

Maurice Baring's Russian Novel

by Ian Boyd

A novel about Russia written by an English novelist is something of a rarity, particularly when it is written by an English novelist who spoke Russian fluently and lived in Russia for many years. Maurice Baring's reputation as a writer is in fact based largely on a knowledge of Russian life and literature which he exploited with considerable skill and shrewdness for at least the early part of his literary career. He was one of the first English writers to introduce Russian life and literature to the general reading public of Edwardian England. From 1904 until 1914, he spent much of his time in Russia writing the series of articles and books, which began with a review of the original production of *The Cherry Orchard* and detailed reports on the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 revolution, and culminated years later with the first edition of *The Oxford Book of Russian Verse*.

The novels that he began writing in the early twenties were, however, very different. They had nothing to do with his experiences in Russia and little to do with political and social questions of any kind. What they do study is life in the small section of upper-class society to which Baring as the son of a well-known Whig aristocrat and the scion of a famous banking family himself belonged. What they are primarily concerned with are the spiritual crises which affect the lives of characters who are totally free of material cares and totally unafflicted with social consciences. Books such as *Cat's Cradle* and *Daphne Adeane*, are described equally well as theological novels or Edwardian society chronicles, but in either case their lack of social commentary is extraordinary. Even a friendly critic has remarked that they give the superficial impression of being Marxist parodies of decadent Capitalist literature.¹ And another critic seems to have them in mind when he questions whether Baring as a novelist had any interest in what was happening to the modern world:

. . . it is doubly singular that in spite of the exceptional sympathy which his friendships bestowed, in spite of an unusual knowledge of the world, and, a proven faith against which to test that knowledge, he should have been content to write novels in his latter years which gave no evidence of being in touch with contemporary life at all.²

Tinker's Leave is a notable exception to this rule. And the centenary of Baring's birth seems to be a good occasion for considering the one novel in which he examined the meaning of his own experience in

¹David Lodge, 'Maurice Baring, Novelist: A Re-appraisal', *The Dublin Review*, Autumn, 1960, p. 262.

²'Happiness in Memory', *T.L.S.*, March 6, 1948, p. 134.

pre-revolutionary Russia and in doing so turned his attention to the perennial political and social problems of his own age. It is true that the problems that are explored seem at first to indicate an obsessive interest in the political life of Czarist Russia, since they are all connected with events that took place during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and the revolution of 1905. It is also true that the novel is unusually personal, since it is generally limited to being a careful record of his own experiences. But the problems turn out to have considerable contemporary relevance, and although his experiences are recounted with an unmistakable note of nostalgia, they are never idealised. What is most striking about the novel in fact is its peculiar kind of realism. Standing mid-way between semi-autobiography and pure fiction, it avoids becoming another romantic version of a return to Ruritania. The difference between Anthony Hope's frivolous hero cherishing his red rose and sentimental memories and Baring's unheroic hero caught up in the political debate that will tear Europe apart for years to come, measures the distance between two very different kinds of fantasy, even though they are both set in approximately the same age and in approximately the same alien environment.

In the introduction to the novel, Baring admits to some difficulty in describing the book he has written. 'What has it turned out to be? What is it?' he asks, 'A novel? A book of travel? An argument? A picture of manners?'³ In fact it has elements of all these *genres*, but his own answer to the question provides the most accurate description of it. 'I think', he writes, 'it is perhaps a record of impressions received in Russia and Manchuria, in wartime, and transposed into a phantasy' (*Ibid.*, p. viii). As a record of his experiences, it is not essentially different from the Russian journals, but the transposition of them into fiction has to a degree changed their meaning. Baring the journalist is replaced by Miles Costerdine the naive businessman abroad. The diary of a journalist at war, which is supposedly a more or less objective record of events, becomes instead a novel of memory and the record of a spiritual odyssey.

One indication of this change is provided by the structure of the novel. Although retaining some features of the loosely episodic book of travel, it also possesses a sharply-defined form. There are three clearly-marked stages to Miles Costerdine's adventure: first the events that carry him from his settled life in Manchuria; secondly, the events of his Manchurian life itself, which form the central part of the novel; and finally the events in Moscow and Susieki, which take place immediately prior to his return to ordinary life. His adventures form a circle which begins and ends in London; in Baring's words, the story has 'a definite starting-place' and 'an appointed goal'. (*T.L.*, p. viii). And this cyclical structure is something more than a convenient

³*Tinker's Leave* (London: Heinemann, 1927), p. viii. Subsequent references will be abbreviated to *T.L.*

division of the incidents that take place. As Miles moves from one period of his adventure to the next, a gradual change in his character takes place. The man who leaves for Paris on his twenty-seventh birthday is a different person from the man who returns to London at the end of the novel. It is this gradual transformation of character by way of experience which is the real subject of the book, for it is the creation of the new Miles, not the return to London, that is the story's 'appointed goal'.

Viewed in this way, the novel can be read as the record of the kind of political experience that might be described as a kind of secular redemption. The first part of the novel recounts the moment of conversion; the second, the Manchurian time, explores the values to which he is converted; and the third presents the moment of crisis in which he chooses between two conflicting versions of his new ideal. In a sense the 'redemption' is associated with a conversion to a kind of romance which is defined in terms of the meaning of Russia. 'Russia', Miles is told, 'will be your romance' (*T.L.*, p. 73). The 'Tinker's leave to live' is in fact a conversion to the values represented by Russia.

Although the chance meeting with the Dashkovs in Paris begins the time of conversion, music plays the most important part in bringing it about. The Wagner concert is an aesthetic preparation for a new life. By bringing him to the concert, the Dashkovs transfer him from the world of business to the world of art: 'The Fire Music from the *Walküre* not only went to Miles' head like wine, but it filled the cup of his aesthetic sensibility, of all that in his nature was capable of receiving musical impression, to the brim' (*T.L.*, p. 20). The effect of the music is in fact described in language that suggests decisive interior transformation:

. . . he was aware, intensely aware, that something catastrophic had happened to him—nothing would ever be the same as it had been before; something was either broken inside him, or had been added to him, he was not sure which; he felt as if he had been taken out of space, turned inside out, and put back again. . . . He could not account for, nor analyse the process; he only knew that he felt 'upset'; as though he had been through a mental shipwreck, rescued from drowning and restored to life, and had 'suffered a sea-change'. All this was going on inside him. Outwardly he seemed to be the same as ever (*T.L.*, pp. 21-22).

Music also plays an important part in making the conversion permanent. After waking from a night's sleep, he has the sense that the spell had been broken and that everything is as it was before, 'he was now back in real life once more' (*T.L.*, p. 29). But when music again intervenes, the former spell is restored. This second kind of music is, however, not the fierce Wagnerian music, but the quiet pastoral music of 'four or five notes played on a reedy pipe' (*T.L.*, p. 30).

Had he known, it was only one of the street cries of Paris, a mender of china or umbrellas advertising his trade . . . but to Miles on that April morning the notes had an intoxicating lilt and magical gaiety about them. It was as though the Spring itself, were calling. Miles thought of a fairy tale; he could not remember which.

The music got into his blood; a spirit of intoxicating irresponsibility seized him, and he said to himself :

'Yes, why not? Why not? Why shouldn't I go away? . . . travel . . . travel . . . over the hills and far away, and seek adventure . . . live? . . . Why should I go back to London? Must I? (*T.L.*, p.30).

In itself, however, music is not enough to bring about the change. Someone is needed to interpret its significance. This is done by the Dashkovs who teach him the meaning of his vague longing for liberation and encourage him to achieve it. It is significant that in their roles as interpreters and guides they repeatedly make use of the language of religion. Madam Dashkov, for example, speaks of the Wagner music as a kind of artistic analogue to baptism, 'his baptême de Feuerzauber' (*T.L.*, p. 22), and in encouraging him to abandon his London life, she speaks of his need for redemption and stimulation :

'You are like some one who has been in prison; you need setting free. I am sure you have great possibilities and capabilities. *J'ai vu cela tout de suit, n'est-ce pas Pierre?* What you want is *Erlösung* and *Anregung*. You must see the world for yourself; it is no life to go every day to the same office. *Ce n'est pas une vie*. Not a life' (*T.L.*, p.24).

For the Dashkovs, returning to London is a kind of sin; 'a crime, a waste' (*T.L.*, p. 26); visiting Russia is a moral imperative; 'you must have leave—*leave to live*' (*T.L.*, p. 26). Finally, as if in symbolic recognition of his conversion, they confer on him a new name: 'we will call you Mihal Ivanytch' (*T.L.*, p. 18).

In the second part of the novel, the meaning of what he has been converted to is explored. What is studied is his gradual introduction into Russian life. This slow and painstaking initiation is brought about through the cumulative effect of all that happens during the journey to Manchuria, where his experience consists largely of a series of seemingly undramatic incidents that are combined and interspersed with a series of seemingly interminable conversations. Throughout the Manchurian time, he remains a collector of impressions. Unable to speak the language of his companions, he must rely on Alyosha Kouragine as his guide and mentor. 'I shall convert you in time', Alyosha tells him, 'to a more human view of life' (*T.L.*, p.69). Yet all the while, his experience of life acts as a kind of gradual education, and by the time he returns to Moscow he has acquired his own definition of the meaning of Russia.

Since this definition is built up from the minutiae of everyday life, it is difficult to reduce it to a single statement. At least part of its meaning eludes rational statement, because in it thinking is entangled with feeling. For him, Russia means first of all romance: '. . . it is what we would call an 'infectious' country', Alyosha tells him. 'Some countries are like that . . . you will be infected. Once the microbe gets into one's blood—the Russian microbe, I mean—the disease never dies; it is fatal like a love-philtre, and to the end of your life you will say, 'Russia what is there between you and me'?' (*T.L.*, pp. 70-71). And again: 'Russia is a country without any obvious attractions and ornaments. There are no show sights. . . . Russia has no elegant make-up, no frills; and yet any one of these villages has more charm for me than all those things put together' (*T.L.*, p. 71). His notion of what it means is therefore strongly coloured by a passionate feeling which is analogous to romantic love. At the beginning of the Manchurian adventures, Alyosha speaks of the longing to be back in Russia which he experiences when he is away from it, and he prophesies that Miles will feel an even stronger longing for it when his journey ends: '. . . that is what you will feel one day, more strongly perhaps than I, because Russia will be your romance. . . . You will fall in love with Russia. . . . It will happen to you; and perhaps some day in the future you will remember this journey and it will haunt you like the face of some one you once loved' (*T.L.*, pp. 72-73).

In spite of the apparent irrationality of this feeling, the political view associated with it that he acquires during the Manchurian travels provides a kind of intellectual content for his view of Russia. It is a political view based essentially on two things: a notion of Russian liberty, and a notion of the Russian Liberals. The first is political only in the extended meaning of the term, since it is concerned primarily with the Russian nation apart from its political organisation. The liberty at issue is a liberty of manners rather than political liberty. But the second element that shapes his view is political in a narrower sense of the word, since it is concerned with the reliability of the Russian Liberals and their political theories.

The meaning of Russian liberty is established by a series of contrasts between the life Miles knew in England and the life he experiences in Russia. Essentially this is a contrast between the values of a predominantly industrial society and the values of a predominantly agrarian one. The strong affirmation of the benefits of the Russian liberty of manners implies a criticism of the English social order. Thus, a constant theme of the Manchurian conversations is the contrasting positions of the poor in England and Russia. Alyosha reminds him of the cruel side of Edwardian prosperity: 'In your country people are put in prison for begging and they starve in the streets. That would be impossible here, *really* impossible' (*T.L.*, p.68). And one of the English journalists speaks of the difference between English and Russian poverty; '. . . here in the East,

they are all agriculturists; in the West, we live in towns, and towns produce a *grinding* poverty, a slavery, a destitution in which it is difficult for people to live like the birds of the air' (*T.L.*, p. 149).

The argument also extends to the difference between two kinds of law and two kinds of penal systems. Miles's easy assumption of the superiority of English justice over the arbitrary justice of Russia is challenged by Alyosha. For him, the difference between England and Russia is the difference between a country where one can be sure of one's rights and a country where 'any one could be put in prison at any moment for anything' (*T.L.*, p. 67). Alyosha answers that constitutional rights are not always an advantage. In England, 'you could not be imprisoned illegally, but you couldn't be *let out* illegally either—and the great thing for a prisoner is to get out' (*T.L.*, p.67). In Russia, equivalents to the *Habeas Corpus* exist, but they are overlooked: 'If the rules are kept to the letter, one suffers as much, and sometimes more, than when they are laxly kept and elastic' (*T.L.*, p. 68). As for the difference between the two penal systems, Alyosha considers his own experience as proof of the greater humanity of the Russian over the English practice. He had once murdered a man. In England he would likely have been hanged; in Russia he was merely exiled to one of the casually administered penal colonies. 'There is', he concludes, 'less liberty at large in your country than in prison in ours' (*T.L.*, p. 68).

Even Russian failure is preferable to English success. Thus the pursuit of wealth in the West is self-defeating, since it does not result in happiness. 'If you have money, you can't have anything else; not even good cooking—that is the tragedy of the rich people?' (*T.L.*, p. 149). And again; 'Do you remember what Swift said? ". . . One has only to look at the people God has given money to, to see what He thinks of it"' (*T.L.*, p. 148). In Russia paradoxically failure is admired as a sign of true success: 'it is the *failure* who by us is the greatest success. Ivan the Fool who gains the kingdom—which is not always of this world. That is what we all of us want to grasp' (*T.L.*, p. 148). China is brought into the discussion only once and then it is spoken of as a country which has had the wisdom to anticipate Western progress and reject it:

. . . the Chinese foresaw the possibilities of our modern civilisation centuries ago, and all the advantages and resources of modern progress. They foresaw machines and all this consequence; but they chose another road. . . . They understand at once that inventions like the telegraph and the locomotive would not make life happier. If you live in China, you will understand very soon that when everybody travels in a rickshaw, it is the same thing as when everybody travels in an automobile. Life is no slower and no faster (*T.L.*, p. 115).

The second important element in Miles's view of Russia comes from what he learns about the Russian Liberals. As a political group, their beliefs are not presented in any detail and they are simply described as those who favour constitutional government based on Western models. Beyond that, little is said about their views, except perhaps that they do possess a variety of complex schemes for reform. What is most significant, however, is the way in which they are identified with the educated middle classes, so that they are referred to alternatively as the Liberals or the *Intelligentia*. It is also significant that Miles learns to judge them by the same agrarian standard by which he had learned to judge Western industrial society. Thus Alyosha speaks of them as a people who are out of touch with the peasants whose real needs and the practical good sense they ignore: 'They talk of all that ought to be done, and of all that they would do for the people, for the moment. They never think of *asking* the peasant what he wants, they tell him what he ought to want' (*T.L.*, p. 162). They are further alienated from rural Russia by their religious scepticism: 'The peasants think them silly and futile, and also they think they are ungodly, which is quite true' (*T.L.*, p. 162).

But Miles's opinion of the Liberals is formed not only by what he hears of their political views, but by the impression of boredom and vague discontent which emanates from their company. After eating lunch with a group of them outside a Buddhist temple in Liaoyang, he discusses the strange atmosphere of the luncheon party with Alyosha:

'I thought all those people who were at the temple were melancholy', said Miles, 'or was that just because I don't understand Russian?'

'No', said Alyosha; 'it is true. They are all of them bored to death!'

'Because of the war?'

'No, anyhow. They would be more bored at home. They are always like that.'

'But why?'

'They have played vint till they are silly . . . they have no interests. They will tell you it is because there is no political life, and because the Government is so bad . . . that is not the reason of course, but I am wondering now for the first time whether, after all, men can be happy unless they can talk politics.'

'And abuse the Government?'

'Oh, they do that as it is. They do nothing else.'

'Then what more do they want?'

'I do not know. It cannot be to go into Parliament, because they wouldn't, if they could . . . (*T.L.*, pp. 161-162).

The final influence in forming his view of the Liberals is the opinion of Elena Nicolayevna, a nurse with the Red Cross staff in Manchuria and the woman with whom he falls in love. Although claiming to be in sympathy with their political theories, her sympathy does more to undermine respect for Liberalism than Alyosha's cynicism. She believes in Liberal ideas, but detests Liberals: 'I have an elemental hatred in me for the *intelligentia*, for our Russian *intelligentia*, that nothing can cure. I know it is unreasonable . . . I admire our men of science, I admire our teachers, our schoolmasters, our professors. I think they are right. I admire their ideas. But I don't like them personally. I don't want to live with them' (*T.L.*, pp. 194-195). Conversely, the people she does like are people like the Dashkovs, whose political views she thinks indefensible, 'the Conservatives . . . people like Alyosha's uncle and aunts' (*T.L.*, p. 195).

In the third part of the novel, Miles leaves Manchuria and returns to Russia where he is caught up in the debate about the 1905 revolution, which has just begun. It is perhaps significant that during this final period of his adventures, he divides his time equally between town-life with a middle-class family, the Bloums, in Moscow, and country-life with the Conservative and aristocratic Dashkovs in Susieki at their country estate. The two elements that form his view of Russia are as it were separated and polarised, with the Bloum family representing the entire middle-class world and Susieki representing the whole of rural Russia. Significantly, too, he now begins to speak Russian. Consequently he is able to enter directly into Russian life, and the opinions he forms and the choices he makes are the result of an experience which is more personal and immediate than the somewhat special and isolated experience of the Manchurian time.

Family life with the Bloums at first presents the Liberals in a more sympathetic light. At close range he finds them kindly and well-intentioned people whose concern for political reform is evidently genuine and whose hopes for constitutional government seem eminently reasonable. Gradually in fact he begins to acquire their political views. This change in attitude is described in the same language that had been used to describe his romantic feeling for Russia: 'he had caught the infectious disease of Russian politics. He was violently keen; his Whig blood and upbringing were aflame' (*T.L.*, p. 265).

But this new enthusiasm for the Liberal cause is also gradually undermined by his life in the same household. He finds, for example, their reaction to the news of military defeat in Manchuria vaguely disturbing: 'When news of the battle of Mukden reached Moscow, the Bloums said it must mean the end of the war. . . . Ivan Borisovitch rubbed his hands when the bad news reached him, and said, "*chycm huzhe tiem luchshe*" (the worse it is, the better)' (*T.L.*, p. 266). Nor is he allowed to forget what he had been taught in Manchuria. When Elena visits Moscow, he asks her if she really knew the

Liberals. 'Know them'? Elena laughed. 'I know them better than you do, my dear Mihal Ivanytch. I have known them all my life' (*T.L.*, p. 282). A brief conversation with Troumestre, one of the Manchurian journalists, also helps to shake his new-formed confidence in Liberalism. In answer to his claim that the revolution is supported by everyone who loves liberty, the journalist replies in words that provide the clearest statement of Baring's own very Conservative misgivings about Liberalism and Liberals: 'I see precious little trace of liberty in Russia—least of all among your Liberals. They are the most tyrannical and arbitrary people I have ever seen. The only liberty worth having is that which proceeds from authority: the rest is not liberty but licence' (*T.L.*, p. 264).⁴

Life at the Bloums does nothing to contradict Troumestre's judgement. Thus during one of the many long and noisy political arguments, Mr Bloum speaks excitedly of the changes which are about to happen; to which, someone replies that they are sick of politics and would like to forget:

'You won't forget it here', said Ivan Borisovitch. 'Here we are resolved to see the business through', he said energetically, thumping the table with his fist. 'We will teach them a lesson'.

He looked so mild, so fat, so good-natured, so fundamentally weak, as he said these inspiring words that Miles wondered for a moment whether Troumestre might not, to a certain extent, be right (*T.L.*, p. 268).

By contrast the Susieki country-interlude is a time of calm and rest. The garrulous political discussions are replaced by the quiet monotony of rural life. There is perhaps an analogy between Miles's attack of malaria in Moscow and his feverish interest in Russian politics at the same time. If this is so, it is suggestive that he now finds the cure for his malady. The political debate, however, although somewhat muted, does continue during this final period of the novel, for it is at Susieki that he evaluates the complete meaning of his Russian experience and makes his final choice between the two Russias.

The spokesman for the values of rural Russia during the Susieki time is Elena's brother, Valia. The view of political life which he

⁴That this view of liberty is also that of Baring is clear from a letter he wrote to Chesterton that is dated August 22, 1922, in which he makes the same point at greater length but in almost the same words. '. . . anybody who has thought about history or looked on at politics must have reflected that freedom resides where there is order and not where there is licence or no-order. It is true in politics; it is true in art. It is the basis of our whole social life in England. Russia has just given us the most startling of object lessons. The English with their passion for committees, their club-rules and their well-organised traffic are daily realising the fact, however little they may recognise the theory. Only the law can give us freedom, said Goethe, talking of art. "Und das Gezetz kann nur die Freiheit geben". Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* (Sheed and Ward: New York, 1943), p. 476.

develops is essentially the same as that which Miles has been taught in Manchuria, but the picture he draws of the realities of Russian life is much more harsh and pessimistic. He sees no solution to the weaknesses and faults of government, which are perennial and irremedial; as for the final revolution the Liberals look forward to with such enthusiasm, he believes it will not only destroy them, but also result in the kind of tyranny which inevitably follows a time of trouble in Russia:

‘But’, said Miles, ‘surely the old régime is at its last gasp; surely every one is tired of the autocracy and the war; surely the whole system is rotten to the core. You said yourself to me that the top was crumbling’.

‘Revolutions’, said Valia, ‘don’t happen because things are rotting and crumbling. In a way the top has always been rotting and crumbling, and always will be, however many revolutions happen. . . . A revolution will only come when the Government of the moment is too little appropriate to the actual needs of the nation . . . when it fits too badly . . . and not because there is or not a tyrant, or a tyrannical Government . . . the tyrant, the despot, is always the result of a revolution . . . never the cause—I mean of a real revolution, not a Court revolution’ (*T.L.*, pp. 316-317).

For Valia, the rhythm of Russian political life consists of an alternating succession of despotisms and revolutions; ‘Russia will either be governed by despotism or not at all: Despotism or Time of Trouble. That is the formula of Russian history’ (*T.L.*, p. 317). From this point of view, the Liberal schemes for constitutional reform are clearly inept and unrealistic. That is why the conflict will result in an apocalyptic struggle whose only certain outcome is the destruction of the Liberals: ‘I don’t believe in the *intelligentia*’, he explains, ‘I think they are doomed. I don’t know what will happen, but the fight will ultimately be between the peasants and the towns, and I back the peasants’ (*T.L.*, p. 317). The implication is that Miles must also choose between the ineffectual ideal of the urban Liberals and the fragile pastoral ideal represented by Susieki. Although the resolution of the larger historical conflict between the two Russias is not described in the novel, there are indications that Miles’s personal conflict is finally resolved by his decision literally to save Susieki.

What gives this strange incident its significance is the suggestion that it is somehow linked to the *Cherry Orchard* and can be understood only in relation to it. In some sense what happens to Susieki is a re-living of the action of the play. The Dashkovs’ decision to sell what remains of their Russian property and to live abroad provides the realistic explanation for the family crisis, but this commonplace business transaction also threatens to become a repetition of Chekov’s tragedy. ‘It will probably be bought’, Elena says, ‘by some rich

Moscow merchant . . . like *The Cherry Orchard*—you know the play? (*T.L.*, p. 323). The arrival of the Bloums with just such a merchant implies that the sale of the estate would be a victory of town over country. With unconscious irony, they even speak of staging an amateur production of the play: 'If Alexander Feodorovitch buys it, we will get up a performance of *The Cherry Orchard* here' (*T.L.*, p. 308).

Ostensibly, Miles purchases Susieki as a wedding present for Alyosha and Elena, but there are indications that he also understands the symbolic significance of what he does. The estate has come to represent all that was meant by the romance of Russia, which he senses is in danger.⁵ By protecting the symbol, he attempts to protect the reality it symbolises: 'he was living in a world of romance . . . he was afraid of shattering the dream. He knew, although he would not have admitted it, that it was fragile' (*T.L.*, p. 295). And when the marriage does not take place and Elena offers him advice about re-selling the property, ('Some merchant will take it off your hands') (*T.L.*, p. 337), his immediate response is a reference to the conclusion of the play: 'It was to prevent that', he answers, 'that I bought it' (*T.L.*, p. 337).

What is most striking about this resolution of the debate between middle-class Liberalism and rural liberty of life and manners is the apparent futility of the attempt to give the play another ending. The Bloum world is rejected and the values of Alyosha's and Valia's rural world are strongly affirmed, but he is unable to save Susieki. As he prepares to return to London, he receives word that the villa has been burnt and that all that is left of it is 'a charred remnant of smoking ruins' (*T.L.*, p. 343). The burning of Susieki is moreover related to the political life of Russia, since it takes place on the day that Russia had been granted an ambiguous charter 'which altered the course of her history' (*T.L.*, p. 342). The outbreak of violence and incendiarism throughout the country, which accompanies the momentary triumph of the Liberals, is also a metaphor for the destruction of rural Russia which will take place in the future. At the novel's end, the fragile and romantic ideal exists only in the Miles's memory. It cannot be protected from the harsh political realities which destroy it, so that he says goodbye 'thinking, as he spoke, of his brief romance, so sweet while it lasted; so suddenly, so irretrievably shattered: a little casket of dreams he had burnt and buried under the birch-trees at Susieki' (*T.L.*, p. 378).

⁵See, for example, Vernon Lee's comment on the novel: 'We have many of us felt a place as a symbol of everything and your Heimwch for *Susieki* is ours. It is like certain sudden brief Mozart closes (cf. Sonata for Pfte: Andante, C. dur)'. Ethel Smyth, *Maurice Baring* (London: Heinemann, 1938), p. 334.