

THE  
NEW  
SORROW  
IS  
LESS  
THAN  
THE  
OLD  
SORROW

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Black  
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Press

## TIMELINE (NOTES):

1772: Goethe at Wetzlar meets, falls in love with engaged Charlotte Buff, and in his despair considers suicide; concurrent suicide of Jerusalem, a man in love with a married woman.

1774: Publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, an epistolary novel about a young man who commits suicide over his despair at being in love with an engaged woman (Lotte).

Thereafter: “Werther-Fieber” (Werther-Fever) takes Germany by storm; Sturm und Drang, a literary movement that countered the rational empiricism of the Enlightenment takes hold; literary superstardom for Goethe; spin-offs; alternative endings; commercialism of Werther (i.e. Eau de Werther and other products) and so on. Goethe becomes frustrated by so much attention on one specific early piece. Later, he comes to turn away from his early work and, with Schiller, promotes Weimar Classicism.

## TIMELINE (AUTOBIOGRAPHY):

1997–1999: A few post-collegiate years in Munich. Working as au pair, cleaning apartments for extra money. Reading *The Sorrows of*

*Young Werther* for the first time, every time. Falling in love with a flesh-and-blood young man in a foreign language, another country.

Thereafter: Leaving, continuing, leaving, returning. Leaving.

## NOTES:

he (Werther) spoke to his own limbs and chose to cast off a subject of disabled nearness. couldn't embrace her, as if, peering through water, he had jimmed himself into a preoccupation cage. I told you to read the last parts. has changed nothing. still I turn the next blank page. an imploded wave, those copycat suicides. a little ruby on white pillows. here I have had a little too much drink. here I have him saved. the only way to hold is as to break.

this eye is a lackey and very blue. Goethe in old age, running away from the dreary gray book. the other writer who tricked the story and filled the pistol with chicken blood. so that Werther might live. in old age, Goethe despised his own emotion. this wound is rub-salt, very full of noise. someone, somewhere, worships at a shrine. memory is full of embarrassment and embarrassment. young G., apprenticed to the law, in love with C.B., Charlotte Buff, one version of nude. she is a story conflated with one story, her love for Kestner. no surprise for outcome.

*many, many times* I answer to the succinct question *how often have you?* the rational subjectively. of all lungs that inhale antecedent. a number of options loiter on counters. sweet, time-bruised plums. not decisions but placeholders. if enough, is not enough, written-out fog, carefully plucked. yes. plucked fog. I dare you. throw water against your heart as if that dragnet of emotions were a cliff. then master it.

take care, body. weight cast with value is composed of those who envy weight and those who could despise it. Goethe may need assurances, more light, the science of colors. how the visitors come but have only read the one text, written at the age of twenty-four. to be known. passion-trigger-passion. someone, somewhere, worships in a grotto at a shrine to suicide. the pain of. the remittance of. love. which is not to say it was not *smiled upon*. Charlotte Buff, you rue the day. a man named Jerusalem takes his own life. he is a *true-life example* of danger. eating a tongue swallowing a heart. undefeated, he couldn't quite attempt, but did G. ever contemplate. *ever* not a question but an answer.

Werther is the take-up, the glint-black weapon in this illumination, when I closed you. saying *near enough* or something like yellow margarine smeared across kernels of toast, the victorious whole grains. very rational to ingest, also, a decision. the necessity of counterparts. like opening up a velvet case to stare at ghosts. temples. expediency. all right. one ought to dip one's hand in the water, grasping not mere stones, the trinkets of current. nor baubles cast off from shores with flighty motions. rather, the real *stuff*. every discernable tangent. but still, not to be so ruled, solely, this red map.

eat arsenic. get a black tongue. pistol equals dime-sized ruby. a  
keen love that hurts and breaks bones. you just get all crushed  
feeling. noose-neck chafe, frigid river chilling still the bones.  
youth is a very unrequited eyesore. *I able it* the text belies the  
later, older man. *once I was so wounded I made a fresh wound.* in  
old age Goethe could not stomach this purgative and slightly  
rued the day. no one comes to talk to him about *Elective  
Affinities*. *I able love in a parlor that must not be returned.* of  
course, that was a very different book. people gave in.

could bend ankles away from incongruous places. that is, or, that is not. a lark really, *or a sparrow*, to place those fingers *so*, just *so* on the lacy graveclothes. if you insist upon this route, you will lose the house of staircases. but deeply. come. taste. these slowly sloping cadences of stone. saved, rescued, rejuvenated, resuscitated. in another place, ending at the not-end. please. walk through short hallways. imitate the clamor of doors opening swiftly.

everybody *once*.

# Autobiography

## LIST OF FOREIGN WORDS (in order of appearance):

<i>bitte Fenster putzen:</i>	clean the windows, please
<i>die Bäckerei:</i>	the bakery
<i>Tabak:</i>	tobacco
<i>Stimme:</i>	voice
<i>alte Dame:</i>	old lady
<i>moya dryzuuya, kak tebya:</i>	my friend, how are you
DMs:	Deutschmarks
<i>nyet kracuuvuuya:</i>	not beautiful
<i>lieben:</i>	to love
<i>Kastanienbäume:</i>	chestnut trees
<i>das Treppenhaus:</i>	the inner stairwell (as in an apartment house)
<i>Liebe:</i>	love

*excuse moi, Monsieur, je ne parl paux ... parlez vous?*

excuse me, Sir, I don't speak ... do you speak?

<i>bunte:</i>	colorful
<i>ich komme:</i>	I am coming
<i>Schirre:</i>	scissors
<i>braun-äugig:</i>	brown-eyed
<i>zurück:</i>	back (the preposition, not the noun)
<i>Alltag:</i>	everyday
<i>Semmeln ...</i>	breakfast rolls ...