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THE MYTH OF THE QUEST AND THE NOVEL:
THE VISION OF HERMANN HESSE

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Words do not express thoughts very well. They always become a little different immediately they are expressed, a little distorted, a little foolish. And yet it also pleases me and seems right that what is of value and wisdom to one man seems nonsense to another.

Hermann Hesse. Siddhartha, trans. by Hilda Rosner.
(New York: Bantam Press, 1971), p145.

INTRODUCTION

I

Hermann Hesse was born on July 2, 1877 in Calw, a town in southern Germany. Though born in Germany he was a Swiss citizen because of his father, a Baltic-Russian with Swiss citizenship. He became a naturalized German citizen at the age of twelve. As his father was a Protestant theologian and his mother the daughter of an Indian missionary, he grew up in a widely-varied but deeply religious environment.

A difficult child, Hesse refused to submit to the rigid discipline of the German schools. Due to pressures from the family and from school he attempted suicide in 1893 and was treated at the mental institution at Stetten. After his release he tried his hand at various jobs, finally ending as an apprentice in the book trade.

In 1899 he published his first collection of poetry, Romantic Songs, at his own expense. Later in the same year An Hour Beyond Midnight appeared.

Hesse's reputation as a writer was established with the publication of his first novel, Peter Camenzind, in 1904. At this time he married Maria Bernoulli and gave up his bookshop to devote full time to his writing. After the death of his father in 1916 and the mental breakdown of his wife,

Hesse underwent treatment at Lucerne with Joseph Lang, a disciple of Carl Jung.

In 1919 Demian was published, and Hesse established a retreat at Montagnola, Switzerland. He obtained a divorce in 1923 and became a naturalized Swiss citizen. In the same year he remarried, but he was divorced for the second time only a year later.

Steppenwolf appeared in 1927, and Narcissus and Goldmund followed three years later. In 1931 Hesse married for the third time, this time to Ninon Dolbin née Auslander, and The Journey to the East was published. The Glass Bead Game (1943) won the Nobel Prize in 1946. It was to be his last novel.

On August 10, 1962, Hermann Hesse died in his sleep at Montagnola. He was eight-five years old and had not only left his mark on the literary world but had managed, somewhat against his will, to become the hero of a youth cult that is still flourishing today.

II

Much of Hermann Hesse's work is autobiographical, for like any good writer he drew from his own experience in order to create. Just as there is a sense in which every character is partly the author, so there is a sense in which all the characters of Hesse's novels represent Hesse himself. Hesse's protagonists seem to experience virtually the same problems

Hesse had experienced or was himself confronting while writing the particular novel. So it is that the reader encounters such characters as Hans Giebenrath(Hesse's brother?) and Hermann Heilner, dissatisfied students caught in a vicious school system; frustrated artists such as Goldmund and Klingsor(Hesse for a time devoted himself to art, and he called himself a painter); and such men as Harry Haller and H.H., men who see themselves as failures, as people who have a particular vision but are unable to accomplish what they want for themselves.

In spite of the abundance of protagonists with the initials H.H., it would be a mistake to say that any one of them is Hermann Hesse. However, it is certainly true that part of Hermann Hesse is contained in each one. Some facet of the hero's biography usually parallels a portion of Hesse's own life, and the identification between the characters and the author is striking.

It would be a mistake to read Hesse's novels as pure autobiography. Hesse's biography plays a part, to be sure, but the life is the source of creation and communication; it is the starting-point for most of the novels. In a sense, then, the novels of Hermann Hesse represent a multi-leveled symbolic and psychological working-out of personal problems that have found their way into the fiction where they are metamorphosed into more universal concerns.

Though a wide range of problems are covered, there is a sense in which these novels can be seen as one continuous work, for all the problems that the heroes have to face seem to flow together. Perhaps Hesse is telling the same story from many different angles.

The most obvious problem for the Hessean hero is the obstacle presented by religious dogmas and the dictates of society. If the hero accepts these rules for behavior then his actions are necessarily restricted. The standards of society in general and those of bourgeois society in particular present extreme difficulties for the heroes in Demian, Klingsor's Last Summer, Siddhartha, Narcissus and Goldmund, and The Glass Bead Game. Judging from what is known about Hesse's early life, these standards were also obstacles for Hesse himself. His problems with school and with his family helped to bring on the early suicide attempt as a result, and apparently caused some severe difficulties later in his life.

In Demian, Emil Sinclair must come to terms with the problem of good and evil in order to progress (indeed in order to live.) His situation closely parallels the one presented in "A Child's Heart" in Klingsor's Last Summer. Emil's real problems stem from the alleged theft of apples, and for the child the conflict between the worlds of dark and light and of good and evil begins with his stealing his father's figs; both images are obviously related to the myth of the Fall.

These experiences trigger the hero's struggle to cope with the existing social codes and mores.

In addition to the problems of the bourgeois standards of morality and religion that most of the Hessean heroes attempt to solve (some of them are unsuccessful, like Klein and Harry Haller) there is the related problem of how life should be lived and how it can be experienced fully. Both Klingsor and Goldmund attempt to heighten their lives through intense living and through the creation of art-forms that have their roots in the actual life of the creator.

H.H. of The Journey to the East must deal with the loss of faith in the Journey and in life itself. He is not really able to affirm his existence, and his loss of faith stems from his inability to cope with the problems and situations that the journey creates for him, most obviously in the case of the disappearance of Leo at Morbio Inferiore.

Another of H.H.'s difficulties is his inability to really describe the indescribable, for in his attempt to write about the Journey he is trying to say that which cannot be said. This is a problem with which Hesse himself had to deal in the composition of The Glass Bead Game; indeed, it is a problem that all artists must face. Art stems from the experience of the artist, and the experience that the artist seeks to convey to his audience becomes altered through the attempt at any expression. The original idea becomes contaminated with the

overlap of later experiences that are unavoidable. All forms of art are attempts to communicate that which cannot be communicated and to capture in concreteness that which is intangible and abstract. For example, in The Glass Bead Game the abstract must be described in terms that are comprehensible to the reader. The Game cannot be described in precise and concrete terms, but enough must be said so that it will be a meaningful part of the novel.

The old problem of morality is presented clearly in The Glass Bead Game. Here social standards in general constitute the obstacle; the hero must face the opposition of the society with its standards of moral conduct that seek to limit the scope of the hero's behavior. Joseph Knecht must finally decide whether his loyalties rightfully belong to the Castalian society or to himself. The Self wins out, and Knecht leaves Castalia in order to follow his own decisions and live his own life.

So it is that the one problem that all the Hessean heroes must answer is how to be in harmony with the social structure, to live one's life without compromising, without bending to the arbitrary authority of a religious, moral, and social superstructure that for Hesse is primarily bourgeois due to the kind of world in which he lived and which he created for his characters.

III

Most of Hesse's novels, though they vary greatly, share certain unifying characteristics which may be seen to center around the myth of the quest. Basically the Hessean quest represents the attempt of the hero to come to terms with the outside world, to live his life as he wishes in the face of the opposition of the bourgeois world. In this sense there is no becoming as such in Hesse's novels; there is only the struggle of the hero to realize what he is, to know the real person that he is in spite of the opposition of the codes and mores of society. And to live as one is without feelings of guilt and shame despite the external forces of authority, to live one's life without first asking permission is to be successful in the quest as Hesse outlines it.

The Hessean hero can accept no answers that do not come from himself; he can accept only the system that he creates. Concepts of good and evil, of religion and morality, cannot be taken as "givens" in life: they must be discovered; they must be proved through the experiences of life itself. Bourgeois morality offers answers only for the rabble, for those who lead a herd-existence. For the Hessean hero all standards must finally arise from his own self and cannot come from an external source.

The struggle to come to terms with society is long and difficult. It is not always successful, for the struggle is really a quest to rid oneself of the guilt and fear of

the society's reactions to the hero's behavior. Such a quest is always necessary before the Hessean hero will be able to live in harmony with the universe and with himself.

So the goals of the quest may be seen to be to exist in harmony with the universe, to be integrated into society, to create and maintain self-esteem, and to rid oneself of feelings of guilt concerning one's actions. It is not easy to reach these objectives, but the Hessean hero continues his quest until he is either successful or death prevents him from struggling further.

In Hesse's novels the successful quest is always marked by certain qualities of the quester. His contented smile, his saintly walk, and the air of integration with the realm in which he moves are signs of a successful quest. The integration is brought about by the hero's continued refusal to submit to the demands of society and by the creation of a personal code by which the hero can live. It amounts to a kind of triumph of the will; the hero's will emerges triumphant over the dictates of society. Extremely important here is the final realization that what the social structure has declared as good and right is not necessarily so for the individual, for the Hessean quester.

The quest motif may be seen as the basis for Hesse's novels from Peter Camenzind to The Glass Bead Game. It is this aspect of Hesse's novels that this paper will explore.

CHAPTER ONE

THE QUEST

The tales of the homeless wanderer, the stories of a long and complicated journey for a particular purpose, and the ancient legends dealing with pilgrimages and crusades are common phenomena in the realm of literature. All such stories are based on one of man's most ancient myths, the archetypal myth of the Quest.

The Quest myth is an important element in the novels of Hermann Hesse. Perhaps this may be explained by the fact that on one level the novels are symbolic representations of the author's personal search for the Way, for the solutions to the problems and situations in which he finds himself. And for Hesse the focal point seems to be the conflict between the desires of the hero and the restrictions imposed upon him by the demands of the society in which he lives and the religious dogmas, the "Thou shalt not's" that seek to overpower him and to suppress his actions. So it is that the Hessean hero is almost always struggling to live his life without succumbing to the forces of morality and religion; he must come to terms with the bourgeois world. It is the attempt to live as one wishes, to do whatever one chooses, even if it means openly flaunting the bourgeois standards, that is a central part of

the quest as Hesse portrays it in his novels. And this kind of quest is long and dangerous:

The urge to find out the "secret" about one's self and the hidden corners of life, curiosity in the widest and most dangerous sense, is the driving force behind Hesse's work. It is a ruthless curiosity, shameless and without mercy, and it will not rest until the last veil is drawn back.¹

The quest is shameless: the hero must not allow himself to be bound to the standards and beliefs of the bourgeois system, and he cannot bow down to their gods if he is to succeed in his quest. For what has really happened here is that certain experiences have been denied the hero by the laws that the society and its religion have set up in order to establish control over him. Perhaps because the experience is forbidden the hero is driven to seek it through deliberate disobedience. And the experience is necessary because the knowledge that is to be gained from it is not communicable and because the Hessean hero cannot allow himself to be governed by an external authority.

All of Hesse's novels in one way or another are really manifestations of Quest myth variations. For this reason it is useful to begin with an examination of the Quest myth itself.

A list of some of the more familiar Quest legends would certainly include the story of the quest for the Holy Grail and the tale of St. George and the dragon. And the dragon is here an important image. It is worth noting the following

remarks of Northrop Frye:

the central form of the quest-romance is the dragon-killing theme exemplified in the stories of St. George and Perseus....A land ruled by a helpless old king is laid waste by a sea-monster, to whom one young person after another is offered to be devoured; until the lot falls on the king's daughter: at that point the hero arrives, kills the dragon, marries the daughter, and succeeds to the kingdom.²

Here the quest is portrayed as an attempt to overcome the fear of death or of impotency, as well as an attempt to regain vitality and power.

The Quest myth is very important both as a concept in Jungian psychology and as a literary motif. And since the quest myth occurs so frequently in dreams and in the realm of literature it has attracted a great deal of attention from many other academic corners as well.

Northrop Frye's brief outline of the quest consists of the following:

the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero.³

There is a fourth stage, a minor one that is not always included. This is the disappearance of the hero, the "tearing to pieces"⁴, and it occurs after the hero's climactic battle.

In order to apply Frye's schema to the novels of Hermann Hesse it is important to realize that the enemy need not necessarily be an actual person. It may be an abstract entity

or even a psychological condition. In fact, the enemy is analogous to the dragon of the Perseus myth discussed earlier. And for the Hessean hero the dragon, though there are many variations, is the composite of the bourgeois way of life. It represents the neat package of beliefs that the bourgeoisie use to bind themselves and the people over whom they exercise any influence at all. The Hessean dragon is the strong tendency to allow oneself to become attached to, and restricted by, an already existing social code and way of life. For Hesse, the enemy is finally the entire bourgeois mentality and any code that is not created by the individual himself. It is the conflict with this enemy that leads to the despair that the protagonist must overcome; the confrontation with despair is possibly a determiner of the quester's ultimate fate and the final result of the quest.

Such is the case with Siddhartha as he struggles with his thoughts of suicide on the bank of the river. At this point he is ready to admit defeat, and it is his contact with the bourgeois world that has created this situation. Siddhartha has become one of the bourgeoisie; he has allowed their system to engulf him, and the realization of this fact brings him to despair. How he deals with this despair will mean the difference between success and complete failure. The outcome will determine whether or not the quester will reach his goal. Siddhartha must either shrug off the bourgeois system entirely,

or else he must die, for to become a part of this way of life is to admit defeat on the quest anyway.

The goal of a quest is usually obvious and tangible, as it is in the legend of the Holy Grail. According to Northrop Frye, wealth is the most common aspiration of the quester, and the attainment of some female figure, be it bride or mother, is also a possible motive.⁵ To be sure, the Holy Grail represents more than the tangible material value of the object; it represents a kind of spiritual "wealth" as well.

The most obvious Hessean quester after the figure of the Mother is Goldmund. He spends his entire life in the attempt to discover all of the attributes of the archetypal mother-figure who is the essence of his artistic creation. For Goldmund she represents inspiration, the power of creation, and even imagination.

As the goal of the quest, wealth may be represented by such physical, concrete things as an actual treasure (guarded, of course, by the dragon), or such abstract and non-concrete things as power and wisdom, knowledge and control. Serious consideration of the various manifestations of the quest myth in Hesse's work leads to the conclusion that for him the goal of the quest is an abstraction, a kind of self-knowledge and understanding of oneself: "To know oneself, to explore the hidden corners in one's soul, not to flinch even if one finds these corners populated with beasts and demons, this is the purpose of Emil Sinclair's, Steppenwolf's, Goldmund's travels."⁶

However, the quest is directed not so much at "knowing oneself" as it is toward learning to accept whatever one is. If the corners of the mind are inhabited by these demons it is not so important to exorcise them (such a task is impossible; at best some of the demons may be ignored) as it is to learn to live with them, as the Steppenwolf must do.

Another relevant and interesting view of the quest comes from a disciple of Carl Jung, Joseph Henderson. Speaking of the hero-myths, he notes that the following is true:

Over and over again one hears a tale describing a hero's miraculous but humble birth, his early proof of superhuman strength, his rapid rise to prominence or power, his triumphant struggle with the forces of evil, his fallability through the sin of pride (hybris), and the fall through betrayal or an "heroic" sacrifice that ends in his death.

Though there are many obvious deviations, this must be clearly recognizable to any of Hesse's readers as the basic pattern of the life of Joseph Knecht, the hero of The Glass Bead Game; Knecht quickly rises to the position of Magister Ludi and his death must be seen as a heroic and sacrificial drowning, so that this pattern fits Knecht's story well.

In a discussion of the symbols of transcendence that represent man's attempts to reach the Self, a term which designates those unconscious elements in the psyche that he must search deeply within himself to find, Henderson writes the following:

One of the commonest dream symbols for this type of release through transcendence is the theme

of the lonely journey or pilgrimage, which somehow seems to be a spiritual pilgrimage on which the initiate becomes acquainted with the nature of death. But this is not death as a last judgment or other initiatory trial of strength: it is a journey of release, renunciation, and atonement, presided over and fostered by some spirit of compassion. This spirit is more often represented by a "mistress" than a "master" of initiation, a supreme feminine (i.e., anima) figure such as Kwan-Yin in Chinese Buddhism, Sophia in the Christian-Gnostic doctrine, or the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom Pallas Athena.⁸

Clearly this could be a description of Goldmund's quest.

Seeking the powers of inspiration and creative imagination that are represented by the image of the Mother, Goldmund learns that death pervades all things and is a key element in the composition of the feminine figure he seeks. Pleasure and pain, love and death are very closely related contraries.

There remains yet another useful schematization of the myth of the Quest. Joseph Campbell sees the quest as consisting of three phases, which he designates as "separation or departure," "the trials and victories of initiation," and "the return and reintegration with society."⁹

The beginning of the quest is marked by the "Call to Adventure", and the quester proceeds through an extremely demanding episode (Campbell gives examples such as battle, journey, crucifixion, and abduction) that is overcome through the assistance of various helpers. Reaching the apotheosis (marriage, theft, father-atonement) the hero flees and begins return (rescue, resurrection). It is his mission to improve society with the magic elixir (knowledge) that he brings with him.¹⁰

This reading of the Quest myth closely coincides with Hesse's own view, as Theodore Ziolkowski has noted.¹¹ Hesse likewise makes three major divisions in his own schema. Stage One is represented by the innocence of childhood and parallels the condition of man in paradise prior to the Fall.¹²

Stage Two is best characterized by the process of awakening, for this is the period in which the individual first becomes aware of good and evil and of the problems of morality and religion. It is a time of struggle and conflict and is an "insistence upon individuality."¹³ This particular stage is most important for Hesse, for it is here that the hero must take a stand against the already existing rules for behavior that is acceptable to the society.

This second stage can be described in terms of experience, for it represents the Fall and its consequences. In this particular stage that child loses its innocence through the confrontation with the world in all its varied and disturbing aspects. And there is no escape; the innocence of the child cannot be maintained in a world that is already in its fallen state. Experience in this corrupt world shatters innocence and its illusions, and the hero's problems begin.

The Hessean hero cannot accept the justice of an arbitrary system that the society seeks to impose upon him. As the hero learns more of the world from his experiences in it he feels more and more separated from it, isolated in his refusal to

accept the right of this external power to govern his life. He senses that he is helpless in the face of this opposition, and it is here that the assistance of the guides proves most valuable. They teach the hero that he is not alone in his rebellion: Demian serves this function for Sinclair by bringing him knowledge of the existence of others with the mark of Cain, and Harry Haller learns of the world of the Immortals through contact with the Magic Theater of his friends.

Stage Two is almost inevitably followed by despair, for such is the result of the hero's feelings of isolation and helplessness. The first knowledge of good and evil places the hero in a novel situation with which he is at first unable to cope. He despairs at being forced to choose, and he must attempt to come to terms with the bourgeois system that may condemn his actions and hold the whip of eternal damnation over his head. Failure to comply with the commands of the society may also result in ostracism from the society, in imprisonment and even in death should the society see fit to claim the life of the hero by way of retribution for his crimes of disobedience. The price of the knowledge is great, sometimes more than the hero can pay. So it is that Klein and Hans Giebenrath are brought to their deaths. Both die by drowning, for death by water is a recurrent theme in Hesse's novels.

Water is a feminine, maternal symbol closely related to Dionysian elements. Thus it is only appropriate that Goldmund

should meet his death by falling from a horse into a stream; for him the feminine has finally taken on the more deadly aspects. And Hesse's preoccupation with this type of death stems from the fact that water is a traditional symbol for the mind, for imagination and the unconscious, as well as from the above considerations and the fact that his brother Hans met his death by suicidal drowning.

The despair that follows the second stage is a crucial factor. How the hero copes with it determines his fate, for the psychological dragon of despair lurks with its companion, the dragon of social and moral codes, in the foliage along the quester's path. If the hero cannot defeat these dragons then he is almost certainly doomed to destruction; defeating them, he is much nearer to his goal and more certain of the final victory: "The important fact for Hesse is: despair leads either to downfall or salvation- not back, behind morality and culture to a child's paradise, but over and beyond it into a realm where one can live according to one's own beliefs."¹⁴ But Hesse probably would not phrase this as Ziolkowski does; he would say that the final realm is a place where one can live, not "according to one's own beliefs" but rather according to one's own nature and to the dictates of the Self in the sense that the term has been defined previously. This is an important distinction: the Hessean hero must not impose his standards upon others, but neither can he allow others to impose their systems upon him.

Overcoming the despair that inevitably results from knowledge and awareness of the conditions of this world leads the individual into another realm. For Hesse this realm is the Third Kingdom, the world of the Immortals in Steppenwolf. Therefore, Hesse's third stage is the equivalent of Joseph Campbell's third stage, the stage of the return. The innocence and happiness of childhood is recovered on a higher level, and the individual is once more in harmony with the universe and with himself.

But the entrance into the world of the Immortals is not the final exit from the world. Attainment of the Self "is not equated with total rejection of society."¹⁵ It is important for those who live in the "Immortal" realm to be useful to the society. This is the ideal of service, and as a key characteristic of this higher realm, this particular point will be developed further in later discussions.

One of the characteristics of the third stage is the new perspective that the hero gains. This occurs most obviously in Siddhartha; time is seen from a different angle, and the hero realizes that past, present, and future exist for the moment. This amounts to a sharpening of vision, for time exists only in the present. The past is nothing more than memory, and the future is as yet imagination. Even though life can only be lived in the present there is a certain value in being able to see that all the elements of "time" flow

together in such a way that the fragments of a life are almost superimposed upon one another. With this knowledge the hero is prevented from making the serious mistake of attempting to live in either the past or the future. To be sure, it is impossible to accomplish either, but the attempt to do so prevents the hero from living in the present as though it were all that there is. Life can only be lived in the present, and the past must be viewed with an attitude of amor fati. And the hero must affirm this fact. The seeds of the mature man are contained within the child, and the child remains more or less within the man; everything exists in all forms eternally and simultaneously, and the Hessean hero must realize this fact.

Time represents only a fragmentary portion of eternity. To maintain a belief in the existence of time in past, present, and future is to make a perceptual error. Time is but an arbitrary division in a section of eternity; it exists only as the hero perceives it, and to perceive time as existing only in the present is to transcend the fallen state and rise above it to the realm of the Immortals. Therefore, it is possible to argue that one of the manifestations of the dragon which arises and pits itself against the quester is Time, for the heroes of Hesse's novels must come to terms with its aspects in order for the quest to be successful. Time must be transcended on a perceptual level, and the unity of the universe must be perceived through personal experience.

Perception of the ultimate harmony and unity of the universe has been designated by the term "magical thinking."¹⁶ What the term really represents is a change in the perception; it is "the capacity of the individual to see beyond the apparent disharmony of the polar opposites and to perceive the essential unity and totality of all things, within the individual as within the world."¹⁷

Magical thinking includes an acceptance and affirmation of chaos, and it is "a descent into the unconscious and the unbridling of the instinctive life."¹⁸ It is a means of reclaiming the innocence and wisdom of childhood, and it is the direct result of the quester's own experiences in the world. The lesson of Siddhartha is relevant here: this new way of perception and of thinking cannot be taught- experience is the ultimate necessity.¹⁹ And this experience comes about partly through the exercise of the will (as in Siddhartha's willing himself to become Kamala's lover and later Vasudeva's assistant) but primarily it is a matter of grace. Here it is possible to see the influence of German Pietism: man is dependent upon the grace of God; man cannot succeed alone, and God's grace is influenced by the actions of the individual in particular cases. Otherwise it is mere chance that the hero will find the right guides and make the right decisions, though the inner voice, the voice of the self that Pistorius speaks about to Emil in the passage cited previously, serves to help the hero on his way.

The inner voice is the voice of God within the hero, for the only God that exists is an internal one. Through divine providence the hero makes the initial contact with the guides who will help him to make the changes in the perceptual process that he needs to make.

Magical thinking plays an important role in the development of many of Hesse's heroes, the most obvious one being Siddhartha. This new vision is part of the goal that Harry Haller strives so hard to attain, and that Goldmund pays so much to reach.

There is absolutely no escape from the high cost of this attainment. There is no way out for the quester who has confronted the despair that follows the second stage. He must continue onward to his ultimate end, be it success or failure because it is impossible for him to go back to the first stage of childhood innocence. Such is the symbolism of the figure that H.H. encounters in the League Archives of The Journey to the East; such is the fate of the solitary quester. There is no turning back, for the process will continue until the quester reaches his final goal or is ground beneath the wheels of the higher machinery in the process of life.

Success is never certain, and should the journeyer reach the third level there is no assurance that he will be able to remain there. While it is not possible to return to Stage One and the innocence of childhood, it is quite possible to fall

from the third stage back into the second through despair, or, as in Harry Haller's case, seriousness: "Not all of those, by far, who undergo the process reach the third stage; and again, many who fleetingly enter the realm of redemption fall back to the second level and are again subject to its laws and unfulfillable exigencies."²⁰ This is what happens to the Steppenwolf, who frequently vacillates between the second and third stages. The process of constant fluctuation serves to deepen the despair of the second stage and causes the individuals to undergo a continual and intense struggle to maintain themselves permanently within the third level. But, like the Steppenwolf, it is their fate to fail over and over again with little hope of permanently attaining their goal.

There remains yet another aspect of the ancient quest myths that is important in Hesse's work. That is the reliance of the hero upon some sort of extremely well-qualified guide, be it a supernatural helper or a very wise old man. As Northrop Frye points out, "The helpful fairy, the grateful dead man, the wonderful servant who has just the abilities the hero needs in a crisis, are all folk tale commonplaces."²¹

The "wonderful servant" must inevitably call to mind Leo, the loyal servant and President of the League in The Journey to the East. Without Leo, H.H. must fail. The servant-figure provides the assistance necessary for success.

The hero accepts the assistance offered him along the way, for he is desperate and determined to reach his goal. But permanent attachment to the assistants is not possible:

There is nowhere any real society in Hesse's work. Neither the family, nor the nation, nor his time are realities that mean anything to the individual. The individual is alone, on the one hand, but always in search of the ideal condition, of something universal that belongs to him. He seeks to locate himself in a living-space which is larger than himself, but with which he can identify himself and thereby recognize his duties and his place in life.²²

In the traditional quest myths the hero's helper usually possesses some supernatural power, as in the case of Ariadne, who helps Theseus find his way through the labyrinth to kill the Minotaur and escape. Hermine in Steppenwolf is one of Hesse's characters who manifests certain supernatural overtones; she offers Harry Haller the thread that may lead him through the labyrinth of existence and of his own mind.

The figure of the guide often appears in Hesse's works, though the traditional supernatural elements are either modified and softened or eliminated entirely. But the helper's assistance is of primary importance to the hero. Without the assistant, the quest is impossible.

As every patient has his analyst, so every one of Hesse's travelers....has his midwife Socrates: Hans Giebenrath his Hermann Heilner, Emil Sinclair his Demian, Goldmund his Narcissus, the Steppenwolf a whole group of them: the mysterious author of the inserted "Treatise Concerning the Steppenwolf," the girl Hermine who is only a female materialization of his schoolmate Hermann, and the strange musician who is Pablo and Mozart in one. They are all externalizations of the inner teacher who leads the hero on his way.²³

It is the "inner teacher" in its various and numerous manifestations that is the focus of the next chapter. Who the guides are and what they actually do to help the many struggling heroes is a major concern.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

¹Oskar Seidlin. "Hermann Hesse: The Exorcism of the Demon" in Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Theodore Ziolkowski. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973) pp54-55.

²Northrop Frye. Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) p189.

³Frye, p187.

⁴Frye, p192.

⁵Frye, p192.

⁶Seidlin, p63.

⁷Joseph L. Henderson. "Ancient Myths and Modern Man", Man and His Symbols, edited by Carl Jung. (New York:Dell,1968)p101.

⁸Henderson, pp149-150.

⁹Joseph Campbell. The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) p36.

¹⁰Campbell, pp245-246.

¹¹Theodore Ziolkowski. "The Quest for the Grail in Hesse's Demian" Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Theodore Ziolkowski (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p136. Cited hereafter as "The Quest".

¹²This triadic representation rightfully belongs to Theodore Ziolkowski The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965). Cited hereafter as The Novels.

¹³Ziolkowski, The Novels, p56.

¹⁴Ziolkowski, The Novels, pp54-55.

¹⁵Rudolf Koester. "Self-Realization: Hesse's Reflections on Youth" Monatshefte, LVII (1965) p186.

¹⁶Hermann Hesse. Steppenwolf, trans. by Basil Greighton. (New York: Bantam, 1969) p111. All further references will be to this edition.

¹⁷Ziolkowski, The Novels, p25.

¹⁸Mark Boulby. Hermann Hesse: His Mind and Art (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) p258.

¹⁹Hermann Hesse. Siddhartha, trans. by Hilda Rosner. (New York: Bantam, 1968) p34. All further references will be to this edition.

²⁰Ziolkowski, The Novels, p55.

²¹Frye, p197.

²²Walter Naumann. "The Individual and Society in the Work of Hermann Hesse" Monatshefte, XLI (1949) pp38-39.

²³Seidlin, p64.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GUIDING LIGHT

At one point or another all of Hesse's hero-questers fall under the influence of strange and gifted individuals with the power to help them along the way to their goal. These individuals, manifestations of the traditional "helper" in the quest myths, are sources of guidance and support for the hero throughout the trying tasks and ordeals of the quest. As such they serve the important function of guides for the quester. They will lead the hero down the path to his goal, but only if he is capable of following.

Generally, the Hessean hero will come under the influence of two types of guides: masculine and feminine. One frequent type of masculine guide is the wise old man who completely understands the hero's problems and desires, and who offers friendly advice and crucial assistance. The feminine guide usually becomes a kind of Jungian anima-figure closely related in a spiritual way with the hero himself.

Emil Sinclair, the hero of Demian, has two major masculine guides, his strange schoolmate Max Demian and the musician-theologian Pistorius. Pistorius teaches Emil how to listen to the inner voice, the voice of the Self, the deeply rooted intuitions of the hero's own mind: "Gaze into the fire, into

the clouds, and as soon as the inner voices begin to speak, surrender to them, don't ask first whether it's permitted or would please your teachers or father, or some god. You will ruin yourself if you do that."¹

What these remarks really amount to is an exhortation not to submit, not to surrender in the struggle against the bourgeois dragon. Emil Sinclair (like the other Hessean questers) must not allow himself to be ruled by arbitrary and external standards. The only obligations of the hero must finally be to himself, to the Self he represents.

Max Demian is extremely important to Sinclair: the older boy saves the younger from the clutches of evil and guilt inherent in the figure of Kromer, teaches the ultimate meaning and importance of the mark of Cain, and leads to the most valuable guide, Frau Eva. Frau Eva, or Mother Eve as the name is sometimes translated, is the mother of Max Demian, and she represents the feminine, physical, sensual world. Sinclair falls in love with her, and she acts as his protectress and advisor, teaching him to interpret his dreams and introducing him to others who also bear the mark of Cain. Hesse's reading of the Cain story here is interesting: Cain becomes the noble man in the story, noble because he dares to be different. The quester must also have the courage to be different.

Siddhartha also has two important guides, the wise old ferryman Vasudeva, who has learned the secrets of the river

and who exists in the realm of the Immortals, and the beautiful courtesan Kamala, who brings him into the world of material possessions, demanding of him wealth and prestige before she will consent to be his lover. Kamala teaches Siddhartha the world of sex, of self-indulgence and luxury, and it is the old ferryman who saves the sickened Siddhartha when that world fails him.

Vasudeva, whose name means "one who dwells in all beings"², leads his pupil to the new perceptions of time and of unity, helping him to find the peace his inner voice has caused him to seek. He teaches Siddhartha the ideal of service so that both men spend a major portion of their lives ferrying other people across the river that is the source of their wisdom.

Another of Vasudeva's important teachings is that of self-sufficiency:

Siddhartha stayed with the ferryman and learned how to look after the boat, and when there was nothing to do at the ferry, he worked in the rice field with Vasudeva, gathered wood, and picked fruit from the banana trees. He learned how to make oars, how to improve the boat and to make baskets.³

Vasudeva's final lesson is the peaceful acceptance of death. When it is time for him to die, the wise old man, who has waited until Siddhartha has altered his perceptual process, says simply to his companion:

"I have waited for this hour, my friend. Now that it has arrived, let me go. I have been Vasudeva, the ferryman, for a long time. Now it is over. Farewell hut, farewell river, farewell Siddhartha."

Siddhartha bowed low before the departing man.
 "I knew it," he said softly. "Are you going
 into the woods?"

"I am going into the woods; I am going into the
 unity of all things," said Vasudeva, radiant.

And so he went away. Siddhartha watched him.
 With great joy and gravity he watched him saw his
 steps full of peace, his face glowing, his form full
 of light.⁴

So, with quiet peacefulness, he accepts his death and makes
 of it an occasion for rejoicing.

Vasudeva's most salient characteristic is his smile,
 which is a smile of understanding, compassion, wisdom and
 inner contentment. It marks his successful attainment of the
 third level. Such a smile symbolizes the completion of the
 quest in Hesse's works. Vasudeva's smile is the smile of the
 Buddha; it is the smile of the Music Master in The Glass Bead
Game and of Leo in The Journey to the East. In Steppenwolf
 the smile has metamorphosed into the laughter of the Immortals.
 Cold and icy, it is a kind of untroubled dismissal of the
 inconsistencies and absurdities of life with a laugh.

In Steppenwolf, Hermina and Maria are the feminine
 guides, while Pablo, Mozart, and Goethe play the roles of the
 masculine guides. In a sense the writer of the "Treatise"
 and the Immortals themselves are guides for the wanderer
 Harry Haller, who "meets those illusory characters- Hermine,
 his spiritual guide, Maria, his physical mistress, and Pablo,
 who turns out to be the Master Magician- and learns from them
 the art of shedding his inhibitions."⁵

Pablo, the musician who serves as the conductor through the Magic Theater, is Harry's most significant guide. His laughter is the cold laughter of the Immortals, and while he is devoted to jazz and to his saxophone, he is capable of transforming himself into the Immortal Mozart. Like Vasudeva and the Immortals, Pablo lives in the Third Kingdom, and he offers the wisdom of this stage to the Steppenwolf via the Magic Theater. Pablo, then,

is the supreme teacher, counseling both the surrender to life and total detachment, the acceptance of the body and the attainment of harmony. Taking neither life nor world seriously, he portrays harmony through the grace of an amoral existence. He speaks all languages, but he speaks especially well with his body, his eyes, and the sound of his voice. Similarly, he plays all instruments, but the sensual, cacophonous magic of his saxophone is his most perfect means of expression.

Pablo has much to teach the Steppenwolf. From him and from the Magic Theater Harry Haller will learn to laugh the laughter of the Immortals. Pablo has the capacity to teach this to him because he "unites knowledge and vitality in a way that Harry has yet to learn."⁷ Therefore, despite the fact that Pablo is virtually a silent being outside his Magic Theater of the Immortals, he is a vital key to Harry Haller's ultimate success on the quest he has undertaken.

Maria's function is to stimulate Harry's memory. She appears in his bed one night (apparently through the efforts of Hermine) and through the following nights of their

lovemaking his distant memories return:

These pictures- there were hundreds of them, with names and without- all came back. They rose fresh and new out of this night of love, and I knew again, what in my wretchedness I had forgotten, that they were my life's possession and all its worth. Indestructible and abiding as the stars, these experiences, though forgotten, could never be erased. Their series was the story of my life,⁸ their starry light the undying value of my being.

Hermine serves the function of an anima-figure for the Steppenwolf. As Harry notes when he looks at her, "It was a boy's face. And after a moment I saw something in her face that reminded me of my own boyhood and of my friend of those days. His name was Hermann."⁹ And the name Harry, seen as a vulgarization of Hermann, further serves to strengthen the thesis that Hermine is Haller's anima: "The very name of Hermine characterizes her as a representative of the libidinous anima, and her killing signifies an unsuccessful attempt to suppress the libido."¹⁰ However, there are many other possible explanations for Harry Haller's Magic Theater murder of Hermine, and it would be absurd to say that the libido theory offers a complete explanation.

Hermine is an essential part of the Steppenwolf's development:

He has to learn to play; this Hermine can teach him; he has to learn how much of him is still bourgeois, for instance his fear of death; once again he must needs slough off a skin. He has to rediscover the delights of concrete things, of luxury articles and toiletries, all of which help one to live in the present.¹¹

She makes him fall in love with her, a natural reaction since she is in many ways a reflection of his own self. Dressed as a young man, she wins his love with "the spell of a hermaphrodite."¹²

Mozart, due to the lucidity and lightness of his music as opposed to the ornate heaviness of Brahms and Wagner, is an Immortal and thus one of Haller's guides. In the Magic Theater Pablo appears disguised as Mozart, while in The Journey to the East Mozart puts in a brief appearance in the guise of Pablo.

Goethe appears primarily in Haller's dreams. In the first dream in The Black Eagle Goethe is first seen as a pompous, sober man, but he soon cavorts and prances about like a child, laughing the cold and penetrating laughter of the Immortals. Therefore Goethe represents the childish abandonment of seriousness and bourgeois propriety that the Steppenwolf must master before the Third Kingdom is a viable alternative for him.

Narcissus and Goldmund presents a situation that is somewhat unusual in Hesse's work. There are two heroes; the feminine guides dominate, and the book is more sensual than is typical of Hesse's novels.

Goldmund's masculine guides are primarily Narcissus, the young monk, and the artist Master Niklaus. Master Niklaus is a wealthy man, successful in a bourgeois material sense. It is

who teaches Goldmund the skills of the artist, but his primary contribution to Goldmund's development stems from the fact that he is a unhappy man, guided not by the true wisdom and beauty of his art but by the desire for money, fame, and success in the bourgeois world. From his example Goldmund learns how not to live his life. It is the bourgeois elements in this old artist that makes Goldmund flee the bourgeois world entirely.

Narcissus first directs Goldmund toward the world of the Mother, helping him to recover his childhood memories and stressing the importance of following one's destiny wherever it may lead. Goldmund's world is to be the concrete, physical, sensual realm that is best symbolized by the Mother, while Narcissus exists within the abstract, spiritual, and intellectual world of the Father. And Goldmund's life leads him through an almost unending stream of feminine guides, a "connoisseur's collection" of them, in fact.¹³ From each woman he encounters he learns a little more about the many similarities between love and death, joy and pain; each woman is unique, for she has her own way of giving pleasure to the man she loves. Each one teaches Goldmund something about women, about love, about life and death. Each woman is important to Goldmund.

Goldmund leaves the Mariabronn monastery in response to the call of the Mother that is embodied in Lise, the gypsy

woman who claims his virginity and thereby initiates him for his quest: "It is the Mother who first leads Goldmund into the life of the artist. And she will finally take him from it."¹⁴ Lise is the first of a long procession of lovers, and she teaches Goldmund that love is not permanent, because she leaves him to return to her husband, who will beat her for her escapade.

Agnes is the last of Goldmund's feminine guides. She is a deadly kind of anima-figure; his union with her is extremely dangerous, for it almost costs him his life twice. In the end, Agnes is indirectly responsible for his death. She is the beautiful mistress of the governor, and Goldmund looks very much like her: "At the fountain basin he stopped and looked at his mirror image. It matched the blond woman's face like a brother's, except that it was rather unkempt."¹⁵

Narcissus is also a hero-quester. He is Goldmund's equal in the sense that his quest is just as valid, just as right as Goldmund's more sensual one. Narcissus has no actual feminine guides; he vicariously shares Goldmund's experiences. His masculine guides are the Abbot Daniel and the wanderer Goldmund himself. Abbot Daniel represents the unity of the of the masculine and the feminine in that he heads the masculine monastery and is dedicated to the worship of Mary; the name of the monastery is Mariabronn, which means "spring of Mary."¹⁶

Goldmund teaches Narcissus to love. He inspires the monk's way of thinking and prevents the sterile, staid atmosphere of Mariabronn from stifling his nature. And he also sways Narcissus toward a more sympathetic understanding of the mother-world that he is otherwise capable of observing only from the intellectual world of the Father.

In The Journey to the East the guides are primarily masculine. H.H. shares the goals of the journey, but he also has a private goal; he wants to see the Princess Fatima and to become her lover. She is the only feminine guide who has any bearing on H.H.'s quest. He searches for her as Goldmund searches for the mother-figure.

H.H. has two masculine guides, the newspaperman Lukas and Leo. The only function of Lukas' guidance is to lead H.H. to Leo, whose involvement in the Morbio Inferiore episode makes it difficult for H.H. to write his account of the League journey. Leo is the servant on the journey; he is also the President of the League. Like Vasudeva, Siddhartha, and the Music Master, Leo lives in the Third Kingdom and is dedicated to the ideal of service. He is characterized by an air of peace and harmony, a springy step, and the smile which is a "pious, kind bishop's smile."¹⁷ He smiles the smile of knowledge, peace, and success, and he represents what H.H. could possibly be.

In Hesse's last novel, The Glass Bead Game, the feminine guides are completely absent; the only female characters (with the exception of Plinio's wife) appear in the fictional autobiographies that Joseph Knecht has written. There are no women because Castalia is a masculine society. It exists in the intellectual father-world, the world of Narcissus, in which women have no place. Therefore, since Knecht lives entirely within this masculine society, his guides are decidedly masculine. The first is the old Music Master who is responsible for Joseph's initial awakening through music. Joseph's admission into the Castalian system, in fact, is triggered by the Music Master, and it is his advice that sustains Knecht throughout his school years. Like Vasudeva, the Music Master's dominant characteristic is the radiant smile and the aura of peace and contentment. He dies a unique death, seeming to fade away behind his smile into another realm (the Third Kingdom?) beyond human comprehension. Discussing his last visit to the Master with Carlo Ferromonte, Knecht is fully aware of the nature of his mentor's death: "I understood what I was privileged to see here, and now for the first time grasped the meaning of this smile, this radiance. A saint, one who had attained perfection, had permitted me to dwell in his radiance for an hour."¹⁸

Another of Joseph Knecht's guides is the eccentric hermit called Elder Brother. From him Joseph learns respect

for a culture that is different from his own; he cultivates an appreciation of the I Ching and for Oriental culture as well.

Joseph Knecht's other major guide is Father Jacobus, the Benedictine monk at Mariafels. A wise old man, he teaches Knecht history, and through his lessons, he prepares the way for Joseph's later break with Castalia. It is Father Jacobus who "makes clear that the Game of Glass Beads remains a game despite its sophistication."¹⁹ He introduces another real perspective into Knecht's views of Castalia, for he helps Joseph to grasp what the outside world's view of Castalia must inevitably be. So when Joseph leaves Castalia his departure is at least partially attributable to the influence of this old Benedictine monk.

Indeed, the success of the quest is always in some way due to the helpful intervention of the guides. They are partially responsible for the completion of their pupil's quest, but they cannot be held responsible for their failures. The burdens of the quest finally rest upon the shoulders of the hero himself. Therefore, when the quest is a failure, the explanation lies not in the behavior of the guides but in the beliefs and actions of the quester. Consequently, it is justifiable that the next chapter deals not with the unsuccessful quest but rather with the problems of the failing quester.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹Hermann Hesse. Demian, trans. by Michael Roloff and Michael Lebeck. (New York: Bantam, 1970) p93.

²Leroy R. Shaw. "Time and Structure in Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha" Symposium, XI (1957) p216.

³Hesse. Siddhartha, p106.

⁴Hesse. Siddhartha, pp136-137.

⁵Ralph Freedman. "Person and Persona: The Magic Mirrors of Steppenwolf" Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Theodore Ziolkowski. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) p171. Hereafter cited as "Person".

⁶Ralph Freedman. The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) pp86-87. Cited hereafter as simply The Lyrical Novel.

⁷Eugene Webb. "Hermine and the Problem of Failure in Hesse's Steppenwolf" Modern Fiction Studies, 17 (1971) p121.

⁸Hesse. Steppenwolf, p161.

⁹Hesse, Steppenwolf, p122.

¹⁰Ernst Rose. Faith from the Abyss: Hermann Hesse's Way from Romanticism to Modernity (New York: New York University Press, 1965) p92.

¹¹Boulby, p189.

¹²Hesse. Steppenwolf, p190.

¹³Boulby, p101.

¹⁴Edwin Casebeer. Hermann Hesse. (New York: Warner Paperback Co., 1972) p123.

¹⁵Hermann Hesse. Narcissus and Goldmund, trans. by Ursule Molinaro (New York: Bantam, 1971) p237.

¹⁶Casebeer, p118.

¹⁷Hermann Hesse. The Journey to the East, trans. by Hilda Rosner (New York: Bantam, 1972) p115. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited simply as The Journey.

¹⁸Hermann Hesse. Magister Ludi: The Glass Bead Game, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston. (New York: Bantam, 1970) p236. All further references will be to this edition and will be cited simply as GBG.

¹⁹Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p107.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FAILING QUESTER

Unsuccessful quests are relatively infrequent in Hermann Hesse's novels. The most noteworthy failures, however, include H.H., the narrator of The Journey to the East, and Harry Haller, the notorious Steppenwolf.

The reasons for failure are not obvious, but in all the Hessean quests that fail the reason is internal. The cause lies within the personality or actions of the hero himself. As Hesse portrays the unsuccessful quest, the failure does not result from any external cause. Such is the case of Harry Haller, the protagonist of Steppenwolf. And as one might suspect, the reasons for his failure are neither obvious nor simple, but they do stem from his own nature. Thus there is a sense in which the sole cause of Harry Haller's failure is Harry Haller himself. Certainly the blame does not rest with Hermine, Maria, Pablo, or the Immortals; they are his guides, and they offer him as much assistance as they possibly can.

The quest, however, reaches a stage that demands action on the part of the hero alone, thereby making failure possible in spite of the guides. If the hero has not learned the lessons of his teachers and of his own experiences, if he cannot really

continue his quest alone, then it is almost certain that his quest will be a failure.

The failure of the quest may or may not be final. Doubtless when the hero loses his life as the price of that failure then the quest is permanently ended. However, the failure is not always fatal. Hesse portrays the fatal quest with Hans Giebenrath(Beneath the Wheel), who dies by drowning, his death possibly the result of suicide because he had failed to establish himself at school. Klein, the former civil servant turned thief in "Klein and Wagner," finally drowns himself in his despair over failing to become what he would like to be rather than what he is.

If the hero lives through the failure, as both H.H. and Harry Haller do, then another attempt may be possible. Then the failure would represent only a temporary setback, though certain psychological damage is done. Both of the failing questers are given another chance: H.H. is re-admitted to the League, and Harry Haller's suspension from the Magic Theater lasts for a duration of only twelve hours.

Harry Haller is a Steppenwolf, a being who exists between the bourgeois world and the world of the Immortals, unable to live completely in either. His life and situation parallel Hesse's own in several ways, a fact that is significant because it shows Hesse's attempt to use his art therapeutically to solve his own problems. Both are middle-aged and must

struggle to adapt themselves to their age and the conditions in which they find themselves. Both are intellectuals and pacifists. Harry Haller writes articles attacking his country's position in the war, much as Hesse himself had done. Haller is divorced; Hesse had two divorces behind him at the time he was writing Steppenwolf. It would seem that Hermine's observation about Harry is applicable to Hesse himself: "You must be difficult if nobody sticks to you."¹ Haller reads Nietzsche, Goethe, and Novalis, Hesse's favorite authors. The character and the author share a tendency toward depression and self-imposed isolation, an observation based on Hesse's need for his retreat at Montagnola.

What has happened here is that Hesse has interpolated personal elements into fictional elements, using his own life to give life to his character. In fact, the character may have more life about him than the author, a problem that arises in The Journey to the East. As H.H. tells the reader: "I asked the servant Leo why it was that artists sometimes appear to be only half-alive why their creations seemed so irrefutably alive."²

Harry Haller believes himself to be a soul divided between wolf and man. He sees himself as possessing a multiple soul whose dual elements are engaged in a struggle to the death. He is caught in the dichotomy of wolf and man to an almost paralyzing degree. He labels himself as a

Steppenwolf, and the following statement covers the basic psychology of the Steppenwolf:

The Steppenwolves are those artistic, spiritual, scientific, or political intellectuals who have an intuition of the Immortal (Siddharthian) consciousness. Yet they are the sons and daughters of the middle class and are so trapped by its fears that they believe that to destroy their inherited conceptions of Self would be suicide. They rationalize that the drive to enter into the hazardous experience that would ultimately win them Immortal vision is merely the temptation of the "wolf" in them, their base animal desires.³

Harry's mayor problem is that he takes life too seriously. But he meets Hermine, who teaches (or at least attempts to teach) him to live, to dance, to love, to be all that he is capable of being. He is never content, a characteristic that is said to link him with Faust:

Forever in pursuit of the great and eternal truths, the wolf of the steppes will not be satisfied by little pleasures and mediocre happiness. There is something of Faust in his eternal discontent and in his intellectual cravings.....But unlike Faust, the Steppenwolf is faced with destruction in this world.⁴

Since it is impossible for him to set aside the views he shares with the Immortals, Harry must either renounce his bourgeois elements or learn to accept them as a legitimate part of his own nature in order to progress. He must overcome the bourgeois standards that he has allowed to confine him. In the words of the Immortal Mozart, he must "learn what is to be taken seriously and laugh at the rest."⁵ And Harry's quest progresses very well, for he learns to dance, becomes

one of Maria's lovers, and comes to know a great deal about the strange saxophone player Pablo.

Throughout Haller's development the possible love relationship with Hermine is held out as a desired goal. For Hermine tells him: "I mean to make you fall in love with me, and it is part of my calling."⁶ She also tells him that he will her orders and kill her eventually. But it seems that what Hermine really means by this is that Harry has the ability to "kill" her as she exists now; he can put an end to Hermine the prostitute and thereby clear the way for another role, such as Hermine the lover, the wife, or even the sister. It is Harry who gives her words more meaning than she intends. And it is Harry who stabs her in the Magic Theater of his own accord.

The whole novel builds to the scene of Hermine's "murder". At the Masked Ball the couple dances a symbolic wedding dance, Hermine having succeeded in winning Harry's love while she was dressed as a young man: "Without so much as having touched her I surrendered to her spell, and this spell itself kept within the part she played. It was the spell of a hermaphrodite."⁷ From the dance the two gradually make their way to Pablo and the Magic Theater.

The Magic Theater is one of the escapes open to Haller that are outlined in the "Treatise on the Steppenwolf." In order for the wolf and the man in Haller to live together

in peace, self-knowledge is required. And there are three ways for this to happen: "He may get hold of one of our little mirrors. He may encounter the Immortals. He may find in one of our magic theaters the very thing that is needed to free his neglected soul."⁸ All of these methods amount to the same thing, for all require an intense searching of one's soul, no matter how chaotic or painful such an action might be.

The Magic Theater represents the labyrinth of Harry Haller's mind. Pablo tells Harry: "I can throw open to you no picture gallery but your own soul. All I can give you is the opportunity, the impulse, the key. I can help you to make your own world visible. That is all."⁹ This picture gallery of Harry's soul is the Magic Theater. It begins under Pablo's guidance, and on a realistic level it is nothing more than a dream inspired by opium. It is not "reality," perhaps, but all that matters is that Harry perceives it as real. The importance of the Magic Theater lies in the fact that it is "the vehicle through which he is to be introduced symbolically to the full extent of his personality in all its manifestations."¹⁰ And because he holds the key to the Magic Theater and introduces Haller into its realm, Pablo is the most important guide. There is a sense in which Pablo is the Magus of the Magic Theater.

Harry survives most of the encounters in the Magic Theater with little difficulty. He learns from his experiences that the following is true:

a polar conception of reality can easily give way to a view that embraces all manifestations of life. The first step is merely to acknowledge the chaos in our souls and in the world; the second step is to transcend the chaos by realizing that it is all a natural part of life.¹¹

What Harry is struggling to learn is that the sincere affirmation of existence is essential to the successful completion of the quest. Affirmation is the solution, not the struggle and despair that results from the divided soul of the Steppenwolf, who is torn between the desire to obey the commands of the society's moral laws and the need to live his own life in defiance of them. The latter is contained within the aspects of the wolf.

The laughter of the Immortals, that ironic, mocking laughter of acceptance, is what Harry Haller must learn. It is this laughter that will save him from defeat: "he can be saved only if he is made to accept unequivocally his dual identity as a Steppenwolf and to project it playfully into the detached magic of art."¹² Thus humor and laughter become redeeming virtues in that they not only may lead to the realm of the Immortals but that they are also necessary to make this life tolerable. The ability to laugh will save Haller from suicide; it may eventually take him to the realm of the Immortals. The "Treatise on the Steppenwolf" presents humor as just such a life-sustaining factor:

Humor alone, that magnificent discovery of those who are cut short in their calling to highest endeavor, those who falling short of tragedy are yet

as rich in gifts as in afflictions, humor alone (perhaps the most inborn and brilliant achievement of the spirit) attains to the impossible and brings every aspect of human existence within the rays of its prism. To live in the world as though it were not the world, to respect the law and yet stand above it, to have possessions as though "one possessed nothing," to renounce as though it were no renunciation, all these favorite and often formulated propositions of an exalted worldly wisdom, it is the power of humor alone to make efficacious.¹³

The Magic Theater represents the unity of the Steppenwolf's duality because it contains all possibilities. It is infinite, and the unlimited number of doors corresponds to the vast and unbounded potential manifestations of man's being. As the Treatise tells us, "Man is an onion made up of a hundred integuments, a texture made up of many threads."¹⁴ And each door is another layer, another integument, another thread of the soul. While different possibilities are open to different men (the Magic Theater experiences would be quite different for each person) the Magic Theater remains infinite. It contains everything that is possible for man:

The world of the soul- for this is the world of the Magic Theater- not only contains all the libidinous and destructive urges but all the creative and unselfish impulses as well. It is not only the world of Pablo and his prostitute friends, but also the world of Goethe and Mozart.¹⁵

The Magic Theater has only one restriction concerning admission: it is for madmen only. The term "madman" as Hesse uses it here applies only to those people who are able to "perceive the total relativity of good and evil and see with the eyes of the Immortals."¹⁶ Harry Haller finally is

not mad; he is unable to accomplish the fulfillment of his being in order to meet the qualifications requires for the application of the term. Hence Hermine's comment in *The Black Eagle*: "You are no madman, Professor. You're not half mad enough to please me. It seems to me you're much too clever in a silly way, just like a professor."¹⁷

Harry fails in the Magic Theater because he allows his bourgeois elements to creep into the game. His seriousness becomes a severe handicap that he cannot overcome. So he stabs Hermine with one of the "personality chess pieces" he is carrying in his pocket; it has transformed itself into a knife and Hermine is killed, as it were, by a fragment of Harry's own personality. To be sure, it is not a real murder, as the Immortals make clear:

Haller has not alone insulted the majesty of art in that he confounded our beautiful picture gallery with so-called reality, and stabbed to death the reflection of a girl with the reflection of a knife: he has in addition displayed the intention of using our theater as a mechanism of suicide and shown himself devoid of humor.¹⁸

Why Harry kills Hermine is a complex question. It is relevant only because it serves to mark Harry's failure. Jealousy alone would provide a motive, but it is possible that since Hermine represents the anima her murder is an unsuccessful attempt to suppress part of his own nature. Mark Boulby's view of the murder presents still another alternative: "His murder of Hermine is not motivated by jealousy(as Pablo, taking the long view, vainly hopes) but

is rather a disastrous reversion to his bourgeois self, an upsurge of disgust with the sensual."¹⁹ Here, then, in the quest of the Steppenwolf, the bourgeois dragon has proved itself to be at least temporarily stronger than the hero, Harry Haller himself. But neither of the forces has been permanently defeated, and the battle will rage until one side surrenders.

It is interesting to note the parallels that exist between Haller's case and that of Klein in "Klein and Wagner." Klein is another failing quester; his journey leads him to steal, to embezzle, and he is finally brought to the point of committing a murder. But Klein is able to resist the impulse to stab his mistress Teresina, and he drowns himself in his despair at what he is. There is even an element that corresponds to the Magic Theater: Klein dreads to enter the Wagner Theater and cannot bear the awareness of those factors of his personality that it represents. Haller, too, reacts to the murder in a suicidal way, for he is more than willing to face his executioners and seeks death at the hands of the Immortals in the Magic Theater. But the Immortals will have no part in such foolish seriousness, and Haller is finally laughed out of court.

Even though Harry has failed in the Magic Theatre, the fact remains that his failure is not fatal and it may not be permanent. It is implied that the quest will continue and that Harry will again enter into the realm of the Magic

Theater; he will be given another chance: "A glimpse of its meaning had stirred my reason and I was determined to begin the game afresh. I would sample its tortures once more and shudder at its senselessness. I would traverse not once more, but often, the hell of my inner being."²⁰

Harry must continue his painful struggle to reach himself, to exist in the realm of the Immortals. He must learn that life is a game and that it must be played earnestly and to the limits. Life is not to be taken seriously, and when the Steppenwolf learns this his quest will be ended.

The Journey to the East presents a hero whose problems are similar to those of the Steppenwolf and who is not an entirely fictional character, either. H.H. is another of the Hessean questers who bears a marked resemblance to his author. As before, there is an intrusion of reality into the fiction. H.H. (Harry Haller, Hermann Hesse, Hermann Heilner) incorporates some elements of Hesse's own life. The book itself deals with the problem of writing about something which cannot be written about, a problem Hesse must have been struggling with in the preliminary stages of The Glass Bead Game. Such is the problem that confronts all artists: how to describe or convey an experience that becomes altered with the attempt at any real expression so that it can never really be purely communicated. H.H., like Harry Haller in his records, tells his own story; he even shares the suicidal existence of the Steppenwolf.

Like Harry Haller, H.H. has not learned that life is a game. When he declares that life cannot be a game he is admonished by Leo: "That is just what life is when it is beautiful and happy- a game! Naturally one can also do all kinds of other things with it, make a duty of it, or a battleground, or a prison, but that does not make it any prettier."²¹ The lesson to be gained from this statement is that H.H. must learn not to take life so seriously; he must learn to smile the smile of contentment that shows itself so frequently on the face of Leo.

Though H.H. does not realize it, the conditions of his guide Leo represent the real goal of his quest, just as Siddhartha's goal is the wisdom and peaceful harmony that belongs to Vasudeva. The double figure that H.H. encounters in the League Archives makes the connection between H.H. and Leo clear: Leo represents H.H. at his best, and the figure of H.H. flows into Leo's corresponding one.

The double figure could also be interpreted as the symbol of the relationship between the character Leo and the author H.H. (Hermann Hesse.) On this level Leo would represent the Hessean ideal and the highest values of Hesse himself. All of H.H.'s energy for being flows into Leo; the author gives himself to his character and is himself depleted as a result. This is only one of the many levels of possible interpretation for this simple, yet complex symbol.

No problems arise for H.H. until the servant Leo disappears from the group of Eastern wayfarers at Morbio Inferiore. H.H. cannot cope with this situation and finally deserts the group and the entire League. He returns "with nostalgia but without faith."²² He does not even know if the League still exists, but he is driven to write an account of experiences, telling everything he has not sworn to keep secret.

H.H. has failed, and despair strikes him as it does Harry Haller. Once devoted to music, and given to entertaining while on the pilgrimage, H.H. sells his violin and lives a narrow, suicidal existence.

The journey to the East is a journey that cuts across both time and space. The pilgrims consist of such people as Pablo from Steppenwolf, Goldmund, Vasudeva, Klingsor, and many other characters from the world of Hesse's fiction, of fiction in general, and of "reality." So the journey to the East represents the quest for the Third Kingdom, a quest in which H.H. has failed.

The most beautiful moments of H.H.'s quest occur at the Bremgarten festival. All the travelers are in perfect harmony, each one doing what pleases him most. This harmony has been compared to "the beatitude of Eden."²³ Characteristic of the Third Kingdom and its higher level of innocence, this beatitude is important: "This beatitude, an inner spiritual integrity and an outer unity with nature...is the goal of the pilgrimage."²⁴

But in spite of his experiences at Bremgarten, H.H. fails, and this beatitude remains a goal that H.H. does not attain permanently within the scope of this novel.

After an episode of extreme depression and self-accusation H.H. is brought before the League council, just as Harry Haller is brought before the court of the Immortals. Similarly, his worst crimes are merely smiled at by the League officials. Punishment for these offenses would be absurd: "To regard such behavior as sinful is to regard the world as sinful, or even as avoidable, and over this the river in Siddhartha laughs; to consider the world, the inevitable as sinful is indeed a laughable error."²⁵

Why does H.H. fail? The most obvious answer would be the loss of faith in the League and its objectives; also obvious is the fact that his memory fails him. He forgets (as the Steppenwolf does) and is confused about things that were once familiar and important to him. H.H. does not remember the rules and requirements of the League; he does not even realize that he has lost his League ring until Leo returns it to him. Mark Boulby suggests the following answer:

It is H.H.'s selfish pride which is the real reason for his forgetting; his memory is confused and dreadfully fragmentary, as it must be for one who has imagined himself isolated and thus cut himself off from the truth of the past. He is deluded, he faces the wrong way round; hence his struggles to escape from the darkness of forgetting only plunge him more deeply into it.²⁶

H.H. is unable to believe in and live by the ideal that Leo exhibits, the ideal of service. He is too caught up in himself, too proud and too certain of his own importance.

Another cause of H.H.'s failure is his seriousness. Like the Steppenwolf he has not learned to laugh. Therefore one of his most serious problems is the selling of his violin, because it symbolizes his final rejection of any and all portions of life that are not respectably serious. It has been suggested that his selling of the violin is important, but for another reason:

H.H.'s worst sin of all, perhaps, was the sale of his violin, that instrument of form....This was, of course, Harry Haller's real sin, the failure to live out the world with sense of form, his riddling the world and neutralizing form with morbid introspection, hyperreflection, and the moralizing will. ²⁷

H.H., like Haller but unlike Leo, is not in harmony with the universe and its creatures. Even Necker, the dog that is so friendly with Leo, cannot accept H.H. but must growl at the intruder that H.H. represents.

Like Harry Haller, H.H. is brought to an awareness of his shortcomings. He repents and is consequently "taken back into the fold" like the Prodigal Son.²⁸ And once he has been re-admitted to the Order there is nothing that can be said. H.H. has a second chance (as does Haller) to reach the goals of his quest. But it is as H.H. tells us: "Now everything seems

different again, and I do not yet know whether it has helped me in my problem or not."²⁹ His struggle must continue, and his success is not guaranteed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- ¹Hesse, Steppenwolf, p102.
- ²Casebeer, p62.
- ³Hesse, Steppenwolf, p243.
- ⁴Seymour L. Flaxman. "Der Steppenwolf: Hesse's Portrait of the Intellectual" Modern Language Quarterly, 15(1954) p350.
- ⁵Hesse, Steppenwolf, p243.
- ⁶Hesse, Steppenwolf, p126.
- ⁷Hesse, Steppenwolf, p190.
- ⁸Hesse, Steppenwolf, p64.
- ⁹Hesse, Steppenwolf, p200.
- ¹⁰Ziolkowski, The Novels, p216.
- ¹¹Ziolkowski, The Novels, p26.
- ¹²Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p80.
- ¹³Hesse, Steppenwolf, p63.
- ¹⁴Hesse, Steppenwolf, p69.
- ¹⁵Rose, p91.
- ¹⁶Ziolkowski, The Novels, p215.
- ¹⁷Hesse, Steppenwolf, pp101-102.
- ¹⁸Hesse, Steppenwolf, p245.
- ¹⁹Boulby, p200.
- ²⁰Hesse, Steppenwolf, p248.
- ²¹Hesse, The Journey, pp75-76.
- ²²Boulby, p251.

²³Harvey Buchanan. "Hermann Hesse's Pilgrimage"
Shenandoah, IX, i, p21.

²⁴Buchanan, p21.

²⁵Boulby, p255.

²⁶Boulby, pp259-260.

²⁷Boulby, p256.

²⁸Thomas E. Colby. "The Impenitent Prodigal: Hermann
Hesse's Hero" German Quarterly, 40, p20.

²⁹Hesse, The Journey, p67.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SUCCESSFUL QUEST

Occurring more frequently in Hesse's novels than the failing quester is the quester who succeeds. Even when the protagonist fails there is at least one other character whose own quest has been successful and who is a representative of the Third Kingdom. In Demian Frau Eva and Max Demian are successful questers, as is the protagonist Emil Sinclair.

Siddhartha presents two successful questers, Vasudeva and Siddhartha. The name Siddhartha means "the one who has reached his goal,"¹ and Siddhartha fulfills this prophecy. His quest leads him, via Vasudeva and the river, to a new perception of time and unity. From Vasudeva he learns to listen to the river. He also learns the art of peaceful acceptance and affirmation from the old ferryman's example. From the river Siddhartha learns that there is another way in which to view time, and he realizes that all things exist as all other things eternally and simultaneously. This new perception arises from the fact

That the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past nor the shadow of the future.²

For Siddhartha, too, life is a river, for he sees all the parts of a person's life as flowing together into the unity; but man can only realize the individual experience and so relies on the concept of time. The different stages of Siddhartha's own life amount to nothing more than the flowing of the river. All his different elements blend, and the "scholar, ascetic, sensualist, businessman, laborer, father"³ that is Siddhartha merge into one. Each element must be seen as simply a different aspect of the ultimate underlying unity. Only the present exists; man must learn to live in the present. And as Siddhartha tells Vasudeva, "Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence."⁴

In Siddhartha as in other novels by Hesse the successful quest is the result of knowledge, of the new perspective from which the hero views time; he understands that all things in the universe are linked by an underlying unity and harmony. In Siddhartha's case the smile of peace and contentment appears on his face as it does on the already successful Vasudeva:

Vasudeva's smile was radiant; it hovered brightly in all the wrinkles of his old face, as the Om hovered over all the voices of the river. His smile was radiant as he looked at his friend, and now the same smile appeared on Siddhartha's face. His wound was healing, his pain was dispersing; his self had merged into unity.

From that hour Siddhartha ceased to fight against his destiny. There shone in his face the serenity of knowledge, of one who is no longer confronted with conflict of desires, who has found salvation, who is in harmony with the stream of events, with the stream of life, full of sympathy and compassion, surrendering himself to the stream belonging to the unity of all things.⁵

So Siddhartha has reached his goal; success comes to the quester as the result of his experiences and the wisdom he absorbs from the river and from Vasudeva.

Since Siddhartha focuses on a different quest, and since he has long ago reached his own goals, little is known about Vasudeva except that he is an old ferryman, and that, like Siddhartha, the river has played an important role in his development. He too has learned the important lessons from the river, and he provides an example for Siddhartha of the contented, well-integrated man whose own quest has already been successfully completed.

The preliminary stages of Vasudeva's quest remain a mystery; Vasudeva appears in Siddhartha only as the old ferryman who is very wise and amazingly happy. But Siddhartha appears in many different roles, and his quest takes him from his father and the Brahmins to the Samanas, and from them to Kamala the beautiful and successful courtesan, and to her counterpoint in the material world, the merchant Kamaswami. Siddhartha has many experiences before he arrives at the river to commit suicide. He is saved by the holy Om of the river and becomes Vasudeva's assistant. So Siddhartha's quest takes him from the intellectual world of the Father to ordinary life and the sexual manifestations of the Mother world, and to the river, which is symbolic of the union of these two worlds.

Like the Magic Theater, the League Archives, and the Glass Bead Game, the river contains all possibilities. It represents the flow of time, the unity of the world, and totality, and as such it has a strong influence on Siddhartha's development.

Siddhartha learns to affirm existence and to accept the world as it is. From his experiences emerges his complete lack of "desire to probe and split the world by discriminations, by saying Yea and Nay, for in the real world sin and grace reside close together. Instead, he wants only to love the world, love it as it is, existing in and of itself."⁶

Certainly a great deal of self-overcoming in the Nietzschean sense is involved in Siddhartha's quest, as it is for most of the Hessean questers. Nietzsche's Zarathustra tells us: "Man is a rope, tied between the beast and the overman- a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous shuddering and stopping....What can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going-under."⁷ And Siddhartha does "go under" (indeed he must do so) before he overcomes.

One of the many things that Vasudeva has learned from the river is that everything returns, "everything comes back."⁸ This too is Nietzschean, for it is really nothing more than Hesse's restatement of the theme of eternal recurrence that Nietzsche presents: "all things recur eternally, and we ourselves, too: and...we have already existed an eternal number of times, and all things with us."⁹

Leo in The Journey to the East also is a successful quester with Nietzschean overtones. President and servant of the League, he wears "rope-soled shoes" and lives at 69a Seilergraben, "Ropemaker's Lane,"¹⁰ images which must recall Nietzsche's own tightrope imagery in Thus Spoke Zarathustra. In connection with Leo, Theodore Ziolkowski also mentions Oknos, the rope-maker, who is the symbol of man's greatest development.¹¹

Even though the protagonist of The Journey to the East fails, Leo represents the successful quester. Like Vasudeva, he bears the significant smile: "His smile is the smile of ironic renunciation, for he knows that mastery in the everyday world is illusory while service to the timeless spirit is eternal."¹²

Evidence of Leo's success in his quest is given, but little is known about his personal quest since he appears only in connection with H.H.'s failure. He seeks the key of Solomon and the ability to speak with animals, and it seems that his search is successful, because he later is able to communicate with the Alsatian dog. Leo also has the peaceful smile, the aura of contentment, and the walk that is a characteristic of the Buddha in Siddhartha and of Joseph Knecht in The Glass Bead Game., all of which add up to the successful quester in Hesse's works.

Steppenwolf involves a failing quester as the protagonist, but as in The Journey to the East the Third Kingdom is still represented. The Immortals, emblematic of the successful quest and of higher reality, make very important appearances both as the authors of the "Treatise on the Steppenwolf" and as figures within the scope of the Magic Theater. Pablo, though as little is known about his quest as is known about the life of Leo, is apparently a successful quester. He is happy, content with his own being and with the circle in which he moves; he affirms existence and laughs the chilling laughter of the Immortals.

In Narcissus and Goldmund Goldmund is a successful quester. In search of the image of the Mother, he finds it just prior to his death; even though he is not able to preserve it in a work of art, he has reached his goal. Despite the fact that he is physically destroyed by the time that his quest is completed, and despite the pain and suffering that he must undergo, it seems that Goldmund has found what he has sought so earnestly in his life.

Goldmund injects much of the energy of his quest into his art. Life and its experiences provide the basis for creation: "In the case of the artist, this quest for self-knowledge, this need to fit oneself into the organic pattern of life, is the impetus to the creative process."¹³

Narcissus is the thinker, while Goldmund is the artist; Narcissus exists in the father-world as an intellectual, and Goldmund, with his sensuality, belongs to the world of the

Mother, which is the physical, sensual, world of concrete things. Narcissus' quest keeps him within the walls of the monastery, while Goldmund is called out into the world of experience where he rapidly collects a long string of lovers. And Oskar Seidlin notes the following about Goldmund:

...with each new beloved Goldmund becomes a new lover. He is a true vagabond, a true explorer of the delights and ills of the mother world, an artist not only when he tries to carve into wood the faces and bodies he has loved, but also when he becomes one with them in flesh. His vagrancy is in truth an earnest and pious quest, his hunger for life does not taste of the nihilistic attempt to plunge headlong into life out of fear of death....Goldmund's pilgrimage is, an act of self-realization, not of self-defense.¹⁴

Goldmund is a figure from the mold of Don Juan, and though he makes love to many different women on his quest he does not sin through these actions. In the first place, to apply moral standards here would be absurd. "Goldmund's life in the world is not sinful, because it is the inevitable manifestation of himself."¹⁵ Moral standards and judgments are not applicable to the Hessean quest (or to any other type of quest!) because the quester does whatever he must do in order to reach his goal. Nothing is out of bounds for the quester who succeeds. Anything is possible, but the Hessean quester remains within the bounds of Reason. None of Hesse's characters could even begin to challenge the characters of the Marquis de Sade in licentiousness, debauchery, and total lack of restraint; it seems that the Hessean quester is always basically a "good" man.

Narcissus is led to become the next head of the Maria-bronn monastery. He remains with the monastery even though he is severely tempted by Goldmund and by what he represents. Still, it appears that his quest too is successful; he is just as happy as Goldmund.

To label the quests of both Narcissus and Goldmund as successful may seem debatable; it is certainly controversial. Hans Mayer discusses "two possible attitudes of the artist to reality: a turning away from the world, or an attempt to function within the human community."¹⁶ What he is really discussing is two alternate ways of living; each man must choose his own way. Mayer concludes that "Neither Narcissus nor Goldmund, each of whom chooses one of the two ways, manages to become completely happy."¹⁷ And Theodore Ziolkowski agrees: "neither pure life of the spirit nor a total abandonment to nature represents the proper answer. Goldmund achieves totality, but it is impermanent; while Narcissus resides in the timeless realm that is limited in its extent."¹⁸ But Goldmund has succeeded, even though his quest ultimately claims his life, and Narcissus is in the position that the already successful Abbot Daniel had filled.

Once again, it is probably questionable to include Joseph Knecht in this series of successful questers, since his quest, like that of Goldmund, finally results in his death. But while Knecht's death (by water) is significant, it is not a true negation of the quest.

The Glass Bead Game is the story of Joseph Knecht's life in connection with the Castalian system, and it takes place at some indefinite time in the future. Castalia is an Apollonian, masculine society that is fostered by the intellectually-oriented father world. While "Nietzsche probably would have attacked the pedagogical province as Socratism gone mad, as the total demythologization of culture,"¹⁹ Castalia has its merits as well as its disadvantages. It encourages a high level of education, fosters intellectual development; but it also is dependent upon the whims of the outside world for its existence.

Knecht enters into his quest in response to the old Music Master who brings about his admission to the elite schools. From his example Knecht learns the importance of service. He becomes an example of the service ideal himself, which is only appropriate since the name Knecht means "servant." And "Knecht Ruprecht is one of the German equivalents of our Santa Claus; he is a servant of the Savior."²⁰

As Magister Ludi Joseph Knecht exemplifies the ideal of service, and he continues to do so even with his death, though the recipients of his service alter with the environment.

Seen through the narrator's eyes, Joseph Knecht is the perfect Castalian. But because he leaves Castalia in order to go to Mariafels, because he lives with Elder Brother for a time in Castalia, and because he eventually parts with Castalia

forever, Joseph Knecht is not the typical Castalian. He is not an ordinary Castalian like Fritz Tegularis. Through his associations with Thomas von der Trave (who is perhaps Thomas Mann, born on the Trave River²¹) and with Dubois, the "Foreign Minister" of Castalia, Knecht is brought to the realization that Castalia is not only not an independent, self-supporting system, but that the system itself is of dubious value to the outside world which supports it and receives no service in return. This too sets him apart from the usual member of Castalia:

Most Castalians live in complete ignorance of the dangers inherent in the system and of the threat from the outside world that might one day weary of supporting an institution that was becoming more and more autonomous in its disengagement from reality.²²

Joseph Knecht is characterized by the desire not to submit to any tyrannical and unjustified system. There is a sense in which he is a rebel; he will not bow down before external authority, and he accepts no codes, finally, but his own.

Hesse's last novel centers around the Glass Bead Game, which is strange only because the Game is something that cannot really be described. It relates to both the journey to the East (the novel is dedicated to the Journeyers to the East) and to the Magic Theater; both are seen as historical forerunners of the Glass Bead Game by the Castalian narrator.

Because the Game incorporates all of human knowledge and because its possibilities are infinite, it is a symbol of unity and harmony that is understandably difficult to discuss, and "a concise image of the game never emerges, and the reader is left only with a few indications as to the nature and scope of this concept."²³ Thus The Glass Bead Game is similar to The Journey to the East in that both novels center around something that cannot really be described or discussed.

Because of the distance that exists between the reader and the Glass Bead Game and because of the lack of direct information about the operations of the Game, the reader is left with the impression that the Glass Bead Game is a highly technical, mystical and intellectual accomplishment that is somehow connected with divinity and creativity. The following statement constitutes an adequate summary of the function of the Glass Bead Game:

The Glass Bead Game is one of Hesse's most effective symbols. It is not defined closely enough to reduce it to a simple allegory, but is presented in terms so general that the reader can produce his own associations from almost any area of modern intellectual life. It stands par excellence for the tendency toward abstraction and synthesis characteristic of the years between the two World Wars- in non-objective art, in atonal music, in symbolic logic- and thus represents Hesse's conception of totality through magical thinking.²⁴

Joseph Knecht becomes Magister Ludi, the Master of the Glass Bead Game. Discontented with Castalia as it presently exists, he attempts to affect a change by using all the influence

and power of his position. Realizing that the Glass Bead Game would soon be abandoned if "the purely aesthetic values represented by the province"²⁵ should come under attack from the outside world, and failing in his attempts to reform Castalia, Knecht makes a drastic and dramatic move that is unprecedented in the history of Castalia- he makes a permanent break with the system, resigning from the position of Magister Ludi. He plans to become the tutor of Tito, the son of Plinio DeSignori, an outsider who had been educated at Castalia: "He has come to regard it as more worthwhile to educate a single young man in the "real" world outside than to pass his time in the rarefied administration of an unfruitful "pure" literature and intellectuality."²⁶

His departure from Castalia brings him to his death. But Joseph Knecht has already attained the Third Kingdom: he has refused to submit to the external authority of the Castalian system. The fact that he is the Magister Ludi indicates that he already views time from the required perspective, for such a view would be necessary in dealing with the Glass Bead Game.

Knecht drowns at sunrise while attempting to race his new pupil Tito across a cold mountain lake. Kenneth Negrus suggests that Knecht's dive into the cold waters marks a "reawakening of his repressed vital urges."²⁷ The fact that the death occurs at sunrise would seem to suggest not a tragic

ending as much as a transition, a progression, a rebirth. Death by water could represent the abandonment of the Self to the Dionysian spirit, to formlessness, and perfection. Hilda Cohn makes the connection between the waters of the lake and the waters of baptism, suggesting that both Knecht and Tito are baptized by their swim and that "water becomes the means of regeneration."²⁸

With the death of Joseph Knecht a change comes over Tito, who feels responsible for the death of his tutor. This attitude is justifiable because Joseph's death must finally be seen as a death of sacrifice, a theme that runs through the fictional autobiographies, particularly "The Rainmaker." Because Knecht died in this way, Tito's life will be different.

Death is a moment of success for the former Magister Ludi. He abandons himself to the world in a fatal gesture of surrender, of acceptance and affirmation. Death

...is the moment of fulfillment for Knecht. Like Empedocles' plunge into the volcano, Knecht's plunge into the frigid waters symbolizes the immolation of the Self in the All, the recognition of Truth, the acquisition of immortality in the transcendence to a higher Self, to union with God.²⁹

So Joseph Knecht dies a sacrificial death of service. He is a successful quester, as most of the Hessean questers finally must be seen to be. And since the pattern of the successful quest dominates Hesse's work it is fitting that his last novel should be The Glass Bead Game, which would win him the Nobel Prize in 1946, the climax of the long and tumultuous literary career.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

- ¹Ziolkowski, The Novels, p154.
- ²Hesse, Siddhartha, p107.
- ³Casebeer, p32.
- ⁴Hesse, Siddhartha, p107.
- ⁵Hesse, Siddhartha, p136.
- ⁶Martin Buber. "Hermann Hesse in the Service of the Spirit" Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Theodore Ziolkowski. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) p27.
- ⁷Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Viking Press, 1972) pp14-15.
- ⁸Hesse, Siddhartha, p49.
- ⁹Nietzsche. Op cit p220.
- ¹⁰Ziolkowski, The Novels, p278.
- ¹¹Ziolkowski, The Novels, p279.
- ¹²Ziolkowski, The Novels, p280.
- ¹³Peter B. Gontrum. "Oracle and Shrine: Hesse's Lebensbaum" Monatshefte, LVI (1964) p186.
- ¹⁴Seidlin, p60.
- ¹⁵Boulby, p225.
- ¹⁶Hans Mayer. "Hermann Hesse and 'The Age of the Feuilleton'" Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Theodore Ziolkowski. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973) pp82-83.
- ¹⁷Mayer, pp82-83.
- ¹⁸Ziolkowski, The Novels, p245.
- ¹⁹Boulby, p286.
- ²⁰Rose, p139.

²¹Ziolkowski, The Novels, p313.

²²Ziolkowski, The Novels, p319.

²³Ziolkowski, The Novels, pp42-43.

²⁴Ziolkowski, The Novels, p77.

²⁵Ziolkowski, The Novels, p311.

²⁶Mayer, p91.

²⁷Kenneth Negrus. "On the Death of Joseph Knecht in Hermann Hesse's Glasperlenspiel" Monatshefte, LIII (1961) p186.

²⁸Hilda D. Cohn. "The Symbolic End of Hermann Hesse's Glasperlenspiel" Modern Language Quarterly, XI (1950) p356.

²⁹Leslie A. Wilson. "Hesse's Veil of Isis" Monatshefte LV (1963) p321.

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL DATELINE

- July 2, 1877- Hermann Hesse born in Calw, Germany
- 1890- sent to prepare for college entrance examination
- 1891- enters Maulbronn Protestant Theological Seminary
- 1892- runs away from Maulbronn
- 1893- attends Canstatt Gymnasium; attempts suicide
- June 1894-
September, 1895- apprentice at Perrot's clockshop in Calw; decides to be a writer
- October 1895-
1899- apprentice in book trade in Tübingen
- 1899- Romantische Lieder; An Hour Beyond Midnight
- 1902- death of his mother
- 1904- Peter Camenzind published; marries Maria Bernoulli
- 1905- birth of first son, Bruno; Beneath the Wheel
- 1909- birth of second son, Heiner
- 1910- Gertrude
- 1911- travels to India, East Indies, Ceylon; birth of third son, Martin
- 1912- settles in Bern
- 1913- From India, Rosshalde published
- 1914- outbreak of World War I
- 1915- Knulp published

- 1915 -
- 1919- directs book center for German prisoners of war
 - 1916- death of his father;
mental illness of his wife
- 1916-
- 1917- undergoes treatment at Lucerne
 - 1919- Demian published;
moves to Montagnola, Switzerland
 - 1920- Klingsor's Last Summer
 - 1922- Siddhartha
 - 1923- divorces Maria Bernoulli;
becomes Swiss citizen;
marries Ruth Wenger
 - 1924- divorces Ruth Wenger
 - 1926- elected to Prussian Academy of Letters
 - 1927- Steppenwolf;
begins living with Ninon Dolbin
 - 1930- Narcissus and Goldmund
 - 1931- marries Ninon Dolbin;
The Journey to the East
 - 1933- shelters Thomas Mann and others from the Nazis
 - 1936- wins Swiss Gottfried Keller Prize
 - 1939- World War II begins
 - 1943- The Glass Bead Game
 - 1946- Nobel Prize for The Glass Bead Game;
Goethe Award
 - 1947- honorary citizen of Calw

1955- receives peace prize of German publishers

July 2, 1962- honorary citizen of Montagnola

August 10, 1962- dies in his sleep at Montagnola of a
brain hemorrhage at the age of eighty-
five

APPENDIX B

MAJOR WORKS

- 1899 Romantische Lieder; Eine Stunde nach Mitternacht
- 1904 Peter Camenzind
- 1905 Unterm Rad (Beneath the Wheel)
- 1910 Gertrude
- 1913 Rosshalde; From India
- 1915 Knulp
- 1919 Demian
- 1920 Klingsors Letzen Sommer (Klingsor's Last Summer)
- 1922 Siddhartha
- 1927 Steppenwolf
- 1930 Narziss und Goldmund
- 1931 Die Morgenlandfahrt (The Journey to the East)
- 1943 Das Glasperlenspiel (The Glass Bead Game)

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