HERMANN HESSE:

THE PROPHET OF A GENERATION

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INTRODUCTION

Youth, in all generations, though perhaps in some more than in others, constantly seem to be seeking the solution to a universal enigma: the realization of freedom, peace, and union with one's Self through the process of becoming (das Werden) and eventually being (das Sein). Thus it seems almost inevitable that the present young generation of seekers is beckoned to the writings of a man whose mind and soul seem to be in complete accord with its own—a man who seems to have put into words the exact thoughts and emotions which it is struggling to express—a man like Hermann Hesse. Youth is faced with the problem of a world filled with irreconcilable dichotomies: society versus nature; spirit versus materialism; innocence versus decadence. It has always been characteristic of the young to rebel against the weight of tradition, now called the establishment, and revolt against authority. However, the youth of today, (more than one-half the population of the United States has been born since the end of W.W. II) have rejected more vehemently than ever before the beliefs, prejudices, and pathies of the preceding generation and is evolving its own values. To find a reconciliation of opposites, to discover an absolute behind the polarity in man's nature, is the longing that runs through all of Hesse's works. Hermann Hesse, his works, and his life-style, seem to have provided a great deal of the influence needed to back up such a rebellion: "Not only does he endorse youth's
own particular conflicts, but also he leads them through the discovery of themselves and back into the midst of a newly structured life in which they derive their own identities, create their own universe and establish its order." To the young, who very much wish to know and yet cannot accept knowledge on authority, the writings of Hermann Hesse speak with a voice instantly recognizable and persuasive. Not only is the central concern of his career the same as theirs, but also the plots and themes of his novels are precisely those in favor today. Few of his writings fail to express antipathy towards bourgeois materialism, to strike out against the falseness of prosperity, to reject conventional morality and traditional religious beliefs. The religious attitudes of today's youth group are, like Hesse's, part of the cult of self-discovery; one finds reality not in exterior things, but in one's self. To Hesse, the self is the end and essence of living and man is the measure of all things. Hesse was not an orthodox Christian; he did not believe he could be saved by belief in a god outside himself. He was a Gnostic; he believed he could be saved by experience of a god within himself. Thus youth finds itself, as did Hesse, alienated from the mainstream of society. It is apparent that the present generation, devoted to the search for itself, has become self-conscious, self-modeling and self-breeding. While searching for a means of expanding and intensifying life, it has, like Hesse, made itself vulnerable to the entrance and influence of mysticism. Hesse believed that through meditation it is possible to perceive the unity of all existence, and thereby learn to love and admire the world.
Hesse has said that "the true profession of man is to find his way to himself." Such phrases seem to speak the "soul language" of the young. The first group to take Hesse to heart was the Wander-vögel, a youth movement during Germany's 1920's. While hiking and camping together, they read Hesse's idyls out loud to one another and discovered truth in what they heard. Next, the underground Nazi German generation identified with Hesse's Steppenwolf, a romance bringing to life the chaos they felt in being caught between two ages. Then the pseudo-Zen beatniks from American culture resurrected Hesse's Siddhartha and acclaimed it as their own personal creed. Finally, the hippies and those just on the border between conformity and indi- vention have made Hesse's novels sources of authority for dropping out of society: "College students rank him in the pantheon of literary gurus. In hippie novels, those of his novels already available in English--Der Steppenwolf, Siddhartha, Demian, The Journey to the East, Das Glasperlenspiel, Narziß und Goldmund--are all family bibles."3 Not far from the Berkeley campus, a favorite hangout is a coffee house called "Steppenwolf," so named, according to its original owner, Max Scherr, because that novel symbolizes the loneliness of the intell- ectual. A popular rock group also holds the same name out of identi- fication with the spirit of Hesse's novel. At Harvard, where Hesse's books sell better than most of his contemporaries, one student said, "reading him is a gut, emotional experience." Another source added: "Well, he was the first hippie, wasn't he?" Hesse, as his fans boast, is the writer students most want to read when they are not reading
writers they have to read.

In Hesse, youth see themselves unrestrained by parental authority, feel pulled between thinking and feeling and, like Hesse's heroes, break out and grow into new beings. Their primary state is one of becoming—through meditating, cross-examining God, experimenting with the forbidden, daring death, testing crime and sin. Hesse raised all the most relevant questions. The zeal and fire with which he asked the questions made him a symbol for sidafected young people who feel that salvation lies within themselves. Another thing which seems to attract the young to Hesse is his preoccupation with Eastern mysticism and his soul-racked characters (most of them autobiographical) who suffer from that common malady of youth: the identity crisis. He had set out to penetrate the innermost thoughts of youth and he would not have come much closer to such a goal. Indeed, Hesse's fiction glorifies the attempt at becoming a full human being and the search of modern civilized man for a purpose in harmony with his nature.

As it is common for every age to discover in some former age an exalted image of itself, present-day youth have discovered Hermann Hesse. Thousands of students have enthusiastically adopted this rather chilly, but sensitive novelist who was renowned in Europe for thirty years before he won the Nobel Prize in 1946. During all those years he was virtually unknown in the United States. The development of his fame did not take place until the end of almost three decades of neglect; Hesse's works first appeared in America in a period in which
German literature, after having been exceptionally well-received in the initial decade of the century, was entering upon a fifteen-year period of almost total disfavor. However, by the time his works finally began to reach our bookstores, the problems of the 1920's had been replaced by those of a different nature. The prejudices resulting from W.W. II affected the fate of all German authors, not only Hesse. Another obstacle in the slow development of Hesse's popularity in America was apparently due to the quality of his first translators. One needs only read Hesse in English to realize that he was not well served by them in the early translations of his novels.

This fact seems strange considering that Hesse, compared to the complexities of Mann, Hilke and Kafka, wrote in a relatively simple and traditional style and should not present much difficulty. But perhaps this matter of poor translation serves as an explanation of why no edition of his shorter prose works in translation was published sooner. If such an edition had appeared, it would have done much toward exposing Hesse to the American public. Hesse himself, however, actually did not encourage such an introduction, since he felt that judicious American editors would indiscrepantly omit any controversial material. This, Hesse felt, would tend to distort his ideas or present them inaccurately—a valid point since he has frequently been misinterpreted.

However, one of the most important reasons for Hesse being overlooked as long as he was lies within his particular style of writing. He once said: "I know that I am not a storyteller." Indeed one can
see from his writings, especially the later ones, that plot development was often sacrificed for a more didactic form of writing. His themes of self-realization, inner soul contemplation, and the uniting of the spirit with reason—-together with the melancholy, meditative character of his heroes—were not to the tastes of American readers of the Jazz Age, the Great Depression or the war years.

Hesse's American revival began in 1957. Apparently both the popular and academic markets were affected simultaneously. Since then, more than forty articles have been published on Hesse, in both scholarly and general periodicals. A sharp increase in the quantity of his works published has also taken place. Whereas almost no interest had accompanied the first English editions of his works, the reissuance of the same some twenty years later was greeted with sudden enthusiasm. By 1968 almost all of his principal writings were in print, some with new translations and forewords.

It is difficult to determine exactly what it is in Hesse which suddenly drew so many readers to him. His universal appeal, not unlike that which was exerted by a number of popular novelists of the first part of the century, does little to explain the resurgence of interest during the past decade in America. Determining the reasons for such an unexpected mass response of youth to Hesse's life and novels can perhaps best be accomplished by recalling the more important events in his life and reviewing in depth a few of his most popular works. It is toward this goal that this paper is directed.
Hermann Hesse, one of the foremost contemporary German novelists, was born in 1877 in Calw, a small town in the northern part of the Black Forest. This area later served as the setting of many of his novels. His father, Johannes Hesse, was born in 1847 as the son of a doctor. His mother, Maria Gendert, was the daughter of a missionary in India. The Gunderts were of Swabian descent (part Welsh, part Swiss) while the Hesse family was Baltic German. A common involvement in missionary work drew the two families together. Hesse was influenced greatly by both of his grandfathers although he never actually knew his paternal grandfather. Both men, however, left Hesse with such strong impressions that their influence can be seen in his later writing.

Hesse said concerning his father: "He stood alone . . . a little apart, a suffering man and a seeker, learned and kind-hearted . . . he was always a good and wise man. My father was the model that, full of admiration and zeal, I sought to imitate." Maria Gundert-Hesse was small and lively, of a temperament probably inherited from her French mother. Hermann spoke of her: "She was full of music - quite unlike my father, who could not sing at all." She had six children, two of whom died in infancy. The family atmosphere in which the remaining children grew up was rich in security although basically simple. Hesse described his upbringing: "It was our grandfather's
gentle wisdom, our mother’s inexhaustible imagination and love, and our father’s sensitive conscience and his familiarity with suffering, that educated us. Many different worlds had their influence on the Hesse household: the family prayed, studied, read the Bible, researched Indian philology. Buddha and Lao Tse were frequently heard names. Guests from distant places often visited the family and contributed to the view of the world which young Hermann acquired. German romanticism and Oriental mysticism met in the Hesse household and merged in the boy’s imagination.

At the age of four, Hesse’s home was moved to Basle on the Rhine. His father had been invited to Basle to edit a missionary magazine and to teach German and literature. From 1881 till 1886 young Hesse lived in a country setting. Here he learned to appreciate nature firsthand and developed a strong love of the outdoors. Even as a boy, the poet developed violent conflicts in his personality which he later revealed in his writings. Hesse was so full of energy and spirit that he created problems for his parents. He played truant from school and his father considered putting him in a corrective school or somewhere away from home, fearing that his son’s home environment was not sufficient for a child they already thought to be gifted. When Johannes Hesse returned to Calw to rejoin a publishing house, Hesse attended the town’s preparatory school from 1886-1890. From there he was sent to the Goppingen Grammar School, partly for disciplinary reasons and partly to get ready to take the Landexamen. His later writings are so filled with impressions from his childhood years and surroundings
that one can be sure of the tremendous importance they had to him in his appreciation and love for his Heimatland. However, school was a different story entirely. In fact, it was a tragedy. Hesse regarded school and teachers as enemies until he came under the influence of a Mr. Schmid, his Greek teacher, whom he simultaneously respected and feared. He was fascinated by Greek, and had already begun earlier to compose rhymes in both German and Latin. He stated: "From the age of thirteen onwards I knew I was going to be either a writer or nothing." Religion and poetry were his earliest passions and poetry prevailed. In 1891, he successfully completed the Landexamen, an accomplishment which made his parents happy. This entitled him to a free place in a theological school. Hesse continued his studies on a scholarship at the Maulbronn Seminary. Here he remained only six months, eventually running away as the result of a deep spiritual conflict. From all appearances Hesse had been very happy and satisfied with life at Maulbronn although he had little free time. However, after his running away, depression and feelings of isolation began to dominate him so strongly that his father called him home. What sensitive youth of today experiencing life at a high university would not be able to identify with such feelings? Thus began a period of terrible psychological turmoil. He suffered a series of minor nervous breakdowns and then, in 1892, was handed over to a family friend and theologian, Christoph Blumhardt, to see if he could help. This experiment ended not only in failure but also in a suicide attempt by Hesse. Blumhardt gave up and Hesse returned home. Hesse's next
academic sojourn was in a school called Stetten near Stuttgart. He appeared to be growing psychologically stronger, but it was still clear that he had not yet mastered his worried concerning God and the world. Upon leaving Stetten after five months, he first spent a few miserable weeks at a school at home in Basle, and then finally fulfilled his wish to attend a Gymnasium. He became a pupil at Bad Cannstadt but soon began to run up bills at local bars. In October, 1893, Hesse became an apprentice at the Mayer Bookshop in Esslingen. He left after only three days and returned home for a few months. He next tried a position as an apprentice mechanic in a clockmaking business. During this period he started extensively and studying literature and began to regain his mental health. He never regretted the fourteen months he spent in practical mechanics, but he now resolved to take up the profession of bookseller, a decision with which his parents agreed.

Hesse moved to Tubingen in October, 1895, to be trained in publishing and secondhand bookselling. He enjoyed the work, although it was exhausting. He began the process of self-education through private study in the evenings. Now and then he was invited to student parties and meetings, but remained an outsider and withdrew into his own world. In 1898 he was promoted to bookseller's assistant, even though he deplored the "world of commerce" as inferior and self-degrading. In August, 1899, he concluded his work in Tubingen and again returned to Basle to work as an assistant in a bookshop. Through parental connections he began to associate with some
influencial families of Basel society. Thus having established contacts with cultural circles, he began to relate to reality. He was turned down for military service in 1913 due to serious near-sightedness. He traveled throughout Switzerland and in 1901 went to Italy—a country he enjoyed immensely. His ability and confidence as a writer was steadily growing. During the next fifteen years he achieved some small reputation as a man who had little to say but said it exquisitely. To devote more time to writing, he resigned from his job in Basle and joined the staff of an antiquarian bookshop. The salary he received was hardly enough to get by on and so he accepted an offer of the post of assistant in Leipzig's Museum of Book Production in 1902. He had several collections of poems published—one of which was dedicated to his mother. However, she died before their publication.

To Hesse's surprise he received a request from a publisher to submit work to him. Hesse agreed to send whatever he might be able to produce but promised no regular submissions. Peter Camenzind, the first prose composition he sent, was published and won Hesse immediate recognition. So began Hesse's reputation as a great writer.

In April, 1903, Hesse returned to Italy for a second time. He happened to travel with Maria Bernoulli and was inspired to ask her hand in marriage. They were married in 1914 and Hesse pursued a full-time literary career. They lead a simple, natural, country life, living in a farmhouse in the village of Gaienhofen on the Bodensee. It was not long before it became apparent even in his writings that
this comfortable and secure life made him uneasy. He wondered if he was really happy and felt there was still more he wanted. A first child, Bruno, was born in 1905, during the three years the young couple spent in the farmhouse. Hesse and his wife then decided to move and to build a house of their own at a soft some distance from the village. Hesse's fellow writers began to visit him and added to an increasing number of friends and acquaintances. His fame and success flew quickly in these years at Gaienhofen, being awarded several honors and prizes for his work. For financial reasons he was forced to submit more and more material to papers and journals. He became involved as joint editor of the journal, März, and was actively engaged as a literary critic. He regularly visited northern Italy in the spring of every year and poor health forced him to visit health resorts frequently. In the summer he loved to ski in the Swiss Alps with his wife. He often traveled for the purpose of giving public readings, although he disliked doing so. The volume of work with which he had to contend depressed him physically and spiritually. Hesse gradually became more and more convinced that his life in Gaienhofen was not to his liking; even his wife and three sons offered no consolation.

In 1905 Hesse decided on a trip to India. Since it had been his mother's homeland and the country in which his father and grandfather had worked, India held much significance for him. In Hesse's childhood, his grandfather and the world of Indian wisdom he represented gave him a conception of the idea of the mind in life. He had learned that the mind is wholly apart from life. Confronted with the mind,
life and the individual lose their importance; they become an illu-
sion. This was the influence of the teachings of Eastern (Indian
and Chinese) philosophy and literature in Hesse's life. The Asiatic
way of life made a great impression on him, however they did not lead
him to the inner liberation or spiritual realization that he was striv-
ing for. By this time Hesse's marriage was in serious trouble, never-
thless a move from Gaienhofen to Berne, Switzerland was planned as
a kind of compromise. During this time he wrote Drei Geschichten aus
dem Leben Knulps, a story about a misfit who cannot settle down into
a conventional, well-ordered, social life and is forced to lonely
wander from place to place. It sums up Hesse's own turmoil over the
bourgeois world of commerce and the perhaps purposeless life of the
artist.

World War I was now imminent. Although living in Switzerland,
Hesse volunteered but was rejected for service in the German army.
He was later assigned to the Prisoners of War Welfare Organization
in Berne. A great change came over him after the outbreak of W.W.I:
"All illusions, all cherished ideals in regard to modern civilization
and culture were shattered." He realized how insecure the foundations
were upon which the world had built the future. Before the war he had
kept his problems and ideas to himself, but with the outbreak of
the war he assumed an aggressively critical attitude. His mood led
him to a conscious opposition to modern mechanical civilization—a
bitter pessimism which strikes a note of accord to our generation
of war protesting, flag-burning youth. Hesse spoke their sentiments
exactly when he raised his voice against the spread of nationalism. This depiction of revolt against authority offers a good deal with which to identify. He was one of the few intellects who did not support the German Kaiser. Hesse bitterly opposed the madness taking place and wrote many articles pleading for love of one's fellow man, for justice and virtue. He was called a "traitor" and "wretch"--terms which hurt him deeply: "For Hesse the war meant not only the destruction of his freedom and independence. Rather is proved to be the great moral crisis! that forced him to justify anew his entire thinking and his entire work."* He never ceased his tireless efforts in working for the prisoners of war. He tried to provide them with books and even edited an anonymous paper. Not only the stress of the war, but also problems in his personal life upset him tremendously. His oldest son was dangerously ill, his father died, and his wife had to spend some time in a mental home. It was at this time that he himself was forced to undergo psychoanalysis. These sessions, with the help of Dr. Josef Lang, were successful in opening up new channels for Hesse in his development as a man and poet. At the same time he finished treatments, the war ended. From this period of upheaval in his life came Blick ins Chaos, Zarathustras Wiederkehr and Demian. The latter book especially is one with which so many modern young people identify.
Demian

In **Demian** Hesse says: "The life of every man is a way to himself, an attempt at a way, the suggestion of a path. No man has ever been utterly himself, yet every man strives to be so..."\(^{10}\)

The characters of **Demian** are motivated by the vision of a new world in which traditional concepts of good and evil will have been renounced. Demian and his friends look forward to a rebirth of humanity. In **Demian** we can see the longings, dissatisfaction, and mental struggles of the author when he was young. The terrors of the discipline his father imposed on him are apparent. **Demian** is the story of Emil Sinclair's youth. Because of his frequent rebelliousness, Hesse, like his hero Emil Sinclair, was thrust into loneliness. The novel describes how at first good and evil oppose each other in the youth but at last are reconciled in the self the hero becomes. Sinclair describes how his conventional middle-class boyhood fell apart when he told a boastful lie and left himself open to blackmail and humiliation by an evil boy, Kromer. But he is unexpectedly rescued by Max Demian, an older boy who lives mysteriously with his widowed mother. Sinclair first notices Demian when he takes Cain's side in a Biblical discussion. Demian later explains to Sinclair that "those who wear the sign of Cain are a chosen band. We represent the will of Nature to something new, to the individualization of the future."\(^{19}\)

**Demian** ends with the World War marking an end to the old, and a new beginning. Salvation, in a word, is the theme of **Demian**. The story
of this German youth is a work intensely involved with a particular generation at a particular time. Indeed Demian had a great appeal to disillusioned postwar German youth. Hesse's story of a young man's struggle for identity electrified a generation looking for a way out of a moral and political disaster. Demian is closely connected to the fate of the war and of Europe. It touched the nerve of the time with uncanny precision. The book typified the torn German soul. As one student put it: "He (Hesse) writes about people trying to maintain individuality in a society which forces conformity."12 Today's young people can see themselves as Sinclair in revolt against the father image, forced into a mold, subjected to conformity, and having their spirit and intelligence crushed.
1919-1923

Even at the time of the publication of *Demian*, Hesse's life had begun to fall apart. He left his home in Berne with his wife still in a mental institution and his children boarded with friends. He found himself alone and isolated and so he packed up and looked for a place to begin again. He found Ticino in southern Switzerland and from there, Montagnola, a small village into which he moved in May, 1919. Here he did, indeed, become a new man. He worked harder at this time than at any other. He produced not only writings (*Klein und Wagner* and *Klingsohr*) but also pointings. Painting afforded him pleasure and relaxation for the rest of his life. He also became involved with the publication of a journal whose object was to assist in the creation of a new Germany and a new way of life. This gave him an opportunity to express his feelings toward the new form of nationalism developing in the young Germans: their vile abuse of the Jews. Since W.W. I Hesse has been addressing himself above all to German youth, attempting to warn them against false pathos and romanticism. His pre-war attitudes were changing. He felt worthless, worn out and shabby. He abjectly sustained a living. Few friends came to Montagnola. In the winter of 1919, Hesse began writing *Siddhartha*. 
Siddhartha was formulated from the knowledge Hesse gained from experiences in India. He was unable to work on his novel for long periods of time until he recollected more completely the life of asceticism and meditation. During the years when he was actively but intermittently occupied with writing Siddhartha—from 1919 to 1922—he turned to Indian philosophy on at least one crucial occasion: after he had reached the point where Siddhartha rejects suicide, Hesse was unable to go on with the book; only after he had occupied himself with painting and a renewed study of the Indian pantheon was he able to affirm Siddhartha’s salvation. In 1920 he wrote:


This book is a second example of youth’s attraction to Hesse. Much of the current appeal of Hesse can be attributed to the present popularity of Oriental mysticism. Hesse found himself drawn to the mythical world of India “with its cosmic cycles of man’s birth, death and rebirth, its vision of unity and timelessness within the continuous flux of time.” 13 His interest in Indian ideas was based upon
close acquaintance with a number of basic works of Indian philosophy in German translation. Within the book are a number of obvious references to Indian philosophy. Hesse used Hindu terms and names with their traditional meanings—Om, Samsara, Nirvana, Maya, and Kreshna. The name Siddhartha itself, one of the epithets for Buddha, is derived from Siddha which means one who has attained perfection.

Govinda, literally meaning protector of cows, was the name of the teacher of Sankarachara (Sankara), Vasudeva was the father of Krishna, and Kamala and Kamaswami were both apparently derived from the word kama, meaning desire.

The novel describes the path taken by Siddhartha, the son of an aristocratic Brahmin family, as he seeks to solve the most basic problem: how can man, in spite of numerous difficulties, find his way to Ultimate Happiness? Siddhartha leaves home to escape the tangled ethics of duty, works, practicality, and the honoring of his father's wishes. He joins a quietist sect and becomes a Samana. The conventional religion of Siddhartha's father conflicted with Siddhartha's search for Atman within himself. The wisdom of the Brahmins was insufficient. Thus he threw off the bondage of relatives to devote his life to finding himself. Hesse, too, rebelled against the pietistic orthodoxy of his parents and the strict school system in Germany that destroyed any attempt of independence in its pupils. So he ran away to shape his own life. However Hesse's character, Siddhartha, finds that as an ascetic he fails to discover the knowledge
he is seeking and so, leaves the Samansa. His friend, Govinda, follows the Illustrious One, Gotama Buddha, but Siddhartha finds no answer in Buddha's teachings. Siddhartha continues on his way through the world of the senses. From the extreme of asceticism he crosses the river to the extreme of worldliness. But he finds that embracing objects of the senses is no better than rejecting them. Neither brings him any closer to reality. His feeling of indifference to the material world changes to one of repulsion. His success in business only disgusts him, but he had to experience this world before he could really understand its futility. Again he crosses the river. He awakens from his despair to a new life with Vausdeva, the ferryman. He begins to learn the mystery of the river and the true meaning of permanence, despite change, and at the same time, unity within eternal change. Becoming a ferryman who carries people across the boundary between illusion and reality, Siddhartha's only goal is the service and welfare of others. Through the river he purges himself of all possessiveness, desire and attachment. Siddhartha wants true knowledge, meaning knowledge of the Self. Having found the teachings of others to be useless, Siddhartha turns to his own Self as teacher. To find it he must cross to the sensory side of the river first. After long and disappointing experiences he comes to realize that desire clouds knowledge of Self and so he revolts against this world of illusion and false reality. The end of the search comes after he considers suicide. Bitter and empty, Siddhartha returns to the river and almost
drowns himself, but the recollection of the word "OM" recalls him to life. He is now on the path of knowledge for certain—through suffering, he has learned. The attainment of wisdom, which is his goal, is closely associated with the river. The river is the most compelling symbol of change and persistence as the oneness of all things. As a ferryman on the river he gradually gains the ultimate vision of cosmic unity, of the interconnection, blending, and identity of all things. The river symbolizes the all-encompassing flood of Reality. From it he learns that all things are a part of the One, and that all things are simultaneous. Siddhartha finally finds the freedom, peace, and union with the Ultimate that he has sought throughout his life. To the question, "Who am I?" Siddhartha says: "you must look only within your innermost self, but you will find an answer only in the midst of life." To many young people this is precisely the answer fashioned by their own call and their desire for personal authenticity. This theme of self education has inspired many youths longing for independence to strike out on their own as Siddhartha did. For those young people who heed this call, who seek their selves, (many of whom are recognized as today's hippies) the word of Hesse's novels is passed from mouth to ear. Siddhartha has become one of their guides, their expression, their pleasure. Any seeker of self who has looked into Zen or Oriental mysticism is likely to have read it. Hesse's message that man must somehow succeed in serving humanity, despite the world's seeming indifference, sounds very attractive to many youngsters
who are not struggling with the "unreality of their lives." They see themselves also as "the eternal outsider, the seeker for life's fundamental meaning."
Hesse's marriage was officially dissolved in 1923, the same year in which he assumed Swiss citizenship. He spent one year studying and giving readings and then surprisingly, married Ruth Wenger in January, 1924. He knew even then that he was not well-suited for marriage, a fact that became evident from another divorce in 1927. He spent his winters in Zurich, his summers near Berne with friends and upon the advice of doctors annually visited Baden-Baden, the health resort, in late autumn. His life-style alternated between two poles which he struggled to unite: reality and ideal, reality and beauty. Towards the end of Siddhartha he wrote: "It may be important to great thinkers to examine the world, to explain and despise it. But I think it is only important to love the world, not to despise it, not for us to hate each other, but to be able to regard the world and ourselves and all beings with love, admiration and respect." Following Siddhartha, however, a new mood came over him. His very existence, his environment and work began disgusting him. He found the satisfied, bourgeois world intolerable. It was this mood that he wrote Der Steppenwolf, the story of Harry Haller's crisis and revolt, a searing appraisal of Western civilization. Hesse had reached another stage in life. His spirit became tired of itself, retreated before chaos and the animal in man.
Der Steppenwolf

Der Steppenwolf has been called a "diary of introspection and nightmare." Harry Haller, an obviously autobiographical figure, rises in revolt against the neurosis of a whole generation, the sickness of the age to which both Haller and Hesse belong. This rejection of twentieth-century civilization was a culmination of Hesse's attitudes toward the moral depravity, intellectual mediocrity, superficial comfort, conventionality, and foolish optimism. He felt the individual had been forgotten in a world of materialism, a world in which science had become a religion and man had lost his soul to money and machines with no appreciation of beauty or artistic creation. The middle-class or bourgeois represented all that he hated. It was, Hesse, felt, the sincere seekers of truth and meaning in life that were the misfits and outcasts of society. Such an outsider was Hesse's Harry Haller. Haller speaks almost entirely in behalf of his creator.

"The Steppenwolf, Harry Haller, is to be understood as a product of the modern bourgeois society. Even worse, with all his yearning for the bourgeois life and in spite of his lone wolf traits, he is actually used to fortify the world of the bourgeois. In this way he always recognized and affirmed with one half of his nature and behavior that which his other half fought against and denied." Der Steppenwolf is the story of the struggle between a sensitive,
mature individual and a vulgar, brutalized society. Harry Haller suffers the Weltenschmerz of living in a disturbed period when two cultures, two historical eras, overlap. He is dismayed by political egoism, brutal militarism, and commercialized art. Harry Haller is a highly individual personality. Haller the artist realizes that an unbridgeable chasm exists in him, a gap between the "wolf of the steppe" and the domesticated civilized being. His crisis, as he rises in revolt against the society in which he is a member, leads him to the verge of suicide due to "guilt feelings that comes of individuation." He is a soul torn by conflicts and contradictions which threaten to destroy him. Harry turns away from human society and lives a solitary, hungry life. As the novel begins, taking place in the early twenties, Haller is a forty-seven year old only intellectual. Thus, as a background he has lived through the turn of the century, experienced the Great War, and watched the collapse of everything meaningful to him. The Steppenwolf, as we learn in Hesse's introduction to the novel, was "brought up by devoted but severe and very pious parents and teachers in accordance with that doctrine that makes the breaking of the will the cornerstone of education and upbringing." Every frustrated youth in America can perhaps feel the truth of that observation. Once the Steppenwolf had been an eminent writer and thinker, the father of a family, the center of admiring friends and colleagues; now he is an idle hermit. Rebelling against Post-War society with its oppressive jazz music, wild entertainments,
world exhibitions, business, politics, and overcrowdedness, Haller is an unerring critic of modern society at its worst. "Harry rails against the things that train his mind to want the very things which prevent his development." Yet something in his rejection is ambivalent. He continually takes lodging in comfortable, clean houses, although he looks down on the false existence of his landlords. He wears expensive clothes and loves off annuities, yet condemns the evils of capitalism. He is a lover of Mozart, of poetry, of peace, a true idealist, yet there is in him also a wolf with wild, evil urges. These paradoxes are but expressions of the deep inner dichotomies of his existence: society/nature, spirit/material, innocence/deterioration and most deadly of all, wolf and man. Both poles are felt to be equally desirable. The man, according to Harry, is his civilized, rational self; the wolf is his dark, instinctual nature. And wolf and man, for Harry, are engaged in a continual conflict with no compromise possible. In the moments in which the man in him is dominant, he aspires to saintliness. When his wolf self takes over over him he leans toward the dark, anti-social world of the sinner. However, he cannot let himself go too far to either extreme, for he himself is a middle-class man. He really feels comfortable in the secure world of the bourgeois, though he disdains it. He differs from the others in his sensibility and consciousness. Therefore, he is never free of society, but only alienated from it. He attempts to live in relation to both worlds even though they pull in opposite directions.
Harry Haller can neither transcend nor identify with the bourgeois. He is forced to accept a Zen-like attitude as his only alternative. This is expressed when he says:

"The ability to live in the world as though it were not the world, to respect the law and yet to stand above it, to have possessions as though one possessed nothing, to renounce as though it were no renunciation."

This is Harry's only solution. His greatest capacity is for suffering, and his greatest desire is to make sense out of a senseless world. Harry seeks the opportunity for a full realization of himself. Because the memory of his orderly middle-class background is too strong to allow him to obey the wolf's dictates and become a criminal or a revolutionary, he can do nothing but suffer from the conflict of his two beings. In Der Steppenwolf Hesse states:

"For what I always hated and detested and cursed above all things was this contentment, this healthiness and comfort, this carefully preserved optimism of the middle classes, this fat and prosperous brood of mediocrity." Undoubtedly it is to statements such as these that today's youth react, feeling that they have found a writer who has expressed their own condition exactly. It is no wonder that Der Steppenwolf is a favorite among them. The wolf in Haller laughs at the rational bourgeois in him when he makes polite dinner conversation, snarls at such things as his approval (by his silence) of war-mongering editorials, when he fails to rip down every stupid
advertisement in the street, and when he is too cowardly to disassociate himself from the materialistic world. He is so torn apart by the frustrations of civilized living that he becomes dedicated to death. He probes the city at night, attracted and repelled by the pathos and meanness of what he sees. He is drawn to the underworld, those on the fringes of good society, yet yearns for the old solidity and honesty of the European middle-class. He escapes this fate by turning to the sensual world of a bar where he finds Hermine and is partially rejuvenated. This young woman teaches him to dance, make love, and use drugs. Just as Siddhartha had Kamala, Harry Haller has Hermine to teach him to sin. She helps him to change and enjoy some of the simple, but forbidden pleasures in life. Too many readers have misunderstood the novel, considering it to be no more than a chronicle of pleasures open to the uninhibited men and women of the jazz age. They, and perhaps the youth are most guilty of this, fail to see what Hesse was trying to demonstrate. Hesse said:

"Daß es Leser gibt, die im Steppenwolf nur Bericht über Jazzmusik und Tanzereien finden, während sie weder das magische Theater, noch den Mozart, noch die 'Unsterblichen' sehen, die den eigentlichen Inhalt des Buches bilden, ... daran bin ich unschuldig. Nehmen Sie aus den Steppenwolf das mit, was nicht nur Zeitkritik und Zeitproblematik ist: den Glauben an den Sinn: an die Unsterblichen." 2

In the "Treatise on the Wolf of the Steppes" Haller learns that the middle-class is life's great compromise; it is neither good nor evil, it is simply dull, living only for the preservation of itself.
What keeps it from dying out is just such highly developed individuals such as Harry Haller. They have one solitary means of rising above the stupidities of bourgeois life and reconciling the opposites in man: humor. From the "Treatise" Haller also learns that he has not two souls in his breast but a hundred, a thousand. His life is split many ways, "not just between two poles, instinct and spirit, or the saint and the libertine, but swings between thousands, countless, pairs of poles." He discovers the truth to this statement when he is invited by Hermine to attend a costume ball where he experiences a satirical fantasy called the "Magic Theater"—"not for everyone, only for the insane." In this theater are many doors behind each of which is something he has been seeking but which already exists in his own soul. The "Magic Theater" was a passage through the inner world, a journey inwards through hell. At the center of this was a perpetual self-discovery and self-encounter. The "Magic Theater" itself is an elaborate fantasy resembling an extended dream or hallucination induced by psychedelic drugs. (Harry must take a potion from Pablo before entering the Theater). It consists of a sequence of apparently absurd events, or "entertainments," linked by association rather than logic, centering around either Harry himself (the dreamer) or some aspect of his represented by other figures (shadows selves). For the most part the "Magic Theater" functions as a climax to the various themes so far dealt with in the novel: in the entertainment "JOLLY HUNTING," Harry sees himself in-
volved in a bloody, nonsensical revolution, in which he is as mur-
derous as those directed against him; in "MARVELOUS TAKING OF THE
STEPPEWOLF," he witnesses with disgust a performance in which a
man makes a wolf act like a human being and the wolf compels the
man to act like a beast. Each metamorphosis reveals in ironic exag-
geration Harry's psychological and spiritual troubles: his intro-
verted nature, his Germanic seriousness, and his desire for human
warmth and love. Haller goes through dark mazes of emotion, depra-
vity, and error which drive him almost to suicide. Actually, in the
theater, he must commit an illusory suicide; only then will he be
able to accept the reality that man must live in the world and there-
fore seek out values which he can respect. Men must realize that nei-
ther the world nor the individual is ever completely one-sided, there
is no evil without its accompanying goodness. Thus, as in a dream,
Harry Haller takes part in a war between men and machines: cars
run over people, pedestrians shoot at every driver, and Haller finds
this childish as he finds all war childish. This picture of modern
man lends frightening credibility to Hesse's depressing statement on
the nauseous condition of our aggressive, mechanical civilization.
At the end of the novel Haller still lives on the level of everyday
reality at which we find him in the beginning of the book, but a de-
velopment has taken place. Through his brief contact with the "Immor-
tals" in the "Magic Theater" he has gained an awareness of the eternal
realm of the spirit and has drawn consolation from its existence. Certainly he is still plagued by the requirements and anguish of life on this superficial level. But now at least he can hope and strive, whereas in his suicidal depression at the start of the novel he did not have this consolation.

"The excruciating catharsis of Steppenwolf brought an end to Hesse's period of greatest inner discord and most intense self-quest." Der Steppenwolf is Hesse's bitter struggle with modern civilization. Since the appearance of this book we find a cooler attitude in him, a more deliberate contemplation of the problem of life and an attempt to find a positive answer. Thus the philosophy of Hesse is not one of complete hopelessness even though an individual's life may be a discouraging struggle. He shows the predicament of human nature in a disjointed age—an age of cultural decline, spiritual and moral distress, and of extreme loneliness. Der Steppenwolf is the strongest indictment of his conscious opposition to this age. It contains his bitterest social pessimism.
Der Steppenwolf was published in 1927, the same year in which Hesse began work on Narcissus and Goldmund. Through a correspondence he formed a lasting friendship with Austrian art historian Ninon Dolbin, and she remained, until his death, his most understanding companion. He lived in the Casa Camuzzi until 1931, then he moved into a house built by a friend to his own design: The "Casa Hesse." It lay near the village of Montagnola and commanded a view of both the Lake of Lugano and the mountains. Many famous writers and even political fugitives spent time with Hesse at his home there. Hesse had foreseen Germany's troubles so he was hardly surprised when the Nazis assumed power. He refused to speak out publicly against the war as he had done in the previous one because he was now firmly convinced that any attempt to change the world by force was wrong: violence, for whatever purpose, would never be the right path to change. His books were never banned but German officials were suspicious of him. Many newspapers and publications attacked him as a supporter of the Jews and enemy of the Germans. However, he never stopped writing and was able to publish several books and short pieces during the Nazi era.

Many believe the high point of his creativity came with the writing of The Glass Bead Game (Das Glasperlenspiel). From 1931 to 1942 he worked on it continually. This novel, at first only able to
be published in Switzerland, had a particularly powerful and enduring effect. Immediately after the war, Hesse was flooded with visitors (mostly under twenty-five) and letters from people seeking advice, information and help. They considered him as their personal confidant, doctor, or private confessor because only now did they realize the importance of what he had been saying for so long. He tried to answer every letter he received but not all his answers were pleasant ones. He never attempted to solve people's problems with simplicities, pat answers, or platitudes, but replied to each as seriously as he could. Then, in 1946, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature but, due to poor health, could not journey to Sweden to accept it in person. He began receiving other awards. His books were translated and published into many languages. He very seldom left Montagnola now, although he had numerous contacts with the outside world. Hesse's writing after the war consisted primarily of short stories, essays, a few poems, and a series of open letters (published in newspapers and privately). Thus Das Glasperlenspiel was actually the last major book he wrote. Hesse was ill during the winter of 1961 and, although his illness appeared to have abated with the coming of spring, Hesse was suffering from (and had been for some time) leukemia. And so Hesse died on August 8, 1962, leaving behind a life that was for him a series of crises and new beginnings. "Hesse was acutely aware of the apparent meaninglessness of his own life and the crisis of the Western world, and suffered considerably from both."
In all his changes Hesse remained true to himself and his ideal.
Hesse, as well as a great number of today's young people, was unable to live in accord with the soulless mass emerging from the decline of the times. Hesse's heroes stand apart--are outcasts of society, just as Hesse and the young generation feel removed from others. Hesse's hero is always alienated from his community. The two attitudes toward authority, the one that rebels against any authority, the other that seeks an authority, Hesse sees in man everywhere. The part of man that rebels, that looks for freedom, is the part of "nature," of impulse, the drive. He maintained, and the young agree that no society has the right to restrain this natural man; he must be antisocial, immoral. Hesse says one should obey the voice of one's own heart. The young could hardly be more receptive to such a call. The present generation is taking a new interest in Hermann Hesse and his work, nowhere more so than among the "Flower folk" in the United States. There is no doubt that Hesse's books have always appealed to the young. His contemporary popularity is undoubtedly due, in part, to his preoccupation with Oriental motifs and themes as have been pointed out in Siddhartha.

Hesse, for a number of reasons has appealed to two different groups of readers. His first and most conventional appeal attracted only a few American readers in the past while in Europe and elsewhere
it created a vast reading audience from the beginning. But this first universal appeal was not unlike that which was exerted by other popular novelists of that time. So what explains his present resurgence here in America during the past decade? It is primarily his later works, those subsequent to *Demian*, which account for his recent American vogue. This is based upon Hesse as the author of "mind-expanding" works, works in which the emphasis has shifted from the palpably straightforward narration of events to a kind of subjectivism which is related to the search for self, mysticism, archetypal symbolism, logical paradox as psychological truth, and musical themes and forms which establish a liaison with the subconscious. The reason these works seemed not to have exerted their effects earlier is due to the fact that the audience of readers, the counterpart of that a generation ago, has only recently come into existence and has quite different characteristics from the previous one. Youth have always rejected the values and prejudices of its elders but today's group has done so much more violently than ever before and has accepted the Hesse that its elders rejected, largely due to Hesse's appeal to their particular causes and to those of this time and place. Today's rebellion differs not only in intensity but also in ways that seem to make Hesse almost its prophet. His works never fail to express his hostility toward and rejection of contemporary materialism and the new generation heartily seconds his motion against the glorification of false prosperity and success. Prompted by the doctrine
of love and by a sense of insecurity brought on by the atomic and nuclear threat, this generation sympathizes with Hesse's intense humanism. They applaud his love and reverence for life, and his pacifistic treatment of war. Many students and the young, in general, use his books as a justification in speaking about themselves. This therapeutic quality perhaps, most of all, attracts the new generation to Hermann Hesse. Still another contemporary reader of Hesse contends that "much of the current appeal of Hesse can be attributed to the fact that his writings invite his readers to identify their quests for an integral inner life with that endless struggle for self-realization." In the books of Hesse, readers, particularly the youthful ones, find not only their most secrets thoughts and ambitions set forth with sympathy and passion, but also the record of a man's striving first for adjustment with the society in which he found himself and then for adjustment with himself. "Hesse takes the reader into the depths of his own soul, conducts him through an inferno of conflict with the conditions of his inward and outward life, and in the end shows him that, although man is fated to wander in first one direction and then another, there are certain unquestionable values of man's culture that promise his immortality."

Today's youth seems to believe that an interpreter of its innermost life has arisen from the past. Hesse's visions of life accord with the contemporary visions of youth. Hesse's spiritual agony and exstasy draws the young to him. His "deep sense of the injustice
of human beings having to live on such a lukewarm level of everyday triviality is a quality youth can and does identify with. Hesse's unorthodox moral and religious views, his hostile attitude toward intellectualism, his repudiation of today's practical bourgeois civilization, his emphasis on soul, fantasy and contemplation rather than mind, reason and activity, his open defiance of authority, his love of nature, and his respect for the sacredness of the individual are all themes which, combined, have resulted in the current mass popularity of his life and works.

Hermann Hesse is, beyond a doubt, the ideal for many young people today. No other modern German writer has so glorified youth as Hermann Hesse. Whether you like his analysis or not you cannot ignore them for this writer is one of the great humanists and liberals of his and our time. And one must conclude that, even though many of the young generation may be reading Hesse for the wrong or mistaken ideas, their delight in Hesse signifies a new delight in human pleasures of imagination. Such an influence should only be considered good; this present-day young generation which differs so significantly from any that has come before may be redeemed by their growing interest and faith in such an author as Hermann Hesse.
FOOTNOTES


5. ibid., p. 13.

6. ibid., p. 15.

7. ibid., p. 16.


11. Hesse, Hermann, Demian, p. 54.

12. Timpe, Eugene, op. cit., p. 44.


17 Zeller, op. cit., p. 111.


20 Baumer, op. cit., p. 76.


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