic service. He was also introduced to Max's fourteen-year-old half-sister Amalie, or Amélie as she was more usually known. The offspring of an extramarital affair between Max's late father and Princess Therese von Thurn und Taxis, she had been taken into the care of the older Count's widow after his death. By the following year Tyutchev found himself increasingly attracted to the beautiful young Amélie, and one day late in 1823 she too confessed her feelings for him (2). In the spring of 1824 their young love blossomed during Tyutchev's stay at the Lerchenfelds' country estate of Köfering near Regensburg. One never to be forgotten idyllic episode, a visit with Amélie to the ruins of Donaustauf Castle overlooking the Danube, was later recalled by him in poignant verse (3).

Now sixteen, Amélie was eligible for marriage, and for the two young lovers the way ahead seemed clear. However, through her mother Amélie was related both to the Queen of Prussia and the consort of Grand Duke, later Tsar, Nicholas, and it seems to have been felt in high places that a twenty-year-old trainee diplomat was no suitable match. Instead preparations were made to marry her off to a senior colleague of Tyutchev at the Russian legation, the Baltic-German Baron Alexander von Krüdener, who was twenty-two years older than she. At the end of 1824 Tyutchev came of age, and on or around his twenty-first birthday appears to

have made a formal proposal himself, to be rejected by Amélie's elders against her wishes in favour of Krüdener (4). The engagement was announced in January 1825. In an evidently related incident, Tyutchev closely avoided having to fight a duel (probably with Krüdener, although this is not known for sure). Following this scandal the ambassador arranged for him to take extended leave, and in June, a couple of months before Amélie's wedding, he left for Russia. He and Amélie were to remain lifelong friends, she later using her influence at the Russian court to further his career.

On leave in Russia, Tyutchev found himself in St Petersburg on the day of the Decembrist revolt. Staged by idealistic young army officers during the power vacuum between the death of Tsar Alexander I and the accession of his younger brother Nicholas, the revolt aimed to replace the autocracy with a more liberal system of government. Although just a bystander and in no way involved, Tyutchev knew a dozen or so of the plotters personally, some of whom were relatives of his. He and his brother Nikolay were among the hundreds of suspected sympathisers investigated by the security services, but were subsequently cleared. A poem written the following year 'for the drawer' makes clear his condemnation of the Decembrists' violent action, while at the same time regretting the 'iron winter' of reaction inaugurated by Nicholas (48).

Back in Munich in 1826, Tyutchev met and within a few months had married (secretly to begin with) Eleonore Peterson (née Countess von Bothmer), an aristocratic German widow three years older than himself with four young sons. Clearly on the rebound from Amélie, he seems to have encountered in Eleonore the kind of maternal

attention to which he had been accustomed since childhood. An overriding need to be loved was central to all his relationships with women, and marriage was no bar to a string of infidelities, as the long-suffering Eleonore would find to her cost. For these early years there are strong indications that he continued to enjoy a liaison with Amélie (5), while Eleonore's younger sister Clotilde also appears to have become the object of his attentions (8, 11).

Meanwhile, Tyutchev's diplomatic career progressed painfully slowly. He was deprived of patronage at court when Osterman-Tolstoy, disenchanted with the new Tsar Nicholas, left Russia to settle abroad. Only in 1828 was he finally appointed to a salaried post as second secretary at the Munich legation, after which he and Eleonore felt able to start a family of their own. They also took the opportunity to travel. In 1827 and 1828 they spent lengthy periods in Paris, where Tyutchev made the acquaintance of leading figures of the liberal opposition. Other trips followed: to the Tyrolean Alps, and in 1829 to Italy, where he and his brother Nikolay toured extensively, visiting among other places Rome and the island of Ischia. In 1830 he, Eleonore and Clotilde were united with his parents on home leave in St Petersburg. Three years later he was sent on a courier mission to newly independent Greece, entrusted with delivering without the knowledge of that country's Regency Council an important letter from Ludwig I of Bavaria to his son King Otto of Greece, who was not yet of age. Journeys always inspired Tyutchev to write poems, and these were no exception (14, 18, 19, 27, 31, 56).

In Munich he associated with the philosopher Friedrich Schelling, and became a close friend of Heinrich Heine during the latter's time there from November 1827 to July

1828. His version of 'Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam…' had already earned the distinction of being the first published Russian translation of a Heine poem; others would follow, part of Tyutchev's fairly considerable output as a translator of verse. Critics have detected the influence of Heine in some of his poems (5, 50). At this stage of his career Heine was still better known as an essayist and journalist than as a poet. Tyutchev appears to have seized the opportunity of justifying official Russian policy to him, and for a time at least Heine was prepared to defend Russia's actions in print. These and similar efforts with Schelling and others marked the beginning of a long-term role for Tyutchev as unofficial and often maverick advocate of the Russian cause to western opinion makers.

During these years in Munich Tyutchev contributed poems to various obscure almanachs and later a journal, *Galatea*, published in Russia by his former mentor Raich. None made any wider impact, not least because he insisted on virtual anonymity, hiding behind the initials 'F.T.' or 'F.T-v.' Indeed, it seems likely that they were only sent at all in response to Raich's persuasion. Throughout his life Tyutchev showed little or no interest in the publication of his poetic manuscripts, on one occasion even destroying a large number of them (accidentally, he claimed, although critics have justifiably suspected otherwise). Various reasons have been suggested for this. Certainly for him poetic composition was an intensely private affair, on occasion even a form of mental therapy, and no doubt he was reluctant to see the results made public property. Significant in this respect is the fact that many of his love poems were addressed to women who could not understand a word of Russian. There is also the conviction expressed in

one of his finest poems that 'a thought, once uttered, is a lie' — that our most authentic insights must remain inward, being cheapened and devalued when exposed to the glare of public discourse (30).

In keeping with this was Tyutchev's response to a request for poems from a friend and former colleague at the Munich legation, Ivan Gagarin, one of the few to whom he had felt able to show his manuscripts. Returning to Russia in 1836 and learning that Pushkin was about to start publication of a new journal, Gagarin wrote to Tyutchev offering in effect to become his literary agent. Tyutchev bundled up his unsorted 'scribblings' and sent them off to Gagarin, glad, as he said, to clear out these old papers with their 'rancid smell that turns the stomach', and telling his friend: 'Do with them as you will'. The poems, copied out in a fair hand by Gagarin, were shown to the poets Zhukovsky and Vyazemsky and to Pushkin himself. All three were greatly impressed, and the same year Pushkin published twenty-four in a prominent position in his journal *Sovremmenik* (*The Contemporary*). Plans to follow this up with a volume of verse never came to fruition: Gagarin was sent abroad on a new diplomatic posting, while Pushkin, who might have helped in this respect, was killed in a duel a few months later. Tyutchev wrote a heartfelt tribute in verse to him, published only after his own death (58).

The first half of the 1830s brought mounting troubles. He always preferred the social side of a diplomat's life to its more routine aspects, soon establishing a reputation in fashionable and intellectual circles both as a great wit and raconteur and as a serious commentator on matters political, philosophical and literary. Financially imprudent at the best of times, he found it impossible to meet the cost of such

a lifestyle on his meagre salary and the annual allowance paid out of revenue from his parents' estate. The debts piled up, and it was left to Eleonore and his more practical brother Nikolay to sort out the mess. At this time too he became prone to lengthy periods of disabling depression interspersed with episodes of manic energy, to all appearances symptoms of bipolar disorder. Extramarital affairs continued to put his marriage under strain, most spectacularly in the case of Baroness Ernestine von Dörnberg, a beautiful young widow with whom he fell passionately in love in 1834. She appears initially to have resisted his advances and her own inclination (62, 63), and at the beginning of May left Munich to spend several months with her father, the Bavarian ambassador in Paris, having taken a 'final farewell' of the devastated Tyutchev (64, 65). After her return he resumed his pursuit; by the summer of 1835 they were lovers (66, 67). The following spring Ernestine became pregnant and in July left Munich, after which no more is heard of her for over a year. According to one unverified account she gave birth to a daughter in Switzerland;[7] the child appears to have died quite soon in infancy. Already on 23 April, possibly after learning of Ernestine's pregnancy, Eleonore attempted to commit suicide by stabbing herself.[8]

The scandal prompted the ambassador to request Tyutchev's transfer. Both he and Eleonore were keen to leave Munich, but staff shortages at the legation meant he had to stay on for another year. In April 1837 they left for St Petersburg, where he managed to obtain a new posting as first secretary at the Russian legation in Turin. This was achieved with the help of Amélie, who had moved with her husband to St Petersburg the previous year and already enjoyed considerable influence at court. In August Tyutchev

departed for his new post, leaving Eleonore and the children (they now had three daughters of their own in addition to her sons from the first marriage) to spend the winter with his parents in the Russian capital.

He found Turin an uncongenial place to live and work compared with Munich. The rigid court etiquette insisted upon by King Charles Albert, the absence of any lively social life and the strong influence of the Catholic Church were all distasteful to him. There was in any case very little for him to do at the legation, and at the end of November he took advantage of an official trip to Genoa to meet up with Ernestine. They spent about a week together, exploring the city and its environs (68) and discussing their future. It was no doubt Ernestine who decided they should draw a line under the affair; on 1 December they parted after further 'final farewells' (70).

Back in Turin Tyutchev wrote in mental turmoil to Eleonore that he planned to travel to St Petersburg in the depth of winter to see her. The ambassador gave him leave to go, and a courier mission as far as Vienna was arranged. In fact he appears to have got no further than Munich, where he remained for several weeks. In March he was recalled to Turin in view of a bizarre yet far-reaching diplomatic crisis which had arisen when the Russian ambassador's wife was deemed by King Charles Albert to have offended against the dress code of his court. This would eventually result in Tsar Nicholas recalling his ambassador in protest and Tyutchev taking over as chargé d'affaires. On his way back from Munich to Turin he met up with Ernestine again, this time in Geneva. They spent a week together in the same hotel, aware that on this occasion their farewells would indeed have to be final, as Eleonore

would be leaving to join her husband as soon as navigation in the Gulf of Finland reopened in May.

Some days after reaching Turin, Tyutchev received alarming news that the steam packet from Kronstadt near St Petersburg to Travemünde on which his wife and daughters were travelling had caught fire and been shipwrecked in the Baltic. Fortunately they had survived without great physical injury, although all their papers, money, furniture and other effects were destroyed. Even so the shock had seriously undermined Eleonore's fragile health. The long journey to Turin (Tyutchev had travelled to Munich to meet them), the worry and exertion of setting up home from scratch, and the stifling heat of midsummer all combined to debilitate her further. The final blow was a viral infection which in her weakened state she was unable to fight off. She died on 8 September.

Tyutchev was inconsolable, his grief compounded by guilt and remorse. After two poems written apparently in the aftermath of Eleonore's death and marked by that tragic event (45, 71), he fell virtually silent as a poet for a period of ten years. Some relief was found in his diplomatic work, far more demanding now that he had taken over the running of the legation. His despatches as chargé d'affaires contain much astute analysis, their praise for Piedmontese reforms and progressive politicians even hinting at a hidden political agenda.

At the end of November he and Ernestine were reunited at Genoa and agreed to be wed as soon as the proprieties allowed. In March 1839 he applied to St Petersburg for permission to marry, requesting leave in order to do so and to settle his family affairs (his three daughters were in the temporary care of Eleonore's sister Clotilde in Munich).

Foreign Minister Nesselrode had no objection to the marriage, but said he would have to stay at his post until the newly appointed ambassador arrived. Having hoped for the job himself, Tyutchev was mortified to be passed over. By July Ernestine was pregnant, and with still no sign of the new ambassador he decided to take matters into his own hands. Leaving only an unaccredited trainee diplomat in charge of the legation, he set off with Ernestine to be married at the Russian Orthodox church in Berne. Afterwards they settled in Munich, from where Tyutchev formally submitted his resignation as chargé d'affaires and requested leave to spend the winter abroad before returning to St Petersburg to apply for a new post. This was agreed to.

Ernestine was a woman of some fortune, which she had inherited from her father and her first husband. She began married life to Tyutchev by paying off his debts, and would continue to support him through six years of unemployment. He showed reluctance to report back to his superiors in St Petersburg, to whom in any case news of his dereliction of duty in Turin had begun to seep back. In 1841 he was dismissed from the Foreign Service and stripped of his honorary court rank of chamberlain for 'protracted failure to report back for duty'.

Despite this professional setback he managed with the help of Ernestine's calming influence to achieve a certain equilibrium in his private life during these years in Munich. Ernestine bore him a son and daughter, followed later by another son in Russia. They travelled much together, and Tyutchev had time to develop his political ideas. While never abandoning the liberal ideals of his youth, he was by now convinced that Russia's destiny lay in uniting the Slav peoples languishing under Austrian and Turkish rule. The

result would be a vast and powerful eastern empire inheriting the mantle of Rome and Constantinople, predominantly Slav and of Orthodox faith, and ruled by an autocratic Tsar. Aware that his grandiose Panslavist vision was completely at odds with the cautious and pragmatic policies of Russia's Foreign Minister, the pro-Austrian Count Nesselrode, he resolved to promulgate it in the foreign press, which he knew to be eagerly read in Russia despite censorship restrictions. He even hoped to secure official support for a scheme to recruit and co-ordinate western writers and journalists sympathetic to the Russian cause and prepared to defend it in public, seeing this as a possible way back into government service.

These hopes were bolstered on a visit to Russia in the autumn of 1843 when he was introduced by Amélie to her current lover, the elderly Count von Benckendorff. As head of Nicholas I's notorious Third Section, Benckendorff was primarily in charge of the secret police and internal security, but had extended his department's operations abroad to include foreign intelligence and propaganda, thereby provoking something of a turf war with his rival Nesselrode. Benckendorff was receptive to Tyutchev's proposals and promised his support. Once back in Munich, however, Tyutchev failed in his initial attempts to recruit sympathisers and had to fall back on contributing articles to the press himself.

Ernestine had set her heart on spending the winter in Russia, and he reluctantly agreed. They arrived in St Petersburg in the autumn of 1844 to unwelcome news that his patron Benckendorff had died. This effectively put paid to his project. He continued to petition Nesselrode and the Tsar himself for support, but it was a lost cause. Instead he

was offered and accepted reinstatement in the Foreign Service, with restoration of his chamberlain's title. He hoped for a diplomatic posting abroad, but this too was not forthcoming. Eventually he was appointed as a senior censor in the Foreign Ministry department responsible for vetting imported printed matter and articles on foreign policy in the Russian press. By now it was clear that circumstances had conspired to dash his hopes of a return to life in the West. Apart from anything else, Ernestine had come to love Russia and was set on staying there. Whether he wanted or not, he had to accept that a new chapter had begun in his life.

The revolutions which swept Europe in 1848 were seen by Tyutchev as the death-throes of western civilisation, brought on by its perceived cult of the individual. In political verse, memoranda and articles he predicted a cataclysmic war unleashed against Russia by the revolutionary West compared with which that of 1812 would pale into insignificance. Russia would emerge victorious as a great Graeco-Slavonic Empire ruled by its Tsar, inaugurating a new age in the history of mankind. To begin with he was allowed to promulgate these ideas in articles published abroad, but as the revolutionary tide ebbed and Russia reached a new rapprochement with Austria, plans for a more detailed exposition in a French-language book appear to have been vetoed at a high level. At home his commitment to the Slav cause was welcomed by the Slavophiles. Like them he held the somewhat utopian view that autocratic rule and freedom of expression could coexist quite happily, and in his new career as censor he did what he could to apply this ideal despite the harsh regime introduced as a reaction to the revolutionary events of 1848. As a result he frequently

incurred official reprimands for what was seen as his excessively liberal approach.

Throughout his life Tyutchev would show a commitment to the publication of his political writings notably lacking with regard to his lyric verse. This was particularly apparent in 1848, a year which apart from the flurry of journalistic articles saw the first beginnings of a true poetic rebirth. The barren decade following Eleonore's death ended with a poem apparently marking the tenth anniversary of her passing (10), and another (46) which reprises the themes of 'Day and Night' (45), probably the last poem of any significance written before the long poetic silence. Ovstug and the surrounding countryside inspired a further spate of verse during a visit with Ernestine the following summer (103, 116, 117). Now it seems the floodgates were open, and the next two years or so would prove to be one of the most prolific periods in his life.

We may safely assume that these poems were written without any thought of publication. It was purely by chance that in 1850 the poet Nikolay Nekrasov published in his journal *Sovremennik* a highly appreciative critique of the poems by a certain mysterious 'F. T.' or 'F. T-v' which had appeared in that same journal more than a decade before. Friends of Tyutchev cajoled him into publishing some of his latest verse in other periodicals, and his identity was finally revealed. In 1854 an associate of Nekrasov, the novelist Ivan Turgenev, persuaded Tyutchev (again with some difficulty) to agree to publication of a volume of verse. Although this and another collection in 1868 never enjoyed a wide readership during his lifetime, they succeeded in establishing his reputation as a major poet in the eyes of discerning critics and writers.

For the first decade or so of his marriage to Ernestine there is little evidence of the mental instability to which he had earlier been prey. By the beginning of 1850, however, relations between them had cooled, and Tyutchev by his own admission had fallen into a deep and even suicidal depression. He desperately sought respite in amorous pursuits, including that of an attractive twenty-four-year-old, Yelena Denisyeva. She lived with her maiden aunt, deputy head of the prestigious Smolny Institute for daughters of the aristocracy where two of Tyutchev's daughters were being educated, and for some years already she and her aunt had been family friends of the Tyutchevs. She appears at first to have resisted his advances (74), but in July 1850 they became lovers (75, 76). Tyutchev envisaged no more than a fleeting affair, but Yelena had other ideas, and they remained together for fourteen years, during which time she would bear him three children and he would dedicate to her a series of remarkable love poems, the so-called 'Denisyeva Cycle'. Already by September Yelena was pregnant. Somehow they managed to keep this secret until the following March, when their clandestine assignations became known to the Smolny authorities. In the ensuing scandal Yelena's aunt Anna was forced to retire, and Yelena found herself shunned by most of her friends and family (77). Even Tyutchev seems to have been persuaded to break off the relationship, although this proved to be temporary (78, 79). In May 1851 Yelena gave birth to a daughter (81).

Ernestine acted throughout the affair with great dignity, reportedly never referring to her husband's liaison in conversation with family and friends. Despite this she was understandably heartbroken, and soon after the birth of Yelena's child she retired to Ovstug for a lengthy stay.

Tyutchev was genuinely torn between the two women in his life; he continued to address verse, usually of a penitential nature, to his wife (96, 97). In an enigmatic poem written in November 1851 he appeals to a mysterious feminine 'aerial spirit' (possibly the shade of Eleonore) to comfort him in his mental turmoil (98). Yet by now he found himself increasingly tied to Yelena, whose possessive and temperamental nature made for an often turbulent relationship (82, 83).

Following a difficult winter in St Petersburg, in May 1852 Ernestine returned to Ovstug. Over the next two years she and Tyutchev lived apart for nine tenths of the time, including a year spent by her in Munich. By now the marriage was close to breaking point. The deeply religious Yelena became convinced that her relationship with Tyutchev was a true marriage in the eyes of God which only the world insisted on denying formal recognition. Summers spent together at dachas outside the city were particularly idyllic (84, 85, 87, 88). Yet underlying their happiness was, for Tyutchev at least, a recurring sense of impermanence and the approach of old age (86).

In the autumn of 1854, after years of living at a series of temporary addresses, Tyutchev and Ernestine moved into a spacious new apartment on Nevsky Prospekt. This would remain their home for the next eighteen years, until shortly before his death.[9] From now on Ernestine spent her winters in St Petersburg and the summer months at Ovstug, reluctantly tolerating her husband's double life for the sake of family harmony.

The Crimean War of 1854–56 was hailed by Tyutchev in apocalyptic terms as the long-foreseen final showdown between East and West. Yet far from establishing Russia as

the predominant world power, the war laid bare fatal weaknesses in the autocratic system, in particular its protracted failure to modernise. Following the death of Nicholas I early in 1855, and with defeat looming, Tyutchev joined others in turning on the late Tsar and holding him personally responsible for the debacle (106). In favour of fighting to the bitter end as in 1812, he was mortified when the new Tsar Alexander II eventually decided to sue for peace.

He welcomed the more liberal regime and openness to reform signalled by Alexander. In common with the Slavophiles, Tyutchev fervently supported the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 (105, 107). His own main contribution to the reforms was in his work as censor. An official memorandum on the subject written by him in 1857 criticised the rigid censorship under Nicholas I, advocated freedom of speech and discussed ways in which the government might, as in western countries, handle a free press. The following year he was appointed chairman of the Foreign Censorship Committee, which was responsible for censoring all publications imported into the Russian Empire. In this post, which he held until his death, he continued to fight for a more liberal censorship regime against those in government who felt things had already gone too far (124). Behind the scenes he did what he could to promote the Panslavist cause in official circles, making use of his friendship with Foreign Minister Gorchakov and his court connections (he was a chamberlain and his daughter Anna a maid of honour). On occasion he also acted as an unofficial intermediary between Gorchakov and the press, offering editors access to confidential documents and briefings in return for supporting those aspects of the

government's foreign policy which he himself was happy to endorse.

Meanwhile his private life pursued its unconventional course, divided between a legal wife and one who considered herself such in all but name, and between two separate families. In the summer he would sometimes pay brief visits to Ernestine in distant Ovstug (119), but in general this was the time of year spent with Yelena. Health problems towards the end of the 1850s (he suffered increasingly from gout) required lengthy spells of treatment at spas in Germany and Switzerland. More than once he was accompanied on his travels by Yelena, who was delighted to be able to play the part of wife. In 1860 she gave birth to their second child, a son, in Geneva. For all his avowed political ideals, Tyutchev was still irresistibly drawn to western Europe. He particularly loved the Swiss mountains and lakes (110); what he referred to as his 'western streak' made him shudder at the prospect of returning via the vast 'Scythian plain' (as he writes in one of his letters) to the rigours of a winter in St Petersburg (108).

In the summer of 1864 in St Petersburg Yelena gave birth to another son. Soon afterwards she fell seriously ill with tuberculosis and within a few weeks was dead (89). As after the death of Eleonore, Tyutchev was prostrate with grief. He was persuaded to spend the winter with Ernestine in Nice, where the Russian court had taken up residence with the Emperor and Empress, but this brought no relief (90). They returned in the spring of 1865 to news that two of his three children by Yelena had contracted the same disease that had carried off their mother; they too died soon afterwards. He now felt himself to be 'a broken spring'. Some consolation was found in poetry: the 'Denisyeva cycle'

continued unabated for some years after these tragic events (91, 92, 93).

Although the rigid censorship regime in place under Nicholas I had been relaxed in practice, it had never been formally repealed. A new law promulgated in 1865 brought some clarification, but rather ominously laid down a procedure by which the government could close down periodicals it found troublesome. To oversee such matters it established a Council on Press Affairs, of which Tyutchev as chairman of the Foreign Censorship Committee became an ex officio member. Here he fought a rearguard action, attempting to prevent closure not only of Slavophile and 'national' journals and newspapers but those on the liberal and radical wing too. He frequently found himself in a minority of one on the committee, and on one occasion resigned his position temporarily in protest. He passionately believed that ideas, however misguided, could never be crushed by brute force, but needed to be countered in open debate with argument and persuasion.

He never abandoned his faith in a great Graeco-Slavonic Empire, while acknowledging that Russia's Crimean defeat had effectively postponed that outcome for any foreseeable future. He continued to promulgate his Panslavist views in copious political verse whose publication he promoted with an enthusiasm never shown for that of his incomparably superior lyric poetry. Typical is a poem read out to great acclaim at the 1867 Slavonic Congress in Moscow and St Petersburg, when delegates from all over the Slav lands were officially welcomed by the Tsar and Foreign Minister Gorchakov (111). Nevertheless, Tyutchev's view that the future of the Slav peoples lay in accepting Russian rule was out of tune with that of most of the Czech, Serbian,

Croatian, Bulgarian and other Slav delegates, who wanted nothing more than to shake off all foreign domination. Here as so often his political thought was essentially utopian, lacking any pragmatic consideration of what might realistically be achieved. One of his best known poems enshrines the vision of Russia as an ideal concept, far removed from the often unpromising reality (113).

By the end of the 1860s his letters begin to strike a more insistent note of world-weariness. He took no interest in a second collection of his verse published in 1868, dismissing it as a pointless exercise (123). Even so, he continued to produce lyric gems among the reams of political verse. The nature poetry, inspired by visits to Ovstug (now easily accessible by rail) and Tsarskoye Selo near St Petersburg, is in general more restrained and pictorial than the 'cosmic' verse of his Munich years (118, 119, 120). His unremitting and hopeless pursuit of Yelena Bogdanova, a widow nearly twenty years his junior, provided an unedifying spectacle and yielded only two fairly insignificant poems.

His last visit abroad – to Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) and Toeplitz (Teplice) in the summer of 1870 for treatment of his gout and rheumatism – coincided with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War predicted by him for some time, the course of which he followed with horrified fascination, appalled at what he saw as a reversion to barbarism in the very heart of Europe. A poem written in Karlsbad appears to commemorate an emotional reunion with his recently widowed sister-in-law Clotilde at which poignant memories of his youth were revived (11).

A succession of deaths in his immediate circle, including those of his mother, his brother Nikolay (125), his son Dmitry and daughter Marie, served apart from anything else

as reminders of his own mortality. With growing dismay he observed those around him disappearing one by one 'like the last cards in a game of patience'. In the autumn of 1872 his own health took a turn for the worse, and at the beginning of December he suffered a minor stroke. A second, more serious stroke on New Year's Day left him virtually paralysed (127). By May he had recovered sufficiently to be able to move with Ernestine to a summer dacha at Tsarskoye Selo, where he could enjoy outings in a wheelchair. Two further strokes in June reversed all these gains. He died at Tsarskoye Selo on 15 July (27 July New Style) 1873.

THE WORLD VIEW OF TYUTCHEV'S POETRY

> Belief in fabled myth has perished:
> Cold reason has laid waste to all...

So Tyutchev had lamented before leaving Russia in 1822, going on to express his yearning for an age when the universe was still perceived as a living entity endowed with soul: 'Where are you now, O ancient peoples!/ Your world was temple to the gods'. His poetry of the 1820s and 1830s can be seen as an attempt to regain something of this vision for the modern world as an alternative to the analytical and reductive processes of 'cold reason'. It was an aspiration he shared with writers such as Schiller (whose poem 'Die Götter Griechenlands' the lines just quoted clearly echo), Goethe, Hölderlin and many of the Romantics. Philosophers of the early nineteenth century too had begun to query the monopoly of truth claimed for mechanistic science. Kant's

thoroughgoing analysis of the limits of human perception and understanding had already pointed to the existence of an unknowable reality (the noumenon or 'thing in itself') quite separate from the world of phenomena as perceived by us and known to science. Developing this insight, Friedrich Schelling posited as Kant's unknowable absolute a noumenal will which, though itself beyond time and space, creates and constantly interacts with the world of phenomena. The universe as we perceive it is in Schelling's view the 'imprint' of 'this eternal and infinite self-volition'. Far from being a mere accumulation of inert matter driven by impersonal forces, the whole of nature — the universe — is a single living organism embodying a unity of matter and mind, which are but twin aspects of the one underlying reality or 'world soul'.

Schelling's teachings were seized upon by the Romantics (in England most notably by Coleridge). They were excited by his reintroduction of vitalism and mystery into the matter-of-fact universe of science, and welcomed his insistence on the primacy of the creative imagination as a source of authentic knowledge. In one of his poems of the 1830s Tyutchev defends what is clearly recognisable as a Schellingian view of nature against its deist and materialist opponents (34). And in a later poem he appears to compare Schelling's revelation of what we would now call the unconscious to Columbus's discovery of the new world (37).

Tyutchev's lyric verse of this period certainly embodies to the full the principle of a vital unity of spirit and matter, man and nature A wave racing towards land becomes in a sustained metaphor a lusty foam-flecked stallion before vanishing in spray on the seashore (18); autumn leaves call on the wind to blow them from their 'tiresome' branches so

that like the migrating birds they too can fly far away (21); an autumn evening has about it a 'gentle smile of transience and waning' that suggests saintly suffering (20); a willow bends over a stream, its leaves striving like thirsting lips to catch the elusive waters, yet the stream runs on regardless, revelling in the sunshine and mocking the willow's unrequited yearning (25); and so on.

The extent to which (if at all) such features can be attributed to Schelling's influence is a moot point with scholars. The distinction between noumenal and phenomenal reality was of course made long before the German idealist philosophers by Plato in his analogy of the cave and is familiar from Hindu and Buddhist teachings. Similarly, the concept of nature's dual aspect — an outward appearance of multiplicity concealing a single underlying life force — goes back at least to Spinoza's differentiation between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.

In Tyutchev's verse this duality is most frequently expressed through the imagery of night and day. Day — the world of appearances — is a 'golden-glittering veil' that brings solace and healing to men and gods alike, but it remains just that: an insubstantial veil temporarily concealing the ultimate reality beneath. 'Holy' night flings it aside with ease to reveal the 'nameless dark abyss' before which man 'in naked helplessness', like an 'orphan', stands 'in fear and trembling'. At the same time he knows this terrible reality — 'all/That is elusive, alien and nocturnal' — to be his 'birthright', part of his own soul (45, 46). Although man may represent the culmination of nature's evolution towards consciousness, the roots of his being still go deep into the unconscious, linking him to the noumenal reality underlying all appearances.

On the one hand Tyutchev invites us to open up to the mysterious nocturnal realm of the unconscious revealed through dreams, contemplation of nature, the imagination, art and the play of instinct. 'Seek out that world within your soul,' he tells us in one of his most famous poems, exhorting us to lose ourselves in 'inmost thoughts and feelings' as they rise and set like stars in the night sky. If the 'outer din and glare' of day are allowed to intrude, these inspired insights 'will fade and be not heard'. Any attempt to transfer them into consciousness through the medium of language will inevitably result in distortion: 'A thought, once uttered, is a lie'. Like Schopenhauer, he seems to imply that music alone of the arts is capable of expressing such deeper truths directly: 'Drink in their song — and not a word!' (30). In another poem, dreaming becomes a voyage into the collective unconscious. Just as the oceans encircle the globe, says Tyutchev, our earthly life is surrounded and permeated by dreams. At night their rising tide frees the 'magic craft' of the self from its moorings and carries it off into the 'dark unending sea', surrounded on all sides by an 'abyss of radiant light' from the stars (42). Elsewhere the coming of dusk induces in the poet a pantheistic sense of oneness with the whole of creation: 'All is in me — I in all!' And he longs to lose his identity, if only momentarily, in the noumenal and absolute: 'Let me taste annihilation,/ With the sleeping world made one!' (44)

Here we come to a dilemma. Desirable as union with the absolute may be, it would at its most complete entail the permanent extinction (or 'annihilation') of the self. And to will in effect one's own death in this way is something we are hardwired to resist. During this earlier period of his poetic output Tyutchev can still contemplate a temporary

communion with the mysterious force animating the universe, with effects that are not only not fatal but healing and invigorating. In the poem just quoted he talks of 'tasting' annihilation; in another ('Spring') he urges us to plunge into the 'life-giving ocean' of nature and 'know, if only for an instant,/ Its godlike, all-embracing life'. The death of his wife Eleonore in 1838 undoubtedly brought home to him the more brutal and destructive aspects of 'nature red in tooth and claw'. In the previously quoted poems 'Day and Night' (45) and 'Now holy night has claimed the heavenly sphere…' (46), which between them frame the ten-year poetic hiatus following Eleonore's death, the terror evoked by night's revelation of the numinous is expressed more clearly than ever before. Yet there are clear hints of this even earlier, suggesting that life experiences merely served to reinforce a pre-existing ambivalence of attitude. In a poem written in the first half of the 1830s, the wind howling at night sings 'fearful songs' about 'the ancient, inborn Chaos' (inborn in man too, that is); they speak to the nocturnal side of the soul, enticing it to 'become one with the infinite'. Here, in contrast to the poems quoted earlier, such a union is seen as something to be feared and resisted: 'O, do not rouse those sleeping storms,/ Beneath them stirs unfettered Chaos!..'

This dichotomy and ambiguity at the heart of things finds expression already in the 1830 lyric 'Mal'aria' (31). Here in an Italian setting the outward beauty of nature is contrasted with an invisible but deadly disease borne upon air that seems to all appearances pure and salubrious. Tyutchev tells us he is attracted to this 'mysterious essence/ Of Evil spread abroad, concealed in everything'. Listing the beautiful sights around him — sun, sky and trees, the

'crystal' waters of a spring, a fragrant rose — he adds: 'and all is Death, all this!' And he speculates that when sent to summon us forth from life, the messenger of the Fates may use all these delights as 'an airy cloak to mask his features', thus ensuring that 'his fearsome coming is disguised'. The 'airy cloak' is essentially the same image as that of the comforting 'golden-glittering veil' of day so rudely flung aside by night. And again we have the equation: noumenal reality equals extinction of the individual self. A poem inspired much later in St Petersburg by the dramatic springtime breaking of ice on the Neva uses different imagery to express the same truth. The chunks of ice are swept inexorably downstream, each losing its individual shape and form as it melts, to merge eventually with the 'fathomless abyss' of the sea. The self — that 'phantom of the mind's invention' — is, Tyutchev says, just as fragile and ephemeral as these lumps of ice and like them doomed to return to and be swallowed up in the impersonal life force that is their native element (39).

This fundamental driving force of the universe — Spinoza's *natura naturans*, Schelling's 'eternal and infinite self-volition', the 'imprint' of which is the perceptible world — reappears as Schopenhauer's 'will', to which he opposes our 'representation' (more accurately, perhaps, 'idea' or 'perception') of the world. Schopenhauer's seminal work, which inspired a later generation of creative artists in much the same way as Schelling's philosophy had earlier in the century, was almost certainly unknown to Tyutchev, at least during this earlier period of his life. And yet in many ways his poetic universe seems closer to Schopenhauer's vision than to that of Schelling (whose influence on Schopenhauer was in any case probably greater than the latter was ever

prepared to admit). Whereas Schelling's 'self-volition' is divine in origin and ultimately beneficent, Schopenhauer's 'will' — impersonal, morally indifferent and goalless — seems more akin to what Vladimir Solovyov identified as 'the dark root of universal being' in Tyutchev's poetry. In so far as it is instinctual, non-rational and undifferentiated in character, the conscious individual may perceive it equally as evil, suffering and death, or as a healing transcendent force. Tyutchev's ambivalent feelings — now of attraction, now repulsion — vis-à-vis the noumenal are thus in no way the result, as claimed by some critics, of confusion or loose thinking, but metaphysically well-grounded.

Among the death-infested joys enumerated by Tyutchev in 'Mal'aria' is a woman lying at his side, apparently asleep. Sexual love, one of the most significant ways in which we can connect with the mysterious life force, features prominently in Tyutchev's verse. In one poem the object of his love is completely identified, not to say confused, with the sea, for him always a potent symbol of that force. She (or the sea) brims with 'wondrous life', charming him with the 'gentle murmur' of her 'love-filled sighs' (84). In another he writes of being in thrall to the 'dark night of wondrous passion' in her eyes, their gaze, 'impossible to fathom', laying bare 'the life within entire' (78). But like other routes to the absolute, love is double-edged, bringing pain and suffering as well as bliss. In 'Italian Villa' (68) the very harmony of nature is thrown into confusion by the passion of the poet and his lover, as if the 'evil life' holding them in its sway had crossed 'a forbidden threshold'. Elsewhere the sexual urge is portrayed as a force driving us to 'destroy/ In passion's blind intoxication/ Our heart's desire, our deepest joy' (79). It can set lovers against each other in an un-

relenting duel of wills (82, 83). At its most extreme, love is even said in one poem to be a 'twin' of suicide. The irruption of this powerful and anarchic nocturnal force into the orderly diurnal world mankind has built for itself can wreak havoc as it clashes with the rules and conventions of that world. Beauty, says Tyutchev (and he means Yelena Denisyeva) must 'surely come to woe' when she defies 'the Judgement of the World': 'Such is the world: inhuman in exaction/ Where manifestly human the offence.' (93).

Is there any way to access the inmost nature of things without incurring the pitfalls connected with those examined so far? There would appear to be just one: that offered by art. Tyutchev presents us with a picture of the creative artist as one endowed with unique receptivity to the noumenal, to which again he attaches nocturnal imagery. Thus in one piece he defends a poet who appears somewhat dull and aloof in society circles through an analogy with the moon: by day no more than a 'vapid wisp of cloud', at night it comes into its own as 'a god resplendent-browed', casting its 'potent lustre' over all (57). Addressing his friend and fellow poet Afanasy Fet, Tyutchev likens the creative faculty to the 'blind, prophetic instinct' allowing diviners to sense water in 'the earth's dark depths'; what is more, he says, artists such as Fet have been favoured by the 'Great Mother' with the far more enviable gift of being able on occasion to glimpse Nature herself 'beneath the visible exterior'. Such intimate familiarity with the life force is also attributed to Goethe, of whom Tyutchev says in another poem that he 'prophet-like, with thunderstorms conversed'. This striking image for poetic discourse recurs in Tyutchev's programmatic piece on the philosophy of nature, where he specifically scorns those literal-minded souls with whom

'the thunderstorm has never/ By night held friendly intercourse' (34).

Initiation into the mysteries of being is of course no guarantee against the usual human failings. Pushkin may have soared to 'sacred, lonely heights' and been 'a sounding board' for the gods, but he was at the same time 'flesh and blood... blood hot and furious' (a reference to the quick temper which drove him to his fatal duel) (58). Indeed, the artist's prophetic openness to the life force can often set him or her at odds with the conventions of established society, so that to the rest of humanity the artist will appear as an awkward, eccentric or even dangerous figure. In one poem Tyutchev warns a young girl to be 'fearful of a poet's love', for she will find herself unable to contain his 'all-consuming fire' and will suffer pain or destruction as a result. 'The poet's powers elemental/ To all things but himself extend,' is his explanation for this alarming state of affairs (59). Elsewhere (55) the creative genius is shown in the 'piteous' guise he or she must present to those who live in accordance with convention and common sense: that of a crazed, half-blind prophet in the wilderness. In this case the wilderness is a blazing desert devoid of life which could be seen as representing a world devastated by the extremes of rational thought. Bending one ear to the burning sand, the madman 'thinks he hears the joyous music/ Of water coursing underground'. He is clearly deluded from any rational point of view, yet we are reminded of the 'blind, prophetic instinct' of the water-diviners in Tyutchev's verses to Fet, and have to wonder if his discovery is not in some deeper sense authentic. In fact the vision he has in the final stanza of water issuing from the desert, far surpassing in beauty and vitality anything in the 'real' world of arid emptiness sur-

rounding him, is a tribute to the healing and redemptive power of the imagination. However humanly flawed, however prone to the suffering of the world the creative genius may be, the products of his or her imagination can remove us temporarily from that world to a realm of serene contemplation. The aesthetic experience is in short the one way we have of relating to the ultimate reality of things without incurring the penalty of pain and suffering imposed by other ways open to us. This is essentially the message of a short lyric in which our earthly existence is portrayed as in the grip of 'passions violently clashing' and the 'toils and storms of life'. To this 'sea in raging turmoil' descends Poetry, personified as a 'vision, of celestial birth', and 'onto waves in fury thrashing/ Pours balm that reconciles all strife' (60).

Our discussion so far has centred largely on the 1820s and 1830s, the period when Tyutchev was living abroad. It remains only to consider briefly the changes (or rather shifts in emphasis) detectable in the world view of his later verse, written after his return to Russia and the long poetic silence of 1838–48.

As Boris Kozyrev has pointed out,[10] the 1850 poem 'Two Voices' (38) marks an important turning point. It has been shown to contain echoes of Goethe and Hölderlin, and the first 'voice' (stanzas 1-2) conjures up once more the mytho-poetic world of their verse that Tyutchev had embraced as a young man in Munich. It tells us that, unlike the immortal gods, mankind is doomed to failure in its 'hopeless' struggle with fate. The second 'voice' (stanzas 3-4) appears at first to be making the same point, but through subtle variations ends up saying something quite different. There is now no

reference to the struggle being hopeless, and although clearly subject to death, mortals are said to be vanquished by fate 'alone'. The gods look on from the sidelines, filled with 'envy' for the unyielding courage shown by men and compelled in the final analysis to yield the victor's crown to them. The gods, it seems, have become superfluous to the great tragic drama; after this they make no further appearance in Tyutchev's lyric verse. 'Two Voices' signals a turning away from the ecstatic pantheism of his youth in favour of an almost existentialist concern with the vicissitudes of the human soul, adrift in an inhospitable universe.

Other poems too (particularly in the 'Denisyeva Cycle') are infused with a compassionate awareness of the sufferings of others notably lacking in the earlier verse. The references to Greek mythology scattered through the pantheistic verse of his Munich years largely disappear, replaced by more conventional Christian imagery (74, 105, 107, 127). And where his youthful verse exuded unapologetic religious scepticism (50, 51, 63), we are now confronted with a restless yearning for the faith denied to him (99).

Tyutchev's treatment of nature in many of his later poems could best be characterised as poetic realism. Specific scenes are depicted in visual, almost painterly detail; metaphor, simile and personification, freely used in the earlier poetry to suggest the underlying 'cosmic' unity and living force of nature, are largely absent (116–120). That is not to say that he never returns to the wider philosophical themes. The remarkable disquisition on man and nature, life and death inspired by the ice breaking up in the spring of 1850 has already been mentioned (39). Here and in other poems (122, 126), however, the hidden reality of nature is

no longer the object of worship it had often been in his Munich years. Since then life had taught him to accept beneath the decorative outward appearance an elemental force more akin to Schopenhauer's concept of the universal will: blindly relentless in its action, indifferent to human concerns and ultimately without purpose.

* * *

Within each thematic grouping the poems have been arranged in chronological order (sometimes to reflect the order of events rather than of composition). The overall plan is also roughly chronological. The first eight sections refer (with some overlap) to the period 1822–44 when Tyutchev was living abroad, the following five (from the 'Denisyeva Cycle' on) to his years back in Russia.

Unbracketed datings given in the text are those supplied by Tyutchev himself or members of his immediate family, those in brackets have been established by scholars on the basis of other evidence. In each case the date is that of first composition rather than of later revisions. It should generally be assumed that dates for the period 1822–44 are according to the Western (Gregorian) calendar and from 1844 the Eastern (Julian) calendar, which during Tyutchev's lifetime was twelve days behind the Gregorian. Known or suspected exceptions to this are highlighted in the Notes.

1. *F.I. Tyutchev v dokumentakh, stat'yakh i vospominaniyakh sovremennikov* (ed. G.V. Chagin), Moscow, 1999, pp. 112, 250; F.M. Dostoyevsky, *Pis'ma*, 4 vols., Moscow, 1928–59. III, p. 264; *Tolstoy i o Tolstom. Novye materialy*, II, Moscow, 1926, pp. 97-8; A. Fet, *Vospominaniya*, Moscow, 1983, p. 383.

2. F.W.J. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, in: *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings sämmtliche Werke* (ed. K.F.A. Schelling), 14 vols., Stuttgart–Augsburg, 1856–61. III, pp. 619–20.

3. A. Fet, 'O stikhotvoreniyakh F. Tyutcheva', *F.I. Tyutchev v dokumentakh…* (as note 1), p. 125 (reprint of the article in *Russkoye slovo*, 1859, No.2, pp. 63–84).

4. François Cornillot, 'Tiouttchev: poète-philosophe', dissertation, University of Paris IV, 1973, pp. 501, 503.

5. Ibid., p. 503.

6. The account of Tyutchev's life is abstracted from my *Mirror of the Soul: A Life of the Poet Fyodor Tyutchev*, Shaftesbury (Brimstone Press), 2010 (hereafter: *Mirror*). Material which has subsequently come to light is acknowledged in the following three notes.

7. There is said to be a letter in the Tyutchev family archive at Muranovo attesting this, but I have been unable to obtain verification.

8. The date of Eleonore's suicide attempt, the fact of Ernestine's pregnancy and the scandal caused by all this are confirmed by letters of 1836 from the Russian ambassador in Munich, G.I. Gagarin, to A.M. Gorchakov. These are quoted at some length in the introductory section of: L.V. Gladkova, 'Perepiska F.I. Tyutcheva s K. Pfeffelem (1860–1873)', *Rossiyskiy arkhiv*, XVI, Moscow, 2007, pp. 489–544.

9. In August 1872 they moved to an apartment in Nadezhdinskaya Street. *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F.I. Tyutcheva*, Part 3 (*1861–1873*), ed. A.V. Gladkova and T.G. Dinesman, Moscow, 2012, p. 492.

10. B.M. Kozyrev, 'Pis'ma o Tyutcheve', *Literaturnoye nasledstvo*, XCVII, Part 1, Moscow, 1988, pp.92–3.

First Love:

Amélie

That day remains in memory
The dawning of life's day to me:
She stood unspeaking, like the swelling
Of waves her bosom rising, falling;
Her cheeks, flushed with Aurora's light,
Now kindling fast and burning bright —
Till, like the youthful sun ascendant,
A golden pledge of love, resplendent,
Burst from her lips… and I beheld
A whole new undiscovered world!

1830

A golden time still haunts my senses,
A promised land from long ago:
We two, alone as shadows lengthened;
The Danube, murmuring below.

And on that hill where, palely gleaming,
A castle watches over all,
You stood, a fairy princess, leaning
Against a moss-grown granite wall —

With girlish foot so lightly touching
Those ruins of times past — to view
The sun's long, lingering valediction
From hill, from castle, and from you.

A gentle breeze in passing ruffled
Your clothing and caressed your hair,
And from wild apple branches sprinkled
White blossoms on your shoulders fair.

Carefree, you gazed into the distance…
Last rays flashed through the glowing red;
The river sang with added brilliance
From shrouded banks as daylight fled.

And still you watched with joy unclouded
Till all that blissful day be gone,
While overhead the cool dark shadow
Of fleeting life sped gently on.

(June 1833)

To N.

Your dear gaze, innocently charged with passion —
The golden dawn of feelings heaven-sent —
Could not, alas, persuade them to relent…
But shames them with its silent admonition.

Those false hearts in which truth can find no place
Flee, O my friend, as if from condemnation
That childlike gaze of love: an evocation
Of childhood past they cannot bear to face.

But I see only heaven's benefaction
In your sweet gaze; a well-spring pure and still,
It lives within my soul and ever will,
Sustaining me with visions of perfection…

So too above: the realm where spirits dwell
Is radiant with their astral luminescence;
Below, in sin's dark night, that same pure essence
Of fire consumes all like the flames of hell.

23 November 1824

To N.N.

You love, and can dissemble to perfection:
When unobserved in crowded company
My foot encounters yours, you give reply —
And do not blush beneath that fair complexion!

Unchanged your mask of unconcerned abstraction,
Unchanged the movement of your lips, your smile…
Your husband — hateful guardian — meanwhile
Admires your pliant charms with satisfaction.

The hand of fate and deeds of men conspire
To make clandestine joys the ones you treasure;
You know the world… that it would rate our
pleasure
As treachery adds but to your desire.

The bloom of innocence has long since faded
From youthful cheeks, of modesty now bled,
As all too soon Aurora's rays have fled
From roses with young fragrances pervaded.

So be it! More alluring to the mind,
More pleasing to the senses is the image
Of grapes cool-shaded from the sun's fierce homage,
Their blood agleam through verdant trails of vine.

(Second half of 1820s)

Two Sisters:

Eleonore, Clotilde

To Two Sisters

Encountering you both together,
I saw in her yourself new-made:
That same sweet voice, that look so winning,
The freshness as of day's beginning
That once your countenance displayed.

And all, as in a magic mirror,
Took on substantial shape once more:
The pain and joy of past endeavour;
Your erstwhile youth, now lost forever;
The love for you that once I bore!

(1829?)

To sort a pile of letters, on
The floor she sat, all unregarding,
Like ash from which all heat has gone
Now handling them, and now discarding.

On each familiar leaf she took
Her gaze, so strange and distant, rested;
So too departing souls must look
Upon the shell just now divested…

O, how much life lay buried there,
Life lived and now beyond retrieving —
How many moments of despair,
Of love and joy transformed to grieving!..

I stood unspeaking and apart,
And would have knelt — the impulse filled me —
And more than heavy was my heart,
As if a dear shade's presence chilled me.

(1858)

Still love torments me with a vengeance,
Still now my soul cries out to you —
And through the veiled mists of remembrance
Still shines your image, bright and true…
An image treasured and pervasive —
Unfading, never lost to sight,
Unchanging, hauntingly elusive:
A star set in the vault of night…

(1848)

K.B.

We met — and all the past came flooding
Into my frozen heart once more,
Reviving it, as I remembered
Those years, that golden time of yore…

Just as late autumn may surprise us
With days or passing moments when
We feel a sudden breath of springtime,
And something in us stirs again —

So, washed by the intense emotion
Of times past quickening anew,
With long-forgotten fascination
These features dear to me I view…

As in a dream I gaze upon you —
As if across the years' divide —
And now those sounds speak out more clearly
That in my heart had never died…

Not only memory is speaking:
Life too proclaims itself once more —
You have not lost that old enchantment,
And still I love you as before!..

Karlsbad, 26 July 1870

Nature

Summer Evening

The sun's oppressive blazing orb
Has long been shaken from earth's head;
Now sea-waves languidly absorb
The dying glow of lambent red.

Bright stars already from the deep
Have risen, and with heads still wet
Prise up in their majestic sweep
Heaven's vault, that weighs upon us yet.

The air is stirred into a breeze:
A quickening torrent, fresh and fleet;
And lungs restored draw breath with ease,
Disburdened of day's stifling heat.

And all at once a tremor sweet
Thrills Nature to the very core,
As if she'd dipped her burning feet
In waters sprung from crag and tor.

(Dieppe, August 1827)

Thunderstorm in Spring

I love those storms so unexpected
In early May — the first of spring —
When thunder playfully projected
Sets all the blue sky echoing!

Peal follows peal with youthful clatter;
Then dust flies as a rainburst sheds
Its glistening drops, to fall and scatter
Like pearls, while sunlight gilds their threads.

From mountain heights a torrent surges,
Song fills the woods from countless throats;
And sound of stream and birdsong merges,
All chorusing the thunder's notes.

You'd say that Hebe — prone to blunder —
Had let her father's eagle sup,
And, laughing, spilled the foaming thunder
To scatter earthwards from her cup.

(1828?)

Evening

Above the valley floats a ringing
Of distant bells: their muted sound,
Like cranes in close formation winging,
Soon dies, by rustling foliage drowned…

And, like a sea in spring, flood-swollen,
Day spreads before us bright and still —
While shadows that have gently stolen
Along the vale sweep on at will…

(Second half of 1820s)

Spring Waters

Although the fields are white with snow,
Fast-flowing waters speak of spring:
Rousing the meadows as they go,
They run on, sparkling, clamouring…

To all the valley they proclaim:
'Rejoice, for spring is on the way!
We come as heralds in spring's name,
Sent on, these tidings to convey!'

Rejoice, for spring is on the way!
And on its heels the merry round
Of Maytime, day by tranquil day,
When warmth and light and life abound…

(Second half of 1820s)

Sea Stallion

Hot-blooded stallion of the sea
With mane of lucent green —
Now wild, capricious, running free,
Now placidly serene!
Raised by a tempest far from here
Amidst unending seas,
You learnt from it to shy, to rear,
To canter as you please!

I love to see you charge, unchecked
In your imperious force,
When — steaming, tousle-maned and flecked
With foam — you set your course
For land, careering headlong o'er
The brine with joyful neigh,
To dash hooves on the sounding shore
And — vanish into spray!

(Naples/Ischia, July—August 1829)

Knee-deep in sand our horses flounder…
We journey onwards — daylight fades —
The shadows of dark pines engender
One sea of intermingled shades.
What dismal parts! A chill appalling —
Dense woods, now black, on every side —
And from each bush, morose, unsmiling,
Stares night, a monster hundred-eyed…

(October) 1830

Autumn Evening

These radiant autumnal evenings hold
A poignant and mysterious fascination:
The sighing of sere leaves all crimson-gold;
Trees hectic-flushed with motley coloration;
And tranquil, mist-enveloped azure skies
Above an earth forsaken in its sorrow;
While now and then chill gusts of wind arise
As harbingers of storms upon the morrow;
Decay, exhaustion — and on all impressed
That gentle smile of transience and waning,
Which in a sentient being would suggest
A saintliness that suffers uncomplaining.

(Autumn) 1830

Leaves

Let fir-trees and pine-trees
Lie idle, and sleep
All winter through, mantled
In snow fresh and deep —
Like quills of a hedgehog
Their needles protrude,
And though never fading,
Are never renewed.

Yet we playful creatures
Burst forth bright and gay,
And but for a brief time
On branches we stay.
Throughout all the summer
In beauty we grew —
We frolicked with sunbeams
And bathed in the dew…

But now birds fall silent,
And flowers lie dead —
The sunbeams grow paler,
The breezes have fled.
So why should we linger,
To fade and grow sere?
O let's hasten after
And fly far from here!

Come, winds wildly raging,
O do not delay
From these tiresome branches
To tear us away!
Come quickly now, tear us
Away to join you!

And as you fly, bear us:
We'll fly with you too!..

(Autumn) 1830

What a wild place this mountain gorge is!
Towards me darts a stream: it seeks
New haunts below, and onward forges…
My path leads on to lonely peaks.

The summit reached eventually,
I sit at peace. . . You, stream, have hurled
Yourself on down into the valley —
See how you like it in man's world!

(First half of 1830s)

Here where the forest thins, a kite
Strikes upwards, seeking space and height —
Soars up in swerving flight and on
Towards the skyline — and is gone.

So Nature bids her offspring fly
On wings of vibrant power, while I
Must sample dust and sweat and gall:
Lord of the earth, yet in its thrall!

(First half of 1830s)

Why, O willow, to the river
Do you bend your head so low?..
And with leaves that lips resemble
(Lips with burning thirst a-tremble)
Try to catch its racing flow?

Though with every leaf you quiver,
Yearning for the wayward stream,
Still it dashes onward — dancing,
Gaily in the sunlight glancing,
Laughing at your futile dream.

(First half of 1830s)

In the air's oppressive silence,
Presaging a storm to come,
Sultry is the scent of roses,
Harsh the dragonfly's shrill hum.

Hark! From that white hazy storm-cloud
Echoes now the thunder's crash;
And the darkening sky is girded
Round by lightning's darting flash…

Life in supercharged abundance
Fills the fevered air entire,
Spilling like some godly nectar
Through our veins its sensuous fire!

Maid, what stirs the milk-white veil of
Gauze upon your youthful breast?
What has made those eyes once lustrous
Cloud o'er with a look oppressed —

Made the vestal flame of blushes
Fade, grow pallid, and expire? —
Made each breath you draw more painful,
Touched your lips with searing fire?..

Seeping through your silken lashes,
Two tears on your pale cheeks lie…
Or could they be scattered raindrops
From the gathering storm on high?..

(1833)

Pale showed the east… Our craft sped gently,
Taut canvas jubilantly flapping…
Like heaven upturned, the sea beneath us
A-quiver, tremulously lapping…

Red glowed the east… She prayed intently,
Her veil flung back in supplication:
Petitions on her lips, her glances
Fraught with the heavens' exultation…

Bright flared the east… Now diffidently
She bowed her head, as in confusion:
Her neck pearl-white, her young face streaming
With fiery droplets in profusion…

(September—October 1833)

Philosophical Reflections

Silentium!

Be silent, guard your tongue, and keep
All inmost thoughts and feelings deep
Within your heart concealed. There let
Them in their courses rise and set,
Like stars in jewelled night, unheard:
Admire them, and say not a word.

How can the soul its flame impart?
How can another know your heart,
The truths by which you live and die?
A thought, once uttered, is a lie,
The limpid spring defiled, once stirred:
Drink of it, and say not a word.

Make but the inward life your goal —
Seek out that world within your soul:
Mysterious, magic thoughts are there,
Which, if the outer din and glare
Intrude, will fade and be not heard:
Drink in their song — and not a word!

(Second half of 1820s)

Mal'aria

How sweet is this divine wrath! — this mysterious
essence
Of Evil spread abroad, concealed in everything:
In wayside flowers, the crystal waters of a spring,
The very sky of Rome, the sunlight's iridescence…
Unclouded still is heaven's lofty edifice,
Unchanged the gentle rhythm of your breast's
dilation,
Still treetops stir at the warm breeze's inspiration,
Still fragrant is the rose — and all is Death, all this!

Who knows, perhaps indeed all nature is invested
With colours, odours, sounds and voices that foretell
Our final hour, while easing with their genial spell
The final agony with which all shall be tested.
If so, that envoy whom the Fates have deputised
May use them as an airy cloak to mask his features
When he arrives to summon forth us earthbound
creatures,
Ensuring that his fearsome coming is disguised!

1830

The Fountain

See how the fountain's sparkling jet
Cascades in spray that drifts and dances,
Fragmenting sunlight into glances
Of flame and lambent violet.
To heaven the dazzling beam would soar:
It reaches, touches heights transcendent,
But then is doomed to sink, resplendent
In mists of fire, to earth once more.

O never-failing fountain-head
Of human thought and speculation!
What enigmatic dispensation
Keeps your unflagging waters fed?
How eager is your heavenward thrust!
Yet your insistent beam, deflected
By some unseen hand, is directed
Back down, to splash into the dust.

(First half of 1830s)

My soul, Elysium of silent shades,
Bright shades, resplendent once and ever after,
Detached from all the turmoil that pervades
This age – from its pursuits, its griefs, its laughter –

My soul, Elysium of shades, what can
Life signify for you? What common features
Are shared by you, fair ghosts of better days long
gone,
And this dull herd of soulless creatures?

(First half of 1830s)

Nature is not what you would have it:
No lifeless cast, no mask of death —
In nature there is love, and freedom,
A soul, a tongue, a living breath…

[*For you God stands apart from nature:*
No inward-dwelling vital force,
He merely sets the worlds in motion
And keeps them to their charted course.]

You see a tree, its leaves and blossom:
The gardener stuck them there, no doubt?
The growing foetus — is it moulded
By alien forces from without?

[*Your distant God is soon forgotten;*
What then remains may well suffice
For those who'd make of all creation
One vast mechanical device.]

They live, unseeing and unhearing,
In this world as if plunged in gloom;
From distant suns they sense no breathing,
No life within the waves' white spume.

In their dead heart no spring has blossomed,
Their soul sees not the heavenly light;
For them the forests have not spoken,
And mute is all the star-filled night!

And, agitating streams and forests,
In tongues that owe no earthly source,
With them the thunderstorm has never
By night held friendly intercourse!

Yet who will blame them? Can a deaf-mute
Conceive the organ's depth and reach?
Alas, no sound his soul will quicken:
Not even his own mother's speech!

(1833?)

Nous avons pu tous deux, fatigués du voyage,
Nous asseoir un instant sur le bord du chemin —
Et sentir sur nos fronts flotter le même ombrage,
Et porter nos regards vers l'horizon lointain.

Mais le temps suit son cours et sa pente inflexible
A bientôt séparé ce qu'il avait uni, —
Et l'homme, sous le fouet d'un pouvoir invisible,
S'enfonce, triste et seul, dans l'espace infini.

Et maintenant, ami, de ces heures passées,
De cette vie à deux, que nous est-il resté?
Un regard, un accent, des débris de pensées. —
Hélas, ce qui n'est plus a-t-il jamais été?

Lindau, 4 April 1838

Columbus

Columbus, genius supreme! —
Who, having mapped the world in all its splendour,
To accomplish the unfinished scheme
Of world creation tore the veiling screen asunder,
And with divine hand from mist-wreathed infinity
Plucked forth a treasure none had yet detected —
A new world, unknown, unexpected —
Revealing it at last for all to see.

So human genius has ever
Been linked in close affinity
Through ties of blood that naught can sever
With nature's vital energy.
What genius pledges, nature hastens
In concrete form to realise:
Roused by a kindred voice, she listens —
And soon a new world greets our eyes.

1844

Two Voices

1

Be valiant, my friends: fight the fight and show
mettle,
Though hopeless the fray and unequal the battle!
Above you the stars keep their silence on high,
Beneath you cold graves just as silently lie.

Let gods on Olympus enjoy ease of living:
Immortal, they know neither toil nor misgiving;
Those curses afflict only mortals below…
No victory theirs: death is all they shall know.

2

My friends, show your mettle: fight on, lion-
hearted,
Though fiercely the battle may rage all around!
Above you mute stars in their courses uncharted,
Beneath you graves hearing and speaking no sound.

Let Zeus and his kin watch with envy unending
The struggle of resolute hearts here below;
Who, vanquished by Fate alone, falls while
contending,
A victor's crown snatched from the gods' hands may
show.

(1850)

See on the trackless river, riding
Through waters quick once more and free:
A cavalcade of ice-floes gliding
Down to the all-engulfing sea.

By night they loom impenetrably,
Shoot rainbow-glances in the sun;
Yet as they melt inexorably
Their journey's end can be but one.

All, great and small, must soon — foregoing
What shape or form they had — in this
One fateful elemental flowing
Merge with the fathomless abyss!..

You, phantom of the mind's invention,
The self — that 'I' we all proclaim:
What is your meaning, your intention,
Your destiny, if not the same?

(April 1851)

Day and Night

Just as the ocean's mantling cloak surrounds
The globe, our earthly life is swathed in dreams;
Unleashed by night, a primal power seems
In surging waves to chafe its bounds.

Its siren voice we cannot but obey:
The magic craft awakens and slips free,
And on the risen tide bears us away
Into the dark unending sea.

Heaven's arching vault, ablaze with astral fire,
From depths unfathomed greets our wondering
sight —
And ever on we glide, ringed round entire
By an abyss of radiant light.

(1828–29)

How tranquilly the darkly verdant garden
Is sleeping, cradled in the blue of night!
Through branches white with apple-blossom's
burden
How tranquil glows the moon's pale-golden light!

Whole hosts of stars, as at the world's beginning,
Shine forth, mysterious in the boundless sky;
And strains of distant music faintly dinning
Sound softer than a spring that speaks nearby.

A veil now hides the world of day completely;
All labour rests, all movement flags and dies...
Above the sleeping town awake, as nightly,
The strangest murmurings, like forest sighs...

Whence could this ghostly chorus have arisen:
From mortals' disembodied thoughts in flight,
Heard though unseen, by sleep freed from their
prison
To swarm amidst the chaos of the night?

(First half of the 1830s)

Shadows fall, dove-grey, and mingle;
Colours drain, all sound falls dumb;
Life and movement melt to fickle
Dusk and to a distant hum…
On the air a moth in motion
Unseen scribes its whirring scrawl…
Hour of yearning past expression!..
All is in me, I in all!..

Tranquil dusk, flood all my being
With a draught of potent sleep;
In your soothing, tranquil-flowing,
Fragrant balm my senses steep —
Let oblivion's clouded potion
All my feelings overrun…
Let me taste annihilation,
With the sleeping world made one!

(First half of the 1830s)

That mystic realm where spirits crowd —
A nameless dark abyss — lies hidden
(For so the gods on high have bidden)
Beneath a gold-embroidered shroud.
Day is that golden-glittering veil:
Day, that the soul of mortals quickens
And offers healing when it sickens —
That men and gods as comrade hail!

But all too soon day yields to night,
Which tears aside the veil concealing
That fateful world beneath, revealing
All that lay hidden from our sight:
The fearful dark abyss, outspread,
Laid bare with all its dismal spectres
And naught between that might protect us —
That's why night fills us with such dread!

(October—November 1838?)

Now holy night has claimed the heavenly sphere
And rolled back, like a golden awning
Above the void, congenial day: its cheer
And solace banished until morning.
Like spectral mist the outward world has fled...
And man in naked helplessness, resembling
An orphan with no place to lay his head,
Confronts the dark abyss in fear and trembling.

Thrown back upon the self with all its shifts,
Thought dispossessed and mind denied existence,
Lost in the vastness of his soul, he drifts,
Finding without no purchase, no resistance.
Like some lost dream he struggles to recall
The world of light and life, the world external...
And must accept his birthright to be all
That is elusive, alien and nocturnal.

(1848—49)

Politics and Religion

14th December 1825

By Tyranny you were corrupted,
And at its sword you met defeat:
Which stern, impartial Law accepted
As sentence justified and meet.
The common people have not tarried
In spurning you for oaths betrayed —
And, for posterity now buried,
Your memory will quickly fade.

O victims of a headstrong notion!
What did you dream of as your goal —
That your scant blood, shed in libation,
Could melt the immemorial pole?
Scarce, smoking, had it flashed like garnet
In that primordial icy waste,
Than iron winter breathed upon it
And each last crimson blot effaced.

(1826 or 1827)

Cicero

Midst storms of civil strife and woe
The orator was heard to say:
'Too late I set out on life's way
And now through Rome's dark night must go!'
Yet, taking leave of Rome's past grandeur,
From on the Capitolian Hill
Her setting star, majestic still,
You saw in all its sanguine splendour!..

Thrice-blessed he who has visited
This world at times of destiny!
As guest at their high table he
With gods has sat and broken bread —
On their bright pomp his eyes has feasted,
Of their high councils known the truth,
And though but mortal yet has tasted
Their chalice of eternal youth!

(1829)

And now the coffin has been lowered…
And all around in packed array
Crowd mourners: jostling, loath to breathe in
The stifling odour of decay…

And by the open grave the pastor —
A man of learning and repute —
Begins his funeral oration
In words well-chosen and astute…

He speaks of man, ordained to perish,
The Fall, Christ's blood that washes sin…
Some fail to note these words of wisdom,
Some weigh them for themselves within…

And all the while the sky so boundless
Shines with a pure undying light…
And all around us birdsong endless
Sounds from the blue unfathomed height…

(June 1833)

I love the Lutheran service, with its simple
And solemn rite, austere and dignified —
And understand the lofty creed implied
By these bare walls, this empty, sombre temple.

Do you not see? Faith, taking up position
To leave, for one last time confronts you there:
Still standing in the doorway, in transition,
Although her house is empty now, and bare —

Still standing in the doorway, in transition,
The door still open, though the time is nigh…
The hour has struck… Now pray with expedition:
Soon you shall pray no more to Him on high.

Tegernsee, 16/28 September 1834

The Poetic Imagination

Just as when laid on glowing coal
A parchment smokes and smoulders on,
While muffled fire about the scroll
Devours each word till all are gone —

So too my life burns on each day,
Breathed out as smoke that curls and drifts —
Inexorably I fade away
Amidst grey gloom that never lifts...

O Heaven, could the flame for one
Brief instant freely but ignite —
And I, ablaze with glory bright,
Burn out, all grief and torment done!

(Late 1820s)

Madness

Where sky and scorched earth intermingle
Like livid smoke, now as of old
Untouched by care, forever cheerful,
Lives Madness, piteous to behold...

He delves into the burning desert
Beneath the sun's tormenting rays,
Glazed eyes cast upwards, as if searching
For something in the cloud and haze...

Then with a sudden start he crouches,
One keen ear to the cracked earth bent,
And listens, avidly attentive,
His face a mask of pure content...

He thinks he hears the joyous music
Of water coursing underground:
Now murmuring lullabies so gently,
Now bursting forth with mighty sound!..

(1829?)

Dream at Sea

Our craft tossed by tempest and buffeting seas,
I drowsed, letting wind and waves rage as they please.
In me I felt two infinities play:
They held me enslaved in their unbridled sway.
All around me, like cymbals, the cliffs clashed and
rang,
To each other the winds called, the waves roared
and sang…
Dazed and deafened I lay in this chaos of sound;
Yet above all the chaos my dream soared unbound —
Uncannily silent and morbidly clear,
It seemed over racketing darkness to veer
And in bright febrile flashes its world to unfold:
Diaphanous ether, earth green to behold,
Towers, palaces, labyrinth-gardens showed fair,
And teeming crowds silently swarmed everywhere.
I came to know faces not met with before,
Mysterious beasts, birds fantastical saw…
Like a god, on the heights of creation I strode,
While, unmoving beneath me, the world brightly
glowed…
But then like the howl of a sorcerer through
All this pageant I heard the sea crashing anew,
And into that still realm of visions and dreams
Burst in foaming breakers with wild roars and
screams.

(Naples/Ischia, July—August 1829)

At glittering soirées you saw him mainly:
Now waywardly amused, now sad or stern,
Aloof, or lost in secret thought in turn —
How could you miss the poet marked so plainly!

Observe the moon: by day hard put to muster
Its strength, it hangs, a vapid wisp of cloud;
But when night falls, a god resplendent-browed
Casts over sleeping woods his potent lustre!

(Late 1829 — early 1830)

29th January 1837

Whose hand unleashed the lead that shattered
Our poet's heart for evermore?
Who smashed that fragile, precious store
And all its sacred essence scattered?
Be now his guilt or innocence
Before our earthly laws contended,
A higher judgement seat has branded
Him regicide for all time hence.

But you, denied your rightful lease,
Consigned to darkness cold and final:
To your remains be peace eternal,
To you, the poet's shade, be peace!
Transcending gossip vain and spurious,
To sacred, lonely heights you soared:
For gods you were a sounding board,
Yet flesh and blood... blood hot and furious.

And to assuage your thirst for honour
In that most noble blood you paid —
And on your bier the people laid
Their grief to make a hero's banner.
Let Him condemn your rush to vengeance
Who sees all strife and knows all pain:
In Russia's heart you shall remain
As radiant as first love's remembrance!

(February—March 1837)

O maiden, do not trust the poet,
Or think him yours, all else above;
And more than any blazing anger
Be fearful of a poet's love!

Your soul so innocent will struggle
To make his heart your own in vain;
The virgin's flimsy veil will never
That all-consuming fire contain.

The poet's powers elemental
To all things but himself extend:
He cannot help his laurels scorching
A maiden's tresses in the end.

In vain the common herd belittles
Or praises him unthinkingly...
The heart he stings not like an adder,
But sucks its life blood like a bee.

The poet's pure hand will not sully
That shrine so holy in your sight —
But may, unwitting, crush you lifeless
Or bear you off in heavenward flight.

(1838?)

Amidst the toils and storms of life —
A sea in raging turmoil, rife
With passions violently clashing —
Descends to us, the sons of earth,
A vision, of celestial birth,
Her gaze a heavenly radiance flashing,
And onto waves in fury thrashing
Pours balm that reconciles all strife.

(1848—49)

Ernestine

The earth still wears a sombre air,
Yet spring is in these breezes playing
With boughs of stately firs and swaying
The withered stalks in fields so bare —
Still nature slumbers, although lighter
Her sleep now, and through fading dreams
She smiles with pleasure that spring seems
About to waken and delight her...

My soul, you too have slept, you too...
But whence this sudden agitation
That rouses you to delectation,
Gilding your dreams with lustre new?..
Snow thaws in gleaming liquefaction,
Blue skies, resplendent, shine above...
What is this, goading me to action:
Spring fever — or a woman's love?...

(March 1834)

There is no feeling in your eyes,
There is no truth in your replies,
Your heart is cold and bare.

O, courage! — would it were not true! —
There is no God in heaven too,
And so no point in prayer!

(April 1834?)

From place to place, from here to there,
Fate, like a whirlwind, sweeps mankind;
Though some resist, she does not care,
But drives them on in fury blind.

The wind has carried to our ears
Love's last farewell (familiar sound)...
Behind us many, many tears,
Ahead, obscuring mists abound!..

'O stop, take counsel, and be wise:
Why run away, where will you go?..
Behind you love abandoned lies —
Where else has such delights to show?

'Behind you love abandoned lies,
Prostrate with heartache and distress...
O, spare your anguish, seize this prize:
The chance of lasting happiness!

'That sweet and poignant bliss recall,
The bliss that for so long you knew...
By going on you forfeit all
In life that was most dear to you!..'

This is no time to call the dead —
With gloom enough the hour is rife —
Their image all the more we dread,
The more we held them dear in life.

From place to place, from here to there,
A mighty whirlwind sweeps mankind;
Should some resist, it does not care,
But drives them on in fury blind.

(May 1834)

I sit alone and contemplate
The dying embers in the grate,
With tears half-blind...
Thoughts of the past bring only pain,
And, sunk in gloom, the words in vain
I seek to find.

Did the past really once exist?
And what is now — will it persist
Or disappear?
Like all else that has gone before
It slips into oblivion's maw
Year after year.

Year after year, age after age...
What use then if we rail and rage,
We mortal men?
All flesh is grass that withers, yet
We see each burgeoning spring beget
Green shoots again.

For everything returns anew:
The rose will bloom again, as too
Will briar and thorn...
But you, my poor, pale flower, will not
Come back to life: it is your lot
To lie forlorn.

With what a bitter-sweet delight
I plucked you and I held you tight
That fateful day...
Now stay safeguarded on my breast
Till love's last sigh has been expressed
And dies away.

(May 1834?)

I love your eyes, their look supreme
Of smouldering flame that flares and dances…
When suddenly raising them, you seem
To burnish all who meet your glances
With lightning's pure celestial gleam…

But there's enchantment more beguiling:
In eyes cast down when keen desire
Erupts in kisses fraught with feeling,
Their pendent lashes the dull fire
Of heartsick passion half-concealing.

(Second half of 1835)

Last night, in reverie enchanted —
The moon's last pallid, languid beams
Upon your eyelids gently playing —
You sank into belated dreams...

The silence all about grew deeper,
And darker still the louring gloom,
The measured breathing of your bosom
Distinct now in the soundless room...

But not for long did night's pitch-darkness
Seep through the curtains' flimsy screen,
While drowsily your tossing ringlet
Toyed with some fantasy unseen...

For through the window swiftly gliding
Now all at once slipped in with ease
A misty-white ethereal vision,
As if blown in upon the breeze...

Like some weird apparition, scurrying
Across a floor but dimly lit,
It reached the bed, snatched at the covers,
And seemed intent on mounting it...

Up like a wriggling snake it clambered,
And once on top, for all the world
Like ribbon stirred to fluttering motion,
Between the canopies unfurled —

Where, touching all at once your bosom
With radiance vigorous and bold,
It forced with crimson shout of triumph
Your silken lashes to unfold!

(Late 1835—early 1836)

Italian Villa

So, having turned aside from life's upheavals,
Sequestered by a cypress grove opaque,
The villa, like some shade in fields Elysian,
Once closed its eyes, no more to wake.

Two centuries or more have passed unnoticed
Since, ringed about as if by magic skill,
It fell asleep in its enchanted valley,
Surrendering to the heavens' changing will.

But here the heavens treat earth with such
indulgence!..
Above this roof have winged in languid file
So many summers and warm southern winters —
Yet none has left its mark in all that while.

Still now the fountain babbles in its corner,
Beneath the ceiling breezes gust around,
A swallow darts in, fluttering and chirping...
Yet nothing can disturb this sleep profound!

We entered... All within was dark and tranquil,
And seemed as now forever to have been...
The fountain splashed... Quite still outside the
window,
A stately cypress gazed in on the scene...

. . . . . .

All suddenly was thrown into confusion:
The cypress shook with vehemence intense;
The fountain ceased its chatter but to whisper,
As if through sleep, strange sounds bereft of sense.

What was this? Could it be that not for nothing
The life that held us then so much in sway —
That evil life, with its unruly passion —
Crossed a forbidden threshold on that day?

(Genoa, late November 1837)

1st December 1837

Here then it is that we were fated
To say our poignant last farewells…
Farewell to all that captivated —
And brutally the life so mutilated
That in your tortured bosom dwells!..

Farewell… With sorrow and despair
In years to come you will remember
This land, these shores and this eternal southern
splendour
Where nature blossoms late and fair —
And with their fragrance in December
Last fading roses warm the air…

(Genoa, December 1837)

With what sweet tenderness, what lovesick
melancholy,
On him would rest your gaze of languishing desire!
And you: bewildered, speechless, like one struck
insensate
By lightning's pure celestial fire!

And there were times you'd fall upon your knees, all
trembling,
And weeping — all the turmoil of your heart
revealed...
But soon by carefree, childlike sleep most mercifully
Your silken lashes would be sealed —

And, sinking into his receiving arms, you'd slumber,
He cradling gently as a mother your dear head...
Your groans would cease, your laboured breathing
become calmer,
And peacefully you'd sleep instead.

But now... O, had your dreams then shown you but
some portent
Of what the future still for us two held in store,
You would have woken with a scream, as if
tormented —
Or else slept on, to wake no more.

(Genoa, late 1838)

Last Love

(From the ‘Denisyeva Cycle’)

Lord, grant to him Thy consolation
Who in the summer heat and glare
Must like a beggar trudge the highway
Outside a parkland cool and fair —

Who casts a furtive glance through railings
At grassy combes and shady trees,
Or at the tantalising freshness
Of radiant, richly verdant leas.

For him in vain the branches fashion
Their canopy of welcoming green,
For him in vain the soaring fountain
Descends in mists of drops unseen.

The clouded azure of the grotto
Cannot command his downcast gaze,
Nor will the fountain's jetting waters
Bedew his head with cooling haze…

Lord, grant to him Thy consolation
Who, doomed upon life's path to fare,
Must like a beggar trudge the highway
Outside a parkland cool and fair.

July 1850

On the Neva

Once again a star-glow quivers,
On the rippling tide afloat;
Once more to the waves delivers
Love its enigmatic boat.

And as in a dream the vessel
Glides on between tide and star,
And two spectral forms that nestle
In the craft are borne afar.

Is it idle youth partaking
Of the night's enchantments here?
Or two blessed shades forsaking
This world for a higher sphere?

White-fledged waves so fleet and nimble,
Trackless as unbounded seas,
Shelter in your void this humble
Craft and all its mysteries!

July 1850

Though the sultry heat of midday
Breathes in at the open pane,
Here in this calm sanctuary,
Where deep shade and silence reign,

And aromas quick and fragrant
Roam throughout the darkened space,
Let sweet somnolence enfold you
In its gentle, dark embrace…

In one corner, never tiring,
Sings a fountain night and day,
Moistening the enchanted shadows
With unseen reviving spray…

And a love-struck poet's daydream
Seems to haunt the unlit room:
Hovering, fraught with secret passion,
Lightly in the shifting gloom…

(July 1850)

That which you gave your adoration
And prayers, and cherished as divine,
Fate yielded up to desecration
By idle tongues quick to malign.

The mob broke in and violated
The shrine within your heart concealed,
And you must see, humiliated,
Its sacred mysteries revealed.

Could but the soul, serenely flying
Above the mob on wings so free,
Escape from all this world's undying
Vulgarity and bigotry!

(Spring 1851)

Those eyes... I loved them to distraction —
God knows, they held me in their sway!
From their dark night of wondrous passion
I could not tear my soul away.

Their gaze, impossible to fathom,
Laid bare the life within entire,
Revealing an unending chasm
Of grief and smouldering desire.

Beneath her lashes' silken glory
They brimmed with pensive, mournful life,
Like pleasure languorously weary,
Like suffering fraught with tragic strife.

And at such moments of rare wonder
Not once was it vouchsafed to me
To gaze unmoved upon their splendour
Or stem the tears that flowed so free.

(Spring 1851)

O, how our love breeds ruination —
How we unerringly destroy
In passion's blind intoxication
Our heart's desire, our deepest joy!

When first you claimed her as your lover,
What pride that conquest roused in you!
A year's not passed... Ask, and discover
What now survives of her you knew.

The roses in her cheeks have vanished,
Her carefree smile, her gaze so clear...
All these by withering dews were banished —
By tears, hot tears that scorch and sear.

Do you recall that fateful hour
When you two first met — you and she:
Her words, her glance of magic power,
Her laughter like a child's so free?

And now? Has all been dissipated?
For how long did the vision last?
Like northern summer, a belated
And transient guest, it swiftly passed.

For her your love was retribution
Wrought by a vengeful destiny;
It stained, as with a vile pollution,
Her blameless life with infamy...

A life of bleak renunciation,
Of suffering... And when she turned
To memories for consolation,
Here too her faith and hope were spurned.

Now she has felt life's charms expire
And views the world as one apart...
The mob burst in and through the mire
Trod all the flowers of her heart.

And what is left for the retrieving,
Like ashes, from her long ordeal?
Pain, bitter pain of rage and grieving —
Pain without hope or tears to heal!

O, how our love breeds ruination!
How we unerringly destroy
In passion's blind intoxication
Our heart's desire, our deepest joy!

(Spring 1851)

‘I am unworthy of your loving’:
How often you have heard that phrase.
Although your love was my creation,
How poor I seem in its bright rays…

In that pure light examination
Of my own heart is hard to bear —
I stand in awe and veneration
And worship you in silent prayer…

And when at times with such emotion,
With such a piety sincere,
As if impelled to make devotion,
You kneel before that cradle dear,

Where *she*, your first-born, gently slumbers —
Your cherubim without a name —
Know too why I should feel so humble
Before your loving heart’s true flame.

(Summer 1851)

Though I have earned them, spare me from your
shafts of rancour!
That your part is more enviable none can deny:
Your love burns truly, brightly as a flame, but I —
I see you and am racked by jealousy's vile canker.

Without belief I stand, a pitiful magician,
Before a world of wondrous dreams by me devised —
A lifeless image, by your pure soul idolised:
This I now see with shame to be my true condition.

(1851)

Do not say that his love for me is undiminished
That, as before, he cares for me...
No: ruthlessly he wears me down, would see me
finished —
Although the knife shakes in his hand, I see...

Now weeping, now incensed — indignant, wretched,
lonely,
A prey to violent passion, wronged, abased —
I live in constant torment — live for him, him only...
But O, this life!.. How bitter is its taste!

He measures out the air I breathe in meagre ration...
Who'd treat their fiercest enemy so ill?
Still I draw breath — though painfully, in laboured
fashion —
And yet to live have neither cause nor will.

(1851)

You, my wave upon the ocean,
Creature of caprice and whim,
Whether resting or in motion,
With what wondrous life you brim!

Laughing in the sunlight, flashing
Heaven's mirrored edifice,
Or in frenzy tossing, thrashing
In the turbulent abyss —

How you charm me with the gentle
Murmur of your love-filled sighs —
Move me with your elemental
Raging, your prophetic cries!

Be you by the rip-tide shaken,
Be your aspect dark or bright,
Yet keep safe what you have taken,
Guard it in your azure night.

To your gentle undulation
Votive offering I made:
Not a ring was my oblation,
Neither emerald nor jade —

In that fateful moment, carried
Onwards by enchantment rare,
In your depths not these I buried,
But my heart, that beats yet there.

April 1852

The sun gleams brightly, waters sparkle,
All nature smiles, all life is new,
Trees quiver with elation, bathing
Their branches in the radiant blue.

Trees sing, the waters glint with sunlight,
The air is touched with love's caress,
And all the flowering life of nature
Is drunk with life in sweet excess.

Yet in all this exhilaration
There is no joy that can compare
With one brief smile of tender pathos
Wrung from your heart in its despair...

Kamenny Ostrov. 28 July (1852)

Last Love

O, how at life's ebb-tide love seems
To hold both tenderness and foreboding!
Shine on, last love — shine, parting beams,
Till forced to scatter at nightfall's bidding!

Dark shadow fills half heaven's vault;
Westward alone does an afterglow linger...
Day, pause in your flight, if you cannot halt:
Enchantment, stay a little longer!

Though thinly now the blood may course,
The heart with tenderness brims over...
O last love, doomed to be the source
Of joy and hopelessness interwoven!

(Mid-1852—beginning of 1854)

Flames leap upwards, incandescent,
Scattering sparks that dart and gleam,
While a cool breath from this garden
Wafts to them across the stream.
Here deep shade, there heat and clamour —
Dazed, I wander aimlessly,
Conscious now of one thing only:
You are with me, part of me.

Smoke on smoke, fire spits and crackles,
Chimneys stand bereft and bare;
While, serene, in calm indifference,
Leaves stir, rustling, in the air;
By their gentle breath enveloped,
Now I hear your fervent speech;
Thanks to God: with you beside me
Heaven itself is within reach.

10 July 1855

How rarely we encounter them —
Moments beyond compare
That bring us, as we enter them,
Release from earthly care!
Above me I hear murmuring
The crown of tree on tree,
And only songbirds clamouring
On high commune with me.
All that is false and odious
Is far away from here;
The unhoped-for, the harmonious
Now seems so real, so near.
Contentment and tranquillity
With inward joy unite;
Sweet somnolence envelops me —
O time, pause in your flight!

(July 1855)

All through the day unconscious she had lain,
And now dark shadows covered her completely.
Outside upon the leaves warm summer rain
Was falling — singing softly, sweetly.

And slowly she revived — at length came round,
And heard the raindrops' gentle susurration;
And listened long, enchanted by the sound,
The while absorbed in lucid contemplation...

Then, as if speaking to herself, she said
These few words, spoken lucidly and clearly
(For I was there, alive though surely dead):
'All this I loved, I loved so dearly!'

* * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * *

You loved, with love as deep as the abyss —
For you that matchless love was all that mattered —
O Lord, that I should live on after *this*...
That still my heart beats on and has not
shattered...

(Autumn 1864)

This Nice, this fabled southern winter…
This glare that leaves me pierced and battered…
Like some poor victim of the hunter
Life struggles feebly on, though shattered…
All hopes of flight extinguished, huddling
With broken wing and trailing feather,
It cowers in the dust, still trembling
With pain and helplessness together…

(Nice). 21 November 1864

On the Eve of the Anniversary of 4 August 1864

Dusk falls as I trudge the lonely highway,
All around is still as night draws near…
Heavy is my heart, my limbs grow weary…
Oh, my dearest, can you see me here?

Over me I watch the darkness gather,
Watch day's last pale gleamings disappear…
In this world we two once lived together:
Dearest angel, can you see me here?

Now a day of memory appalling,
Given to prayer and grief, is drawing near…
From wherever spirits have their dwelling,
Dearest angel, can you see me here?

(3 August 1865)

June 1868

Once more above Nevá's broad flow,
As if life were not long since over,
I stand as I stood years ago
To gaze down at the slumbering river.

No stars have pricked through heaven's blue;
A pale enchantment stills each murmur;
Only the moon's soft rays imbue
The pensive waters with their glimmer.

Am I but dreaming, by and by
To wake, or truly now perceiving
What by this same moon you and I
Beheld while still among the living?

June 1868

There are two forces — two momentous forces —
That rule our destinies: we feel their breath
From birth until the grave upon our faces;
They are: the Judgement of the World, and Death.

Inexorable both in equal measure,
They need not answer for the blows they deal;
No protest will be heard, there is no mercy,
Their verdict stops all mouths as with a seal.

Yet Death is the more honest: without bias,
Unswayed by the destruction he must wreak,
He cuts down all with sword unswerving, zealous
To reap both the rebellious and the meek.

Not so the World, for jealously preserving
Its rule, it brooks no challenge, no dispute,
And unlike Death selective in its scything,
Culls but the best ears, torn out at the root.

And woe to that proud force of youthful daring —
To Beauty: she must surely come to woe,
When with determined gaze and smile enduring
She joins unequal battle with her foe,

And, fatefully inspired by an awareness
Of all her rights, with beauty's lack of fear,
As if beneath some spell, strides forth to witness
Against the calumnies of those that jeer,

Scorning the guise of insincere excuses,
Her head held high, with fearless dignity,
And shakes from youthful locks, like dust, the
curses,
The threats, and the inflamed contumely...

Yes, woe to her — and harsher the detraction
The less she has of falsehood and pretence…
Such is the world: inhuman in exaction
Where manifestly human the offence.

March 1869

A Troubled Marriage

I do not know if grace will condescend
To touch this soul that sin has robbed of merit —
If I shall rise again and know an end
To this long darkness of the spirit…

But if my soul is ever meant
To know peace here on earth, then you beside me
Would be that grace — you who were sent
To be my earthly providence and guide me!..

(April 1851)

There is a higher truth in separation:
Love, though it last a lifetime or a day,
Is but a dream of momentary duration
For which awakening means cessation —
And, summoned to awake, no man may disobey…

6 August 1851

Day turns to evening, dusk draws nigh,
Deep shadows from the mountain spread,
Clouds darken all the fading sky…
The hour is late. Now day is fled.

Yet I'll not mourn for day's decline,
And night's dark terrors shall not fear,
If only, magic spirit mine,
You'll comfort and stay with me here…

Enfold me with your wings, to calm
My troubled heart and make me whole:
Their shadow will as healing balm
Bring peace to my enchanted soul.

Who are you? Are you progeny
Of earth, or sent from heaven above?
An aerial spirit you may be —
But one aflame with woman's love!

1 November 1851

O my prophetic soul! O heart
In thrall to anguish and disorder,
That pulses on the shifting border
Between two lives lived out apart!...

In two divided worlds you dwell:
Your day is passion, agitation,
Your dreams a tangled divination
Of what the spirits seem to tell...

Though fateful passions with fierce heat
This lacerated breast be filling,
My soul, like Magdalene, is willing
To cleave forever to Christ's feet.

1855

Slavic Visions, Western Yearnings

I stood beside the broad Nevá,
And through the fog so raw and bitter
Glimpsed great St Isaac's dome: a glitter
Of dull gold looming from afar.

Into the wintry night-dark sky
Clouds hesitantly rose unbidden…
Beneath me deathly-pale and leaden
I saw the frozen river lie…

And thought with silent, sad regret
Of lands where summer had not ended:
Of Genoa and its gulf so splendid,
Ablaze with brilliant sunlight yet…

Have you bewitched me with your arts,
O North, magician undisputed,
That I must linger, as if rooted
To unyielding granite, in these parts?

O that some breeze in passing flight
Through all the darkness here persisting
Might swiftly bear me, unresisting,
There, there, where still the South glows bright!..

St Petersburg. 21 November 1844

And so once more I find myself confronted
With native haunts, long-lost and yet unmourned,
Where thought and feeling first within me dawned —
And where now, as I look on, disenchanted,
While all around the daylight fades and dies,
My childhood stares at me from misted eyes...

Poor, wretched phantom, fleeting and inconstant,
Of that remote, forgotten happiness!
With what misgiving and half-heartedness
I gaze at you, my guest for this brief instant!
To me you seem as distant as must be
A brother who expired in infancy...

Not here, not in these tracts unpopulated,
Are ties of birth I find still meaningful:
Not here was wondrous youth's great festival
In all its burgeoning glory celebrated...
And in another soil was laid, not here,
All that I lived for, all that I held dear.

Ovstug. 13 June 1849

Once again my eyes encounter
Yours, and all this wintry haze —
All our northern gloom and darkness —
Flee before your southern gaze…
And another land — that cherished
Homeland — rises into view:
Paradise, which guilt ancestral
Means its sons must now eschew…

Shapely laurels, gently swaying,
Stir the blue untainted air,
While the ocean's measured breathing
Dissipates all heat and glare;
All day long in sun-drenched vineyards
Ripen grapes of golden cast,
And arcades of ancient marble
Breathe tales of an epic past…

Like some hideous dream the fateful
North is banished from my sight;
Far above, the dome of heaven
Floats, ethereally fair and bright;
Once again I drink the healing
Light with eager, thirsting eyes,
And in its pure rays a magic
Realm once more I recognise.

(Autumn 1849)

Villages of mean appearance,
Nature's gifts at their most frugal —
Land of infinite endurance,
Homeland of the Russian people!

Foreign eyes so proudly gazing
See you, but remain in darkness,
Blind to the veiled light suffusing
All your nakedness and meekness.

As a lowly pauper, bowing
Low beneath the cross's burden,
Once your length and breadth, bestowing
Blessings, walked the King of Heaven.

Roslavl. 13 August 1855

Throughout your reign you served nor God nor
Russia,
But simply followed your own star —
Your deeds, both good and bad, mere empty
masquerading,
The falsest of façades, a mockery degrading:
You were an actor, not a Tsar.

(September 1855)

This crowd of the obscure, low-born,
Long-suffering, gathered here in number:
Shall Freedom come to shake their slumber,
To rouse them with its golden dawn?...

It shall — and in that dawn shall be
Dispersed these dank fogs of inaction...
But wounds grown foul with putrefaction,
The scars of ancient injury,

The emptiness that long has gnawed
At souls, corrupting thought and feeling —
Who will bind these up, and bring healing?...
Thou, stainless robe of Christ our Lord...

Ovstug. 15 August 1857

On the Return Journey

I

Joyless scene and joyless hour —
Journey's end is still so far...
Like some spectre freed at last
From its grave, the moon through wreathing
Mists now lights this empty land...
        Far, so far — be not downcast...

And to think that at this hour
There where we no longer are,
Mirrored in Léman so vast,
This moon is alive and breathing...
Joyful scene and joyful land —
        Far, so far — forget what's past...

II

Familiar sights again... this smoke-grey awning
Where massive, leaden snow-clouds loom,
And in the dull-blue distance, as in mourning,
Dark forests wrapped in autumn gloom...
A drab and silent world too vast to reckon:
All empty, arid, untraversed...
Just here and there, half-glimpsed through bush and
                bracken,
The glint of ice on water, winter's first.

No sound, no colour here: all is arrested,
All life extinguished, gone; man here, it seems —
Resigned to fate, his mind numb and exhausted —
Must see himself as if in his own dreams,

And, eyes grown dim in twilight evanescent,
Cannot believe that yesterday he knew
A land where mountains, rainbow-iridescent,
Gaze on themselves in lakes of deepest blue...

October 1859

Although my home is in the valley,
I sometimes cannot help but sense
The pure life-giving force of breezes
That roam about those peaks immense —
And know the breast's eternal longing
To struggle free from stagnant air:
To leave all that is earthbound, stifling,
And soar on high to summits bare...

Those inaccessible expanses
I watch, engrossed, for hours on end...
What cooling dews in raging torrent
Or rushing stream to us they send!
And sometimes too we catch a glitter
Of flame-light as their virgin snow
Is touched by feet of heavenly angels
Who unseen through the ice fields go.

(Geneva. October 1860)

To the Slavs

Man muß die Slaven
an die Mauer drücken

They fulminate in terms pugnacious:
'The Slavs? We'll drive them to the wall!'
Yet in their onslaught so audacious
Let them take care they do not fall!..

There is a wall, vast and imposing —
They'd drive you to it without fuss,
And yet we find it hard supposing
What they might gain from acting thus.

Though rugged as a cliff of granite,
This wall can stretch, and stretch again;
Already one sixth of our planet
Is held within its vast domain...

There have been those who'd storm and batter,
Dislodging just a stone or two;
Yet always they've been forced to scatter
With broken heads, those warriors true...

That wall stands firmly now as ever:
A sure defence against the flood,
It cannot utter threats... however,
Each stone of it is flesh and blood...

So when the German drive commences,
Let them forge on in wild array
And pin you to its stone defences —
And we shall see who's won the day!

However much they may subject you
To brutish insult and blind hate,
This wall — your wall — will not reject you,
Nor leave its own to meet their fate,

But open wide to grant admission
And then, a living bulwark, close
Behind you, taking up position
Within close quarters of our foes.

May 1867

Who would grasp Russia with the mind?
For her no yardstick was created;
Her soul is of a special kind,
By faith alone appreciated.

28 November 1866

Russian Landscapes

Hesitantly, diffidently,
From above the sun looks down…
Suddenly a clap of thunder
Causes all the earth to frown.

Intermittent gusts of warm air,
Distant rumbling, spots of rain…
Rich the green of unripe cornfields,
Set against the sky's dark stain.

From behind one cloud a steel-blue
Streak of lightning slithers out,
Briefly compassing with pallid
Fire its contours all about.

Raindrops scatter with a vengeance,
Hurling dust into the air;
Peals of rattling, echoing thunder
Their defiant wrath declare…

Once again the sun, uncertain,
Glances at the fields below,
Bathing all the earth's disordered
Travail in a radiant glow.

(Moscow–Ovstug) 6 June 1849

On a still night, late in summer,
How the stars appear to smoulder:
Ripening cornfields in their glimmer
Seem asleep to the beholder...

How hypnotically all glitters
In the silence of the night:
Wave on wave of golden wheat-ears,
By a harvest moon washed white...

(Ovstug) 23 July 1849

Spellbound by that dark magician
Winter see the forest now:
An unmoving apparition,
Mute and robbed of all volition,
Sparkling snow on every bough.

So it stands, bereft of motion,
Neither living nor yet dead:
Drugged as if by magic potion,
Shackled by the witching notion
Of light snow as steely thread…

Should the winter sun with squinting
Rays the sleeping woods caress,
They — unstirring, never hinting
At arousal — flare up, glinting:
Radiant in their loveliness.

(Near Ovstug) 31 December 1852

There comes with autumn's first appearance
A brief spell full of wonder and delight:
Whole days of crystalline transparence
And evenings luminously bright...

Where once the sickle strode through wheat-ears
tumbling
An air of space and emptiness reigns now;
Only a wisp of cobweb, trembling,
Gleams on the idle furrow's brow.

The empty skies fall still as birds forsake us,
Yet distant still is winter's first unruly storm,
And, seeping from above, a blueness pure and warm
Is added to the drowsing acres...

(Ovstug–Moscow) 22 August 1857

I love, when autumn shades are falling,
The grounds of Tsarskoye Selo —
When tranquil twilight comes, enthralling
The world to slumber deep and slow;
While, languishing upon the clouded
Glass of the lake, in waning light
Glide white-winged spectres, as if shrouded
In some dull torpor of delight...

And at October days' brief ending
Dark shadows claim the surfaces
Of steps of porphyry ascending
To Catherine's great palaces —
And, as the sylvan park grows dimmer,
Revealed against the star-set sky
A golden dome's ethereal glimmer
Seems witness to an age gone by...

22 October 1858

Final Years

Nature, just like the Sphinx, contrives to set
Mankind the deadliest test that ever was.
Why do we always fail? Perhaps because
She holds no riddle, and has never yet.

Ovstug. August 1869

To Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin

Accept this wretched catalogue of verses
At which I haven't even deigned to look,
Prevented by sloth's and inaction's curses
From taking any interest in the book...

Today verse has the life-span of a bubble:
Conceived at noon, by evening it is dead...
Correcting it seems hardly worth the trouble —
Oblivion's hand will do the job instead.

(Late August 1869)

Commanded at the highest level
To mount a guard on thought and art,
We strove to be not over-zealous —
Though, armed with rifles, looked the part.

We bore our weapons with reluctance,
Few charges we coerced or cowed:
The role of *prison guard* disdaining,
As *guard of honour* we stood proud.

27 October 1870

Long my companion on life's thoroughfare,
Dear brother, you have left for shores unknown…
And on a summit desolate and bare,
Surrounded by the void, I stand alone…

How long must I remain, forsaken, here?
A day, a year — then emptiness shall reign
Where now into night's dismal gloom I peer,
Bewildered at the causes of my pain…

All passes — and how easy not to be!
Without me, what would change? This blizzard still
Would howl, this steppe, this bleak obscurity
Would all the same the vast horizon fill.

Days numbered, losses hard to count, I mourn
The flower of life, long past and lost to view —
And with no future, of illusion shorn,
Take up my place to head the fateful queue…

Moscow—St Petersburg, 13–14 December 1870

Of all the life that raged so violently,
Of all the blood that flowed in rivers here,
What has survived, what traces persevere?
Two or three burial mounds are all we see...

And on them oak-trees, fully-grown meanwhile,
Sprawl confidently; there, with branches stirring,
They stand in lofty majesty, not caring
Whose bones, whose memory their roots defile.

For Nature has no knowledge of the past —
Our phantom years do not concern or touch her;
And faced with her we dimly see at last
Ourselves as a mere fantasy of Nature.

When each has played its futile part in turn,
She gathers in her children to her bosom,
Where all without distinction come to learn
The healing stillness of that all-engulfing chasm.

(Ovstug—Vshchizh) 17 August 1871

Of so much — health, sleep, will-power, even air —
Through God's chastising hand I am bereft;
Just you of all His blessings has He left,
That I might still have cause for thankful prayer.

February 1873

Notes

Titles or first lines of the Russian originals are shown in brackets

p.2 *'That day remains in memory…' ('Sey den', ya pomnyu, dlya menya…')* My original suggestion that the girl in the poem is Amélie (*Mirror*, p. 65) was made before I had an opportunity to read in full a thesis by François Cornillot in which the same identification is proposed (F. Cornillot, 'Tiouttchev: poète-philosophe', dissertation, University of Paris IV, 1973, p. 202). I am glad to acknowledge Cornillot's precedence in this matter. For the background to this and the following poems addressed to Amélie see above, pp. xvi–xviii.

p.3 *'A golden time still haunts my senses…' ('Ya pomnyu vremya zolotoye…')*

p.4 *To N. (K N.)*

p.5 *To N.N. (K N.N.)* As I have argued elsewhere (*Mirror*, p. 106), internal evidence strongly suggests the woman to be Amélie and the 'hateful guardian' her husband Alexander von Krüdener.

p.8 *To Two Sisters (Dvum syostram).* Both R.A. Gregg and A.A. Nikolayev have identified the women as Tyutchev's first wife Eleonore and her younger sister Clotilde (see *Mirror,* p. 467, *n*103). Tyutchev probably wrote the poem in the autumn of 1829 after returning to his wife from a three-month trip to Italy.

p.9 *'To sort a pile of letters, on…' ('Ona sidela na polu…')* For my identification of the woman sorting letters as Eleonore, see *Mirror*, pp. 424–427. Composed in 1858, the poem evidently recalls a painful incident in Tyutchev and Eleonore's married life in the mid-1830s, following her discovery of his infidelity with Ernestine von Dörnberg. Eleonore's subsequent death in 1838 is hinted at in the references to 'departing souls' and 'a dear shade'.

p.10 *'Still love torments me with a vengeance…' ('Yeshcho tomlyus' toskoy zhelaniy…')* Written in 1848, evidently to mark the tenth anniversary of Eleonore's death (the preceding poem coincides with the twentieth).

p.11 *K.B. (K.B.)* The only convincing explanation of the title is given by

A.A. Nikolayev, who deciphers the initials as 'Clotilde Bothmer' ('C' becoming 'K' in Cyrillic transliteration) (A.A. Nikolayev, 'Zagadka "K.B."', Neva, 1988, No.2, p. 193). Bothmer was Clotilde's maiden name until her marriage in 1839 and is how Tyutchev would have remembered her from the 'golden time' of his youth. Nikolayev points out that while Tyutchev was taking the waters at Karlsbad (present-day Karlovy Vary) in the summer of 1870, Clotilde was staying some 80 miles away at Bad Kösen, between Weimar and Leipzig (ibid, p. 196).

p.14 *Summer Evening (Letniy vecher).* Evidently written during Tyutchev and Eleonore's visit to France in the summer of 1827. The reasons for placing it in Dieppe are given in *Mirror*, p. 101.

p.15 *Thunderstorm in Spring (Vesennyaya groza).* In Greek mythology, Hebe was the goddess of youth, daughter of Zeus and Hera. Her chief duty was to ensure the gods' enduring immortality by serving ambrosia and nectar to them at their feasts on Olympus. In art and poetry of the early nineteenth century she is frequently depicted giving the eagle of Zeus nectar to drink from her chalice. However, although thunder and lightning were traditionally associated both with Zeus and his eagle, the image of Hebe's chalice filled with 'foaming thunder' (line 15) appears to be a variation on the myth unique to Tyutchev. The effect is to emphasise the life-giving force of the thunderstorm.

p.16 *Evening (Vecher).*

p.17 *Spring Waters (Vesenniye vody).*

p.18 *Sea Stallion (Kon' morskoy).* A brilliant piece of literary detective work by Tatyana Dinesman has established that this and *Dream at Sea* were composed during Tyutchev's visit to Naples and the island of Ischia in the summer of 1829 (T.G. Dinesman, 'O nekotorykh faktakh biografii Tyutcheva', *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F.I. Tyutcheva*, ed. T.G. Dinesman, Part 1, Muranovo, 1999, p.303).

p.19 *'Knee-deep in sand our horses flounder...' ('Pesok sypuchy po koleni...)* Written in the autumn of 1830 during Tyutchev and Eleonore's overland return journey to Munich from leave spent in St Petersburg. The poem depicts a scene in Russia's Baltic provinces.

p.20 *Autumn Evening (Osenniy vecher).*

p.21 *Leaves (List'ya).*

p.23 *'What a wild place this mountain gorge is!..' ('Kakoye dikoye ushchel'ye!..')*

p.24 *'Here where the forest thins, a kite...' ('S polyany korshun podnyalsya...')*

p.25 *'Why, O willow, to the river...' ('Chto ty klonish' nad vodami...')*

p.26 *'In the air's oppressive silence...' ('V dushnom vozdukha molchan'ye...')*

p.27 *'Pale showed the east... Our craft sped gently...' ('Vostok belel... Lad'ya katilas'...')* Another 'journey' poem, dating in this case from Tyutchev's diplomatic mission to Greece in 1833 (*Mirror*, p. 420). He travelled by sea from Trieste to Nauplia, then the capital of Greece, on the Austrian corvette *Carolina*, later returning by the same route.

p.30 *Silentium! (Silentium!)* This was a particular favourite of Leo Tolstoy, who would often recite it to others. 'What a remarkable piece!' he once exclaimed. 'I know of no better poem.' For him it was 'the very model of a poem in which every word is in the right place'.

p.31 *Mal'aria (Mal'aria).* Tyutchev's description of an invisible pestilential disease infecting the beauty of Rome and its environs is known to have been inspired by a passage in Madame de Staël's novel *Corinne, ou L'Italie*. However, as Richard Gregg points out, he completely transforms the underlying sense of de Staël's narrative, replacing her essentially Christian message with one that is pagan or at the very least Manichean (R.A. Gregg, *Fedor Tiutchev. The Evolution of a* Poet, New York & London, 1965, pp. 73-76. See also above, pp. xxxviii–xxxix.)

p.32 *The Fountain (Fontan).*

p.33 *'My soul, Elysium of silent shades...' ('Dusha moya, Eliziyum teney...')*

p.34 *'Nature is not what you would have it...' ('Ne to, chto mnite vy, priroda...')* For the poem's first publication in Pushkin's journal *Sovremennik* in 1836 the censors insisted on verses 2 and 4 being removed, evidently on religious grounds. As no manuscript has survived, these verses remain missing. My speculative reconstruction of them is based on the best estimates of scholars as to what they are likely to have contained.

p.36 *'Nous avons pu tous deux, fatigués du voyage...'* This has been included as an example of the relatively few poems in French by Tyutchev.

Translation: 'Weary from the journey, we two were able to sit down for a moment by the roadside — to feel the same shade hang loosely on our brows, and to gaze towards the distant horizon. // But time runs its course, and its relentless downward slope has soon separated that which it once united — and beneath the whip of an invisible power man founders, despondent and alone, in the infinity of space. // And what remains to us now, friend, of those hours passed, of that life together? A look, an inflexion, fragments of thoughts... Alas, did that which is no longer ever exist?'

The poem is addressed to the diplomat Apollonius von Maltitz (1795-1870), himself a poet (in German) and at that time first secretary at the Russian legation in Munich. Tyutchev is known to have associated with him during his stay in Munich from January to the beginning of April 1838, when they discussed among other things Maltitz's wooing of Tyutchev's sister-in-law Clotilde (they announced their engagement soon afterwards and were married a year later). Tyutchev sent Maltitz the poem from Lindau on the shores of Lake Constance on his way back to Turin via Geneva, where he planned to meet Ernestine (appended to the poem was a note in French containing the admission: 'What a child I am, what a weakling'). The metaphorical 'voyage' from which he and Maltitz are said to have rested for a while (line 1) is the journey of life, conceived here in bleakly fatalistic terms — as in the earlier 'From place to place...' (p. 64) — as little more than an enforced trek 'beneath the whip of an invisible power' (line 7).

p.37 *Columbus (Kolumb).* Written just after Tyutchev's return to Russia in the autumn of 1844, this is evidently a veiled tribute to the philosopher Friedrich Schelling (see *Mirror*, pp. 422-424). In his book *Russian Nights* (*Russkiye nochi*), published the same year, Vladimir Odoyevsky had compared Schelling's investigation of the human soul to Columbus's discovery of the New World.

p.38 *Two Voices (Dva golosa).*

p.39 *'See on the trackless river, riding...' ('Smotri, kak na rechnom prostore...')*

p.42 *'Just as the ocean's mantling cloak surrounds...' ('Kak okean ob"yemlet shar zemnoy...')*

p.43 *'How tranquilly the darkly verdant garden...' ('Kak sladko dremlet sad temnozelyony...')*

p.44 *'Shadows fall, dove-grey, and mingle…' ('Teni sizyye smesilis' ')* Another of Tolstoy's favourites. He said it always moved him to tears, in particular the line: 'All is in me, I in all'.

p.45 *Day and Night (Den' i noch').*

p.46 *'Now holy night has claimed the heavenly sphere…' ('Svyataya noch' na nebosklon vzoshla…')*

p.48 *14th December 1825 (14-oye dekabrya 1825).* Addressed to the Decembrists (see above, p. xvii).

p.49 *Cicero (Tsitseron).* A staunch defender of republican values, the Roman orator, statesman and man of letters Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) unsuccessfully opposed the rise to imperial power of Julius Caesar. Lines 3–4 of the poem are a paraphrase of Cicero's words in his 'Brutus, sive dialogus de claris oratoribus' ('Brutus, or a Dialogue on Famous Orators'), XCVI, 330: 'it grieves me that, having set out somewhat late on life's path, I was plunged before journey's end into this night of the republic'.

p.50 *'And now the coffin has been lowered…' ('I grob opushchen uzh v mogilu…')* The funeral described appears to be that of the Prussian ambassador to Bavaria, who died on 30 May 1833 and was buried in a Protestant ceremony at the 'alter Südfriedhof' cemetery in Munich on 2 June. On such occasions it was customary for the diplomatic corps to turn out in force. The officiating pastor was most likely Friedrich Boeckh, the Lutheran Dean of Munich. (See *Mirror*, p. 421).

p.51 *'I love the Lutheran service, with its simple…' ('Ya lyuteran lyublyu bogosluzhen'ye…')* In the autumn of 1834 Tyutchev, his wife Eleonore and their children were staying near Tegernsee, a popular resort on the lake of the same name in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. Services conducted by Pastor Ludwig Schmidt, personal chaplain to the Protestant dowager Queen Karoline of Bavaria, were held in the chapel of her residence at Tegernsee and were open to all. On this occasion Tyutchev evidently accompanied his wife, who was herself a Lutheran. (See *Mirror*, p. 210). In 1834 the date 16/28 September fell on a Sunday.

p.54 *'Just as when laid on glowing coal…' ('Kak nad goryacheyu zoloy…')* This appears to describe one of the attacks of depression to which Tyutchev was prone at various times throughout his life. Such attacks,

alternating with episodes of mania (possibly hinted at here in the expressed desire to flare up, 'ablaze with glory bright'), are characteristic of the bipolar disorder suffered by many creative artists.

p.55 *Madness (Bezumstvo).* See above, p. xlii, for a discussion of how this relates to Tyutchev's view of the creative genius.

p.56 *Dream at Sea (Son na more).* See the note above to *Sea Stallion* (p.18).

p.57 *'At glittering soirées you saw him mainly…' ('Ty zrel yego v krugu bol'shogo sveta…')* As persuasively argued by Ivan Gribushin, the person referred to here is most likely Dmitry Venevitinov, whose untimely death in 1827 at the age of 21 had cut short a promising but as yet largely unrecognised career as poet and thinker. Tyutchev is likely to have met Venevitinov on home leave in Moscow in 1825. Gribushin suggests the poem reflects Tyutchev's memories of these encounters after reading the posthumous collection of Venevitinov's verse published in 1829 (I.I. Gribushin, 'Zametki o Dmitrii Venevitinove', *Russkaya literatura*, 1968, No.1, pp. 196–98).

p.58 *29th January 1837 (29-oye yanvarya 1837)* Written soon after the death on that date of Aleksandr Pushkin, who had been fatally wounded in a duel two days previously.

p.59 *'O maiden, do not trust the poet…' ('Ne ver', ne ver' poetu, deva…')* Composed at some time before the beginning of 1839. Assuming that Tyutchev had a particular maiden and poet in mind, they may have been his sister-in-law Clotilde Bothmer and the diplomat Apollonius von Maltitz (see the note above to *'Nous avons pu tous deux, fatigués du voyage…'*, p. 36).

p.60 *Poetry (Poeziya).*

p.62 *'The earth still wears a sombre air…' ('Yeshcho zemli pechalen vid…')* This and the following poems chart the progress of Tyutchev's affair with Ernestine von Dörnberg between 1834 and 1838 (see above, pp. xxi–xxiii).

p.63 *'There is no feeling in your eyes…' ('I chuvstva net v tvoikh glazakh…')*

p.64 *'From place to place, from here to there…' ('Iz kraya v kray, iz grada v grad…')* Although on the face of it a free translation of Heine's poem 'Abschied' ('Es treibt dich fort von Ort zu Ort…'), Tyutchev's version

expands the three stanzas of Heine's original to seven, adding much that is relevant to his own situation at the time of Ernestine's departure for Paris in May 1834 (see above, p. xxi). In Heine's piece the voice borne on the wind is that of the woman he has left behind. Tyutchev reverses the roles, recalling his own appeals to Ernestine to stay and in the process transforming Heine's two lines of quoted speech into three stanzas (3–5).

p.65 *'I sit alone and contemplate…' ('Sizhu zadumchiv i odin…')*

p.66 *'I love your eyes, their look supreme…' ('Lyublyu glaza tvoi, moy drug…')*

p.67 *'Last night, in reverie enchanted…' ('Vchera, v mechtakh obvorozhonnykh…')*

p.68 *Italian Villa (Ital'yanskaya villa).*

p.70 *1st December 1837 (1-oye dekabrya 1837).*

p.71 *'With what sweet tenderness, what lovesick melancholy…' ('S kakoyu negoyu, s kakoy toskoy vlyublyonnoy…')* A.A. Nikolayev's dating of this to late 1838, after the death of Tyutchev's first wife Eleonore, is more convincing than other suggestions. In Nikolayev's interpretation the first three verses recall the beginning of Tyutchev and Ernestine's passionate affair some three years before in the light of all that had happened since, including the death of Eleonore (F.I. Tyutchev, *Polnoye sobraniye stikhotvoreniy*, ed. A.A. Nikolayev, Leningrad, 1987, pp. 145, 388).

p.74 *'Lord, grant to him Thy consolation…' ('Poshli, Gospod', svoyu otradu…')* Dated July 1850 in the manuscript, the poem reflects the deep depression suffered by Tyutchev during the period before he and Yelena Denisyeva became lovers on 15 July. Evidence for the depression is found in letters of Ernestine and of Tyutchev himself, who later wrote that at the time he might even have succumbed to his suicidal despair 'if it had not been for *Her*', i.e. Yelena. For this reason it is appropriate to see the poem as a prologue to the 'Denisyeva Cycle'. For the biographical background to individual poems in the cycle, see above, pp. xxvii–xxxi.

p.75 *On the Neva (Na Neve).*

p.76 *'Though the sultry heat of midday…' ('Kak ni dyshit polden' znoyny…')*

p.77 *'That which you gave your adoration…' ('Chemu molilas' ty s lyubov'yu…')*

p.78 *'Those eyes… I loved them to distraction…' ('Ya ochi znal, – o, eti ochi!..)* Written, like the preceding poem, soon after the scandal of Tyutchev's affair with Yelena broke in March 1851. There is evidence that he felt obliged to break off their relationship for a while, which explains the use of the past tense here.

p.79 *'O, how our love breeds ruination…' ('O, kak ubiystvenno my lyubim…')*

p.81 *' "I am unworthy of your loving"…' ('Ne raz ty slyshala priznan'ye…')* The child 'without a name' (because illegitimate) is Tyutchev and Yelena's daughter Yelena, born on 20 May/ 1 June 1851.

p.82 *'Though I have earned them, spare me from your shafts of rancour…' ('O, ne trevozh' menya ukoroy spravedlivoy…')*

p.83 *'Do not say that his love for me is undiminished…' ('Ne govori: menya on, kak i prezhde, lyubit…')*

p.84 *'You, my wave upon the ocean…' ('Ty, volna moya morskaya…')* The epigraph in French ('Mercurial as a wave') refers to Yelena Denisyeva.

p.85 *'The sun gleams brightly, waters sparkle…' ('Siyayet solntse, vody bleshchut…')*

p.86 *Last Love (Poslednyaya lyubov').*

p.87 *'Flames leap upwards, incandescent…' ('Plamya rdeyet, plamya pyshet…')*

p.88 *'How rarely we encounter them…' ('Tak, v zhizni yest' mgnoveniya…')*

p.89 *'All through the day unconscious she had lain…' ('Ves' den' ona lezhala v zabyt'i…')* Written some weeks after the event, this recalls the final hours of Yelena Denisyeva, who died in St Petersburg on 4 August 1864 by the Russian calendar.

p.90 *'This Nice, this fabled southern winter…' ('O, etot yug, o, eta Nitstsa…')*

p.91 *On the Eve of the Anniversary of 4 August 1864 (Nakanune godovshchiny 4 avgusta 1864 g.)* On 3 August 1865 Tyutchev and Ernestine left Moscow for the three-day journey by road to Ovstug. That evening Tyutchev was inspired to compose this sombre reflection on the imminent anniversary of Yelena's death, no doubt while taking the opportunity to stretch his legs at a coaching station.

p.92 *June 1868 (Iyun' 1868).*

p.93 *'There are two forces — two momentous forces...' ('Dve sily yest' – dve rokovye sily...')* Although the poem is couched in general terms and makes no specific reference to Yelena, Tyutchev clearly had society's treatment of her in mind. For that reason it seems reasonable to agree with Irina Petrova's inclusion of it as an epilogue to the Denisyeva Cycle (I.V. Petrova, 'Mir, obshchestvo, chelovek v lirike Tyutcheva', *Literaturnoye nasledstvo*, XCVII, Part 1, Moscow, 1988, p. 59).

p.96 *'I do not know if grace will condescend...' ('Ne znayu ya, kosnyotsya l' blagodat'...')* One of a series of 'penitential' poems addressed to Ernestine, this was written immediately after Tyutchev's affair with Yelena Denisyeva became public knowledge. Conscious of the efforts his wife was making to learn Russian, he slipped the manuscript into her album of pressed flowers with a note in French: 'For you (to decipher all on your own)'. There it lay unnoticed for nearly a quarter of a century: Ernestine finally chanced upon it only two years after his death.

p.97 *'There is a higher truth in separation...' ('V razluke yest' vysokoye znachen'ye...')*

p.98 *'Day turns to evening, dusk draws nigh...' ('Den' vechereyet, noch' blizka...')* See above, p. xxviii.

p.99 *'O my prophetic soul! O heart...' ('O veshchaya dusha moya...')*

p.102 *'I stood beside the broad Nevá...' ('Glyadel ya, stoya nad Nevoy...')* Written two months after what would prove to be Tyutchev's permanent return to Russia in the autumn of 1844. The longing for the warm sunlit south expressed here would recur in a number of his later poems. The words 'There, there' appear consciously to echo the cry 'Dahin, dahin!' in Goethe's well-known poem on a similar theme, 'Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühen?...' *Nevá*: note that the stress falls on the second syllable. *St Isaac's*: cathedral built to the design of the French architect de Montferrand between 1818 and 1858. Its large gilded dome is a prominent landmark in the city.

p.103 *'And so once more I find myself confronted...' ('Itak, opyat' uvidelsya ya s vami...')* In 1846 Tyutchev travelled to the family estate at Ovstug for the first time in 27 years. As he wrote to Ernestine at the time, 'none of my living memories relate to the period I was last there. My life began later,

and everything other than that life is as foreign to me as the day before I was born.' Similar sentiments are expressed in this poem, written on a return visit three years later. The final couplet refers to the grave of his first wife Eleonore in Turin.

p.104 *'Once again my eyes encounter…' ('Vnov' tvoi ya vizhu ochi…')* Another 'southern' poem: here too the idyllic landscape evoked is that of Italy. Gennady Chagin has suggested that the woman addressed in the poem is the celebrated Italian soprano Giulia Grisi, who during the autumn and winter season of 1849-1850 appeared in St Petersburg in the title roles of Bellini's *Norma*, Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* and other operas (G.V. Chagin, 'Zapiski literaturoveda. "Vnov' tvoi ya vizhu ochi…" ', *Russkaya slovesnost'*, 1997, No. 5, pp. 31, 58). Tyutchev is known to have attended her performances and may also have met her socially. Lines 7–8 reflect a probably fanciful family tradition that the Tyutchev clan was founded by a thirteenth-century Venetian merchant named Dudgi who is said to have settled in Russia after accompanying Marco Polo on his voyages.

p.105 *'Villages of mean appearance…' ('Eti bednye selen'ya…')*

p.106 *'Throughout your reign you served nor God nor Russia…' ('Ne Bogu ty sluzhili i ne Rossii…')* The fall of Sevastopol in the autumn of 1855 signalled the beginning of the end for Russia in the Crimean War and was evidently the occasion for this outburst against the late Tsar Nicholas I, whom Tyutchev and many others now held personally responsible for the disaster.

p.107 *'This crowd of the obscure, low-born…' ('Nad etoy tyomnoyu tolpoy…')* The 'Freedom' referred to is the forthcoming emancipation of the serfs announced by Tsar Alexander II. The decree enacting this was finally promulgated in 1861.

p.108 *On the Return Journey (Na vozvratnom puti).*

p.110 *'Although my home is in the valley…' ('Khotya ya svil gnezdo v doline…')*

p.111 *To the Slavs (Slavyanam).* Written for the Slavonic Congress held in St Petersburg and Moscow in May 1867 (see above, p. xxxii). An example of Tyutchev's copious but generally inferior political verse. The German epigraph ('The Slavs must be driven to the wall') is a saying attributed to Count von Beust, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary 1866–71.

p.113 *'Who would grasp Russia with the mind?...' ('Umom Rossiyu ne ponyat'...')* For Tyutchev the idea of Russia was always more attractive than the reality. Writing to his wife Ernestine the following year, he invokes 'dear Russia, a poor and unwelcoming country incomparably easier to love than to live in' (*Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F.I. Tyutcheva*, Part 3 [*1861–1873*], ed. A.V. Gladkova and T.G. Dinesman, Moscow, 2012, p. 287).

p.116 *'Hesitantly, diffidently...' ('Neokhotno i nesmelo...')*

p.117 *'On a still night, late in summer...' ('Tikhoy noch'yu, pozdnim letom...')*

p.118 *'Spellbound by that dark magician...' ('Charodeykoyu zimoyu...')*

p.119 *'There comes with autumn's first appearance...' ('Yest' v oseni pervovonachal'noy...')* Tolstoy admired this poem, singling out for especial praise lines 7–8 with their evocative use of the word 'idle'. 'The art of writing poetry lies in the ability to find such images, and Tyutchev was a great master of that,' he commented.

p.120 *'I love, when autumn shades are falling...' ('Osenney pozdneyu poroyu...')* Tsarskoye Selo ('The Tsar's village'), 15 miles to the south of St Petersburg, was a summer residence of the imperial family from the times of Peter the Great. It also became a popular resort for the aristocracy, particularly after Russia's first railway line, linking it with the capital, was opened in 1837. The magnificent Catherine Palace (Yekaterininsky dvorets) was originally named for Catherine I, Peter the Great's second wife, but rebuilt in the 'Russian Baroque' style for the Empress Elizabeth by the Italian architect Rastrelli. A prominent feature is the palace church with its five gilded domes. The interior was subsequently remodelled on Classical lines by Catherine the Great. Tyutchev's reference to 'Catherine's great palaces' is presumably meant to include the nearby Alexander Palace, built by Catherine the Great for her grandson, the future Emperor Alexander I. Within the grounds of the Catherine Park are spacious informal gardens in the English style set around a lake with swans.

p.122 *'Nature, just like the Sphinx, contrives to set...' ('Priroda – Sfinks. I tem ona verney...')*

p.123 *To Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin (Mikhailu Petrovichu Pogodinu)* Only two volumes of Tyutchev's verse were published during his lifetime, the second in 1868. In neither case did he show any interest in col-

laborating with his editors and publishers, leaving it to them to prepare the texts as best they could. His low opinion of the 1868 collection is expressed in these lines, inscribed in a copy presented to his old friend M.P. Pogodin (1800—75), a professor of Russian history close to the Slavophiles who had known Tyutchev since their student days at Moscow University.

p.124 *'Commanded at the highest level…' ('Velen'yu vysshemu pokorny…')* This characteristically liberal slant on the censor's role was inscribed in the album of a fellow official, Platon Aleksandrovich Vakar.

p.125 *'Long my companion on life's thoroughfare…' ('Brat, stol'ko let soputstvovavshy mne…')* Tyutchev's brother Nikolay (born 1801), to whom he had always been close, collapsed and died at his club in Moscow on 8/20 December 1870. According to Tyutchev, the words of the poem came to him 'in a state of half sleep' as he was travelling back to St Petersburg by night train after the funeral on 11 December.

p.126 *'Of all the life that raged so violently…' ('Ot zhizni toy, chto bushevala zdes'…')* On the date in question Tyutchev and Ernestine were travelling from Ovstug to the village of Vshchizh to visit a neighbouring landowner. The poem was inspired by the sight of some ancient burial mounds by the roadside, relics of battles between Russians and nomadic tribes in pre-Christian times.

p.127 *'Of so much — health, sleep, will-power, even air —…' ('Vsyo otnyal u menya kaznyashchy Bog…')* Composed during Tyutchev's final illness and addressed to his wife Ernestine.

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