

## The Last Summer

*B.Pasternak*

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A thin Penguin Modern Classics which I must have bought in Vancouver 1974 along with a pile of other books to keep me busy on my train ride to Montreal. I think that this one was the first I read, I remember nothing of it, and when I now reread it not a single thing rings a bell.

It is a thin book, more of a long short story than a novel. It makes you think of Mansfield or Woolf when you read it, more of Woolf than of Mansfield. There is no plot and it is hard to make head or tail of it, what is it all about? One stream of consciousness with frequent discontinuities. It is about a young man letting himself reminisce. A young man on the threshold of life having just completed successfully his studies and taken on the job of a tutor in a one-kid family which has just split up, the father living on the ground floor, the mother with son on top. He thinks of women. One is one from the street with a drunken husband snoring away, the other is a young Danish widow serving in the home as a companion to the wife. Not happy with the situation talking to the young man in German interspersed with comments in English. He is in love with both, or so he thinks, whatever comes within his circle is fair game to his imagination. But above all his imagination is caught up by a story he envisioned, of another man (himself?) offering himself at an auction to be sold as chattel. He is carried away writing a synopsis oblivious of everything, including the Danish widow with whom he has an engagement for a walk after having proposed to her filling his face with tears.

We are not presented with a narrative but a sequence of impression following upon each other without any logical constraints. In a short story this may be charming, although as noted not necessarily memorable, in a longer one making up a novel it would be tedious. Anyway it fits in the tenor of the times.

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