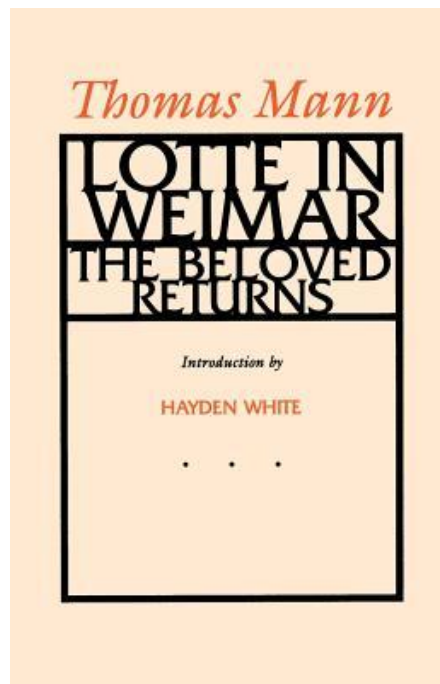




Lotte in Weimar: The Beloved Returns

Thomas Mann

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Forty years after their youthful association, Lotte Kestner, real-life heroine of Goethe's famous novel *The Sorrows of Werther*, makes a pilgrimage to Weimar to see Goethe. Upon her arrival, Lotte, to her surprise, is greeted as a celebrity and taken up into Goethe's set.

Thomas Mann, fascinated with the concept of genius and with the richness of German culture, found in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe the embodiment of the German culture hero. Mann's novelistic biography of Goethe was first published in English in 1940. *Lotte in Weimar* is a vivid dual portrait—a complex study of Goethe and of Lotte, the still-vivacious woman who in her youth was the model for Charlotte in Goethe's widely-read *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Lotte's thoughts, as she anticipates meeting Goethe again after forty years, and her conversations with those in Weimar who knew the great man, allow Mann to assess Goethe's genius from many points of view.

Lotte in Weimar: The Beloved Returns Details

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Philipp says

Continuation of Goethe's Werther. As Goethe is processing the impossibility of his young love in his "Die Leiden des jungen Werther", this book is to be understood as the second part of the story some decades of life later. Outstanding reproduction of the mood of a time, full of caricatures in many levels. Even the longish and procedural mood, obsessed of details is reproduced from classicism very precise. ;) Nevertheless (and therefore): an excellent writing.

Ioana Crețu says

„Realitatea e o operă a renunțării.”

Sheri-lee says

A bit tedious at times but mostly because I felt like I should know more about some of the characters prior to this reading. I'm not smart enough or informed enough for this book as real life people are mentioned like I should know their personal biographies. I'm sure if I knew more about Goethe, and his circle, this story would have been interesting on many more levels than it was for me. But, none the less, I found it interesting on the surface levels that I could embrace. The basis of the story would make for a good movie. I think it would be difficult to live the life of a person whom a literary character is based on...especially one who would be obviously recognized by the general populace.

Jacques le fataliste et son maître says

Un capolavoro di ironia, questo ritratto della società e in particolare dell'intellettualità che si raccoglie attorno al vecchio Goethe come attorno a un monumento nazionale.

Coraggioso e affascinante il capitolo in cui Mann ci conduce all'inseguimento dei pensieri di Goethe, mettendoli in scena in un monologo interiore (o pseudo tale).

Takenari says

Well I read it in Japanese translation. One of two books I read in 2010 over which I lingered the longest (the other being Schild's Ladder by Greg Egan). Its audacity of structure, depth and breadth of knowledge on Goethe, and gentle sense of irony were all eye-opening. I mean who else, writing on Goethe, has the guts to show the great man get so aroused by his own fantasies that he starts to masturbate (this, if my interpretation of the scene is correct in the translation). Such a rewarding book that I now long to read Joseph and His Brothers and finish Doktor Faustus.

Thomas Mann admired Goethe tremendously, wrote essays about him and gave lectures on this author. It is safe to say that Mann was fascinated by the author. This novel portrays Goethe as a difficult, irritating, selfish aging man who is devoted primarily to his own special interests and pursuits. The psychology of a man like this is plumbed with the acuity of the great writer that Mann was by the late nineteen-thirties. The character of Goethe is delineated through the perspectives of Lotte, Goethe's son August, and Adele Schopenhauer. The views of Goethe of each of these in turn seem to mirror their perspectives. Filled with scenes from Goethe's life his character is gradually revealed, his genius as a writer is plumbed, and his works are revealed through interpolated quotations. The novel is an interesting experiment in style that differs in many ways from other of Mann's works I have read, while still maintaining the voice of the author.

Peter Jakobs says

One of the very best books I ever read! Except of the final chapter it describes one day in Weimar when Charlotte Kestner, born Buff, arrived in Weimar to visit her sister - but actually to meet Goethe first time after 44 years when they had a unfulfilled love. Not any love - but the one which inspired Goethe to write his most famous novel: "Die Leiden des jungen Werther".

Beside this aspect there are a lot of statements in Goethe's thoughts which seem to be more Thomas Mann's own thoughts about art and politics: Goethe as one of the few Germans recognizing the new ideas brought to Europe by Napoléon and warning about the new German (Prussian) nationalism raising up - and warning against a total isolation and catastrophe (which then later lead to Mann's exodus from Nazi-Germany). All written in perfect style - simply a genius idea!

Jonathan Ashleigh says

Because of my infatuation with *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, I had high hopes for this fictitious depiction of historical possibilities. But it was long-winded and I can't imagine how anyone could have stayed interested. *The Sorrows of Young Mike* is a much better option if you are looking to read deeper into something that pertains to Werther.

Bogdan Ra? says

The first characteristic of this book which you will remark is its refinement, a refinement which made Thomas Mann famous with *Buddenbrooks*, but to a whole new level this time (no wonder since there are 38 years between these two beautiful works): it's more than charming. The society back then was charming: elegance, manners, language, everything...

After a while, and you'd be right to believe so, you would have the impression that this will only turn out to be an afternoon full of "conversations", masterly crafted, between Lotte and some of Goethe's acquaintances in her hotel room, but just after you get used with the fact that she's never going to meet Goethe, and that's fine since the book is anything but boring, finally she actually decides to decline all of those who'd want to have a chat or speak with her and go to her relatives and meet Goethe later on.

Being inside the mind of Goethe and see from his eyes, not literally of course, is a wonderful experience. Also, all the reference to his works, yet not a critical study but words and opinions by his relatives and acquaintances, is a valuable contribution in understanding them a little better.

Lotte's perspective on the world is not something you should omit. It is really interesting to see what is her reaction and opinion on Goethe's famous epistolary novel, *The sorrows of young Werther*, and the consequences that book had on her ordinary life. You will also notice she has quite an intellect and her views concerning the world are nothing short of spirit.

The ending of this novel is sublime. Lotte's fever, after being silenced by Goethe who says his final words, cannot be described...it's overwhelming.

The allegory with the fly and the candle, which she had used against him - claiming that everyone close to him are sacrificing for him - is superbly reversed: he is the candle that consumes itself so that everyone could be enlightened by it.

A beautiful and undeniable proof of Mann's admiration for Goethe. Definitely something "worthy to be written".

One of my favorite books from him, not sure if it's in second place but definitely in top three.

Cooper Renner says

Less a novel than a work of social and literary criticism in the guise of fiction, this is a masterly work, but not a masterpiece like *Magic Mountain*. Much of the book resembles a Platonic dialogue, though there is often less dialogue as such than long expositions and narrative by one character told to another who mostly listens. The "incident" around which the novel revolves is the visit of "Lotte" of "Sorrows of Young Werther" to Weimar where the book's author Goethe has long lived.

Spiderorchid says

Sehr schön konstruiert und ausgesprochen amüsant (vor allem, wenn man Goethe nicht besonders mag...). Thomas Mann führt den Goethe-Kult und die überspannten Romantiker vor und zeichnet dabei ein interessantes Bild der Zeit. Besonders gefallen hat mir, wie er in Lottes Persönlichkeit ihre Existenz als "Werther's Lotte" und als bodenständige Frau mit einem individuellen, vom literarischen Kult der auf ihr basierten Figur losgelösten Ehe- und Familienleben verbindet. Die Charaktere des Romans bleiben ihren historischen Vorbildern treu, sind aber zugleich auch eigenständige Romanfiguren.

Sehr interessant für Literaturfans und wenn man fast wie nebenbei etwas über die Zeit erfahren möchte. Streckenweise anstrengend zu lesen, da Mann die Personen in der Sprache der Goethe-Zeit reden lässt und das an manchen Stellen sehr geschraubt wird und die Grammatik von der heute Üblichen etwas abweicht.

Sandra Matteotti says

Besuch bei Goethe

"Mit der ordinären Post von Gotha trafen an diesem Tage, morgens kurz nach 8 Uhr, drei Frauenzimmer vor dem renommierten Hause am Markte ein, denen auf den ersten Blick – und auch auf den zweiten noch – nichts Sonderliches anzumerken gewesen war."

Bei den drei Frauenzimmern handelt es sich um Charlotte Kestner samt Tochter und Zofe. Unter dem Vorwand, ihre Schwester besuchen zu wollen, ist die in die Jahre gekommene Lotte nach Weimar gereist und lässt sich im Gasthof „Zum Elephanten“ nieder. Der hauseigene Kellner kann sein Glück kaum fassen, dem Urbild von Werthers Lotte gegenüber zu stehen. Auch eine Zeichnerin buhlt um ihre Gunst. Viele weitere Besuche tragen die Aura und das Werk Goethes in Kestners Hotelzimmer, vom grossen Meister und eigentlichem Grund des Besuchs in Weimar fehlt aber bis zum 7. Kapitel jede leibliche Spur.

Im 7. Kapitel erwacht Goethe zum Leben, im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes, indem man ihn nämlich im Bett liegend und in einem Seiten langen Monolog über Tod, Teufel, Zeit und Leben nachdenkend erlebt. Von seinem Sohn erfährt er von Charlottens Ankunft, seine Reaktion ist wenig erfreut:

"Konnt' sie sich's nicht verkneifen, die Alte, und mir's nicht ersparen?"

Goethe gibt Lotte die Ehre eines Zwiegesprächs nicht, lädt sie nur zu einer grossen Tafelrunde. Das einzige persönliche Gespräch mit Goethe führt sie an einem der nächsten Abende im Traum auf dem Rückweg von einem (immerhin von Goethe gesponserten) Theaterbesuch. Dieses Gespräch ist ein Spiel der Verwandlungen, eine Mischung von Realität und Traum, von Gegenwart und Vergangenheit. Es zitiert dabei fleissig aus dem Divan. Durch dieses Gespräch erhält Lotte die Hoffnung auf ein Wiedersehen im Jenseits und findet sich beim Erwachen wieder vor dem „Elephanten“. Die Geschichte schliesst ihren Kreis.

Thomas Mann zeigt in diesem sehr amüsanten, an ein Schauspiel erinnernden Werk seine grosse Kenntnis und tiefe Liebe zu Goethe und seinem Werk. Er lässt Goethe in dessen eigener Sprache sprechen, verweist auf die diversen Werke des grossen Dichters, zitiert daraus und lässt ihn so durch die Zitate und Worte über ihn lebendig werden.

Lotte in Weimar thematisiert wie die meisten von Thomas Manns Werken das Spannungsverhältnis von Kunst und Leben, macht das Erzählen durch Goethes eigenen Erzählungen zum Thema. Neben einer Darstellung Goethes spiegelt sich Thomas Mann in der Figur des Goethe auch selber, indem er autobiographische Momente einfliessen lässt, seinen eigenen Schreibprozess thematisiert. Thomas Mann schreibt dazu selber an Ferdinand Lion:

"[ich] geniesse die Intimität, um nicht zu sagen: die unio-mystica, unbeschreiblich."

Fazit:

Eines von Thomas Manns leichtesten, humorvollsten Werken, das trotz der Leichtigkeit nicht die künstlerische Grösse und das fundierte Wissen der dargestellten Inhalte vermissen lässt. Eines meiner Lieblingsbücher von Thomas Mann.

Paula Ferreira Pinto says

Muito surpreendida, não com a qualidade dado que outra coisa não esperava de Mann, mas sim com o gosto com que fui progredindo na leitura, por vezes de forma quase compulsiva.

Na verdade, a leitura deste livro serviu para verificar se empreender uma viagem mais ambiciosa nas obras deste autor seria aventura para esta leitora. Confesso que não cria que me fosse entusiasmar com o género e, portanto, pareceu-me sensato atestar com recurso a um livro de dimensão mais modesta do que os colossos que todos sabemos identificar.

E, para meu grande espanto, não deixando de admitir que o estilo não é aquele que mais me fascina, não é que não só gostei, como gostei muito e que fiquei com vontade de me afoitar nuns Buddenbrook ou numa Montanha Mágica?!

Nada como não nos deixarmos dominar por preconceitos cuja origem nem sabemos bem identificar.

Mattatja says

this isn't a novel; half comedic Lustspiel, half platonic dialogue, this is Mann's study on Goethe, his person, his work and his artistry (and to some extent on Mann himself and his self-conception). The level of detail in this is honestly awe-inspiring but, even though it is filled with lots of typical Mann tongue-in-cheek humour, I would bestow it with the predicate 'interesting' rather than 'entertaining' (which isn't necessarily a bad thing). The predominant non-fictional reflections are really thought-provoking but in turn the few fictional/novelistic elements don't always work, imo.

Scott Robinson says

Only a novelist as self-possessed as Mann could adequately tackle the monumental subject of Goethe. Indeed it seems that, with a work as unique in style as this, Mann was attempting to make yet another stride toward the same vast stylistic breadth as Goethe's own oeuvre of verse.

The premise is so simple, yet the philosophic scope so wide and rich. Whether such a reunion between Goethe and the inspiration for his *The Sorrows of Young Werther* ever occurred or not, the reader will insist: "This is how it must have been! It had to have been...!" Mann would have us believe it was the poet's final fated retribution.

Steve Gordon says

"There it is, the faith of our youth; we never, at bottom, relinquish it; never, however old we grow, do we tire of reconfirming its truth, of reassuring ourselves that we are still the same, that growing old is but a physical, outward phenomenon and naught can avail to alter that innermost, foolish self of ours which we have carried about so long."

If you are a big Werther fan, then this will delight you. I enjoyed the straight forward storytelling of Lotte's arrival more than Goethe's stream of consciousness in the middling part - even if Goethe's ideas were a bit more interesting.

William Dearth says

This is a very special book. If you are an admirer of both Thomas Mann and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, arguably the greatest literary giant in German history, you will capture rare insight of both men.

The only problem with the book is that as a prerequisite, one certainly must be familiar with Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther" for this book to really be appreciated. Mann's conception and writing is first rate as always. One could probably enjoy reading this without knowledge of Werther, but much will be missed. And anyway, "The Sorrows of Young Werther" is a short book that can be read in a day or two and will add so much enjoyment to "Lotte in Weimar".

