

MONARCH NOTES

HERMANN HESSE'S

SHORT  
FICTION

EARLY SPRING  
MY RECOLLECTIONS OF KNULP

THE END

A CHILD'S HEART

KLEIN AND WAGNER

KLINGSOR'S LAST SUMMER

*A CRITICAL COMMENTARY*

A NOTE TO THE READER

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A CRITICAL COMMENTARY

**JERRY GLENN**

PROFESSOR OF GERMAN  
UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

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**MONARCH PRESS**

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Standard Book Number: 671-00942-7

Published by  
MONARCH PRESS  
a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.  
1 West 39th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10018

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*General Editors of Monarch Notes*

<i>Walter James Miller</i>	<i>Bonnie E. Nelson</i>	<i>John M. Bell</i>
<i>Professor of English</i>	<i>Lecturer,</i>	<i>Associate Professor</i>
<i>New York University</i>	<i>Adult Education</i>	<i>of Humanities</i>
	<i>Hofstra University</i>	<i>New York University</i>

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## A NOTE TO THE STUDENT

In what ways is Hesse's short story "My Recollections of Knulp" a definite parallel to his novel *Steppenwolf*? What is the primary prototype of the Knulp stories? In what ways is "A Child's Heart" similar to Hesse's *Demian*? These are a few of the fascinating questions discussed in this Monarch Note, which is designed to aid you in your study and appreciation of Hesse's short fiction. But this Note will make little sense to you unless you are already familiar with at least some of the stories discussed, either in the original German or in the English translation (published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, available in paperback). The author of this Monarch Note assumes, throughout his critical discussion, that it will prompt you to refer back repeatedly to your original text.

—The Editors.

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## HESSE'S LIFE, WORKS, AND IMPACT

### Family background

Like many German writers, Hermann Hesse came from a family which had for many generations been associated with the Protestant clergy. The father, Johannes Hesse, was a Protestant clergyman who belonged to the pietistic tradition, a liberal branch of German Protestantism which stressed a concern for the individual's relationship to God above strict formal dogma. Hermann was later to acknowledge the importance of the religious atmosphere of his childhood, as, for example, in a letter dated 1950 in which he spoke of Christianity as it was *lived*, rather than *preached*, in his home. Johannes Hesse spent the years 1869 to 1873 as a missionary in India. There he acquired an interest in Oriental philosophy and theology which he was to retain for the rest of his life. Forced to return to Europe on account of poor health, he settled in Calw, a town in Southwestern Germany, where he was active as an author of works on religious subjects. Hermann's mother, Marie, came from a similar background; she had been in India as the wife of a missionary. She was living in Calw after the death of her first husband when she met Johannes Hesse.

Hermann, the second of six children, was born in Calw on July 2nd, 1877. Four years later the family moved to Basel, Switzerland, and acquired Swiss citizenship. The father continued his religious work in Basel where he became the editor of a missionary magazine. In 1886 the family returned to Calw where Hesse was to remain until leaving home to attend a boarding school in 1890. Her-

mann's early childhood years were for the most part pleasant and they were certainly intellectually stimulating. Literature, philosophy, and the arts were discussed and respected in his home. Guests, many of whom came from foreign lands, were often entertained there. Hermann felt an especial affinity to his mother whose loving care provided him with a feeling of security and well-being. His father, on the other hand, in spite of his tolerance in regard to many theological matters, believed in strict discipline and followed rigid theories of education which allowed no room for freedom of expression on his son's part. Many of the difficulties of these early years are reflected in Hesse's works, as, for example, in "A Child's Heart." As a boy, Hermann was not an outstanding pupil and did not enjoy school; he once remarked that he had had only one teacher whom he admired.

### **Search for a career**

As was common in Germany at that time, Hermann was sent to a boarding school to prepare for the difficult examination which all students had to pass in order to be admitted to advanced schools and the university. He entered the school in Göppingen in 1890 to undertake this preparation. At this school, for the only time in his life, he was an exceptionally good student. After successfully passing the examination, he followed the wishes of his father and enrolled in the famous school at Maulbronn with the intention of becoming a Protestant minister. The atmosphere of the school soon proved too oppressive and Hermann ran away. He returned, but once more was unable to adjust and soon left the school permanently. The months which followed were exceedingly traumatic for the disturbed youth. Help was sought from various persons and institutions, but Hermann's emotional problems could not be alleviated. Once he even went so far as to attempt suicide. His final exposure to formal education was at a preparatory school in Bad Cannstatt in 1893 and 1894.



Hesse was not at all happy there and his experiences formed the basis for the descriptions of some of Sinclair's unhappy school experiences in *Demian*.

While doing mechanical work in a Calw clock factory in 1894 and 1895, the young Hesse decided that he wanted to become a writer. He soon found employment in a bookstore in Tübingen and began to see meaning, or at least potential meaning, in life. In 1899 he published his first books, a collection of poetry and one of short prose pieces. In that same year he moved to Basel where he continued to work in the book trade and to expand his horizons, by reading books of many different kinds, and by traveling in Switzerland and Italy. Two years later he wrote a book which attracted the attention of some important German critics and which accordingly established Hesse's reputation as an author: *The Posthumous Papers and Poems of Hermann Lauscher*.

### Important early writings

Other books followed, including, in 1904, the novel *Peter Camenzind*. This book was immediately successful and the royalties from it and from other writings gave Hesse a degree of financial independence. He was accordingly able to leave the book trade and devote himself entirely to his writing. The novel is about a poor but talented Swiss boy who grows up in harmony with nature, but decides to go out into the world where he eventually attains a measure of material success in society. He ultimately comes to realize that he has not found self-fulfillment in love, intellectual pursuits, art, music, or material goods. Following the death of his close friend Boppi, a cripple, he finally retires to lead an isolated life free of the demands of society. *Already in the first of Hesse's novels we see very clearly the theme that will pervade all of the later ones: the difficult search on the part of an individual for identity and fulfillment.*

Hesse soon became a respected member of the German literary elite and contributed stories, poems, reviews, and essays to many of the leading periodicals of that time. He also continued to write novels and the next one, *Beneath the Wheel* (1906), was to a great extent autobiographical. It relates the unsuccessful attempt of the hero, Hans Giebenrath, to cope with the stifling atmosphere of the educational system. The two sides of Hesse's own nature are shown in Hans and in Hermann Heilner, who rebelled against the system and ran away. Hans, like Hesse, experienced many disappointments and eventually found himself unable to cope with the demands of his father and of the school. In two very important respects, however, the novel does not follow Hesse's biography; Hans' mother dies when he is very young, depriving him of a source of warmth and love, and Hans himself, in a state of depression, drowns while still a young man. One of many German literary works of the early twentieth century which attacked the educational system, *Beneath the Wheel* was very popular.

Hesse's next two novels, *Gertrude* (1910) and *Rosshalde* (1914), deal with the problems of the artist. The former is one of the least autobiographical of Hesse's works. The hero, Kuhn, is a musician who enjoyed a happy childhood. He injures his leg in an accident and becomes introverted. He falls in love with Gertrude, but lacks the self-assurance to reveal his feelings to her and try to win her love. She marries another man, but the marriage is not successful and her husband commits suicide. Kuhn becomes a great composer, although he remains a lonely and unhappy person. He has but limited contact with Gertrude in his later years, although she continues to be a source of inspiration for his great works of art.

### Years of crisis

In 1904 Hesse married Maria Bernoulli, a Swiss woman nine years his elder. The couple led an isolated life in

Gaienhofen. Sons were born in 1905 and 1909. Hesse was a successful and highly productive writer, but his marriage became progressively less happy. In 1911 he made a journey to the Orient in the company of the painter Hans Sturzenegger. Hesse was particularly interested in India, the country in which both of his parents had lived and which his father and grandfather had studied extensively. The trip, however, did not enable Hesse to find the peace and fulfillment which he so desperately sought. Some of his impressions are recorded in *From India* (1913). His personal conflicts are reflected rather directly in the novel *Rosshalde*, the story of the painter Johann Veraguth, who lives a lonely and unhappy life at his estate, Rosshalde, with his wife and a younger son, Pierre. An older son, Albert, is away at school and returns only during vacation periods. Life acquires meaning for Veraguth through his work as an artist and his love for Pierre. He tolerates his marriage only for the sake of Pierre. What remains of his happiness is shattered when Pierre dies of meningitis. The end of the novel remains open. Veraguth, turning his back on bourgeois society, leaves Rosshalde and his wife to travel. His future is uncertain.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 marked another crisis in Hesse's complicated personal life. Although he had been living in Switzerland for many years, he was German and his reading public expected him to support the German cause. (Switzerland remained neutral during the war.) Hesse did not immediately assume an anti-German stand, but he publicly questioned the excessive patriotism in his native country which was brought out by the war and he was in turn sharply criticized from many sides in Germany. He remained in Switzerland throughout the war and was active in the effort to improve the lot of German prisoners of war and internees.

Hesse's literary productivity continued undiminished during the first years of the war and *Knulp*, one of the more popular of his earlier works, appeared in 1915. *The*

three stories contained in the collection will be analyzed in detail in this Monarch Note.

The following year, 1916, was to bring severe misfortune: the death of his father, the serious illness of his son Martin, and the mental breakdown of his wife, who had to be sent to an institution. This was in fact the end of Hesse's first marriage, although he did not obtain a formal divorce until 1923. Hesse was naturally despondent and his search for psychiatric help brought him in contact with Dr. Joseph Lang, a disciple of the eminent psychologist Carl Gustav Jung. From Doctor Lang, Hesse not only received advice which helped him overcome his own personal crisis, but he also learned in detail the theories of Jung. Hesse became a devoted student of Jung and the influence of this psychologist was to become one of the most important factors in his later works.

### The middle years

*Demian* was written during a short period of time in 1917 under the immediate influence of Doctor Lang and, through him, of Jung. This new novel marks a radical break in Hesse's literary development and the author did not want his readers in any way to be reminded of his earlier works or to associate the new Hesse—the Hesse of *Demian*—with them. Accordingly he published the novel in 1919 under the pseudonym Emil Sinclair, the name of one of the main characters of the book. The novel was an immediate success. The young postwar generation felt a strong affinity to this strange, powerful work, and it was also well-received by literary critics. The Fontane Prize, a prestigious literary prize awarded for outstanding first novels, was presented to the mysterious Emil Sinclair. The prize was returned by the publisher and in 1920 Hesse revealed that he was actually the author. But he had achieved his goal. To the reading public, Hermann Hesse was now primarily known as the author of *Demian*, not of *Peter*

*Camenzind*, *Rosshalde*, and other early works which Hesse had come to consider to be immature.

The most important theme of *Demian* is the necessity of first recognizing, and then integrating into one's personality, the two different aspects of life—the "light" and the "dark," the spiritual and the sensual, saintliness and sin. The setting, plot, and style of *Demian* are for the most part dissimilar from those of Hesse's previous works. It is set in Germany during the early years of the present century and describes the outer and inner development of Emil Sinclair from late childhood to maturity. Here, as in *Siddhartha*, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and many of Hesse's works—although not in the stories discussed in this Monarch Note—three distinct stages of development can be seen: the early period of innocence, a middle period which is not without searching, loneliness, and even despair, and the final period in which a synthesis is effected. When Emil Sinclair is first introduced to the "dark" world, he sees no way to reconcile the warm, serene atmosphere of his home with the cold frightening world he now sees. But with the help of Max Demian he gradually becomes more and more able to see the possibility of accepting both aspects of his human nature and he eventually finds he is no longer forced to view them as polar opposites.

The year 1919 was indeed an important one. Hesse wrote several important essays during that year, including *Zarathustra's Return* in which his debt to Nietzsche is acknowledged, and three of his better short stories, "A Child's Heart," "Klingsor's Last Summer" and "Klein and Wagner," published together in 1920 under the title *Klingsor's Last Summer*. These three stories will be analyzed in detail in this Monarch Note. Furthermore, Hesse moved from Bern, where he had been living, to the small Swiss town of Montagnola, which was to be his home in his later years. It was also at about this time that Hesse first took up painting; he later became an accomplished painter and it was to remain his favorite hobby throughout his life.

And finally, work on the next important book, *Siddhartha*, was begun in this year.

*Siddhartha* proved to be an especially difficult book to write. As Hesse remarked, the first two periods of the hero's life, those of innocence and searching, were easy for him to portray. But the final triumphant vision of the old Siddhartha was foreign to Hesse's experience and hence he had great difficulty putting it on paper. Only in 1922 was the completed novel published.

In this highly poetic book set in ancient India Hesse describes the life of Siddhartha. First the hero masters his intellect and will, and then he turns to the world of the senses. He finds neither asceticism nor hedonism totally satisfying. Late in life he finds fulfillment in a mystical vision at, and with the help of, a river, the symbol of perfection, unity, and continuity.

In 1923 Hesse became a Swiss citizen. His personal life, however, remained unsettled. He obtained a divorce from his first wife and soon thereafter (in January, 1924) he married Ruth Wenger. Five years were to lapse before the publication of his next major novel, *Steppenwolf* (1927). These years were far from totally barren. Hesse continued to publish poems, short stories, essays, and reviews in various journals and newspapers. But a feeling of alienation, which is reflected in the suffering of Harry Haller in *Steppenwolf*, continued to affect him. His second marriage, like the first, did not prove to be successful; it ended in divorce in 1927. By this time Hesse was one of the most famous writers of his generation and his first full-length biography, by Hugo Ball, appeared in conjunction with his fiftieth birthday in that same year.

*Steppenwolf*, like *Demian*, "Klein and Wagner," and "Klingsor's Last Summer," has a "realistic" setting in the twentieth century. The hero, Harry Haller, is a middle-aged man who is torn between the world of the bourgeoisie

and that of the artist-intellectual. At first he believes that there are but two aspects of his personality, and that he is torn between these irreconcilable poles. He finds a mysterious "treatise" (reflecting insights of his own unconscious) which points out that his conception of a simple duality within himself was incorrect. There are not two Harry Hallers, the Steppenwolf and the bourgeois citizen, but many very different aspects of a complicated individual. Haller gradually comes to realize and accept this fact on a conscious level during the remainder of the novel, and the closing scene, the so-called "Magic Theater," symbolically represents the progress which he has made.

In 1930 one of Hesse's most popular novels appeared, *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Set in the Middle Ages (although not in any specific century), with a plot rich in adventure, the novel examines the duality of spirit and nature, incorporated by the two leading characters, Narcissus and Goldmund, respectively. Most of the story is devoted to Goldmund's wanderings. Originally a seminarian, he is told by his friend and teacher Narcissus that he is not destined for the priesthood. He leaves the seminary and has many adventures. He has brief, but meaningful, affairs with many women; he experiences birth and death, and is himself forced to kill another human being; with great effort he becomes a skilled sculptor and produces a few pieces of extraordinary beauty. Narcissus, on the other hand, becomes a priest and intellectual. Each respects the other, and Narcissus often helps his friend in one way or another. Although Goldmund dies a realistic and unidealized death, his way of life, which includes both the spirit and the senses, is presented as superior to that of Narcissus, whose philosophy attempts to deny death, and who, as a result, will not be able to face death when it comes, as it inevitably must. In many respects this novel invites comparison with *Knulp*.

Hesse married again in 1931. His third wife, with whom he was to remain until his death some thirty years

later, was Ninon Ausländer Dolbin. Hesse's happiness during these years is portrayed symbolically in the highly autobiographical, but equally unrealistic, novel *Journey to the East* (1932). The hero is named "H.H.," an obvious allusion to Hermann Hesse, and many other references to the author's life can be detected in the book. Once again the hero goes through three stages in his development. He naively and confidently joins a secret Order or League and takes part in its "Journey to the East." He later drops out of the League and experiences intense loneliness and despair. With the help of Andreas Leo, a figure who resembles the old Siddhartha in some respects, he finally comes to understand the League, and himself, and then comes to feel a sense of harmony with the world.

For Hesse, unlike most important German-speaking writers, Hitler's rise to power in the early 1930's did not signal any radical changes. Hesse was already a Swiss citizen and although his hatred of war—and of the other things for which Nazism stood—remained undiminished, he was not and never had been a political activist. He had little faith in practical politics and hence did not join the active political opposition to the Nazis. In the early 1930's, under the dark cloud which covered Europe, Hesse began work on his last great novel, *The Glass Bead Game*, or *Magister Ludi*, as it is often called in English. According to Hesse's original plans, this work was to consist of a number of "autobiographies" which would describe successive reincarnations of a single person. Hesse's conception of the novel changed as he was writing it and the emphasis shifted to the final historical period, the world of Castalia, about the year 2400 A.D. The three autobiographies of Joseph Knecht that are appended to the novel are vestiges of the original plan, and a fourth autobiography was also written but not included in the book. As Hesse himself later stated, the writing of *The Glass Bead Game* was his own spiritual defense against the deadly political and moral climate in the world at that time.



Joseph Knecht's biographies and poems, which are appended to the narrator's dry, pedantic biography, most clearly reveal the novel's important issues and themes. Knecht comes to realize that he must seek oneness with nature, but is not able to formulate his ideas, let alone express them adequately and directly in words. He ultimately does seek that he cannot find what he is seeking in the rarified atmosphere of Castalia, and accordingly forsakes it in favor of a life in the "real" world. He dies before coming to a full conscious realization of the significance of his feelings and actions, and critics hence sometimes debate the validity of his life. But he has remained true to himself, and his life must therefore be called successful.

### Old age

Hesse's reputation continued to grow after the publication of *The Glass Bead Game*. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature—the world's highest literary award—in 1946, and later received several other important prizes and awards in recognition of his literary work. He continued to write poetry and short prose pieces, and he faithfully answered the numerous letters addressed to him by admiring readers, although he felt uncomfortable in the role of advisor and father confessor. But *The Glass Bead Game* was to be his last novel. As the years went by, he guarded his privacy more and more carefully and seldom left his secluded home at Montagnola, of which he was so fond. He died of a brain hemorrhage on August 9, 1962, a month after his eighty-fifth birthday.

### Intellectual influences

It would be impossible even to list all of the important influences on Hesse. He was exposed to theology, philosophy, literature, and the other arts at an early age and retained his varied interests throughout his long life. Among the literary figures whom he most admired, however, two de-

serve particular mention: the mystical Romantic poet Novalis (pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), about whom Hesse once said: "Among all German writers, Goethe is the one to whom I owe the most, the one to whom I am most deeply indebted, who has held my attention, enslaved and encouraged me, forced me to follow his lead or vigorously attack it." Hesse also knew many religious and philosophical writers. As was mentioned above, Christianity was quite important as a formative influence. He also studied various Eastern religions in some depth.

Two of the most important influences on Hesse's thought must be discussed here: the philosopher and poet Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). Before going into the extent of these influences, however, it must be emphasized that individuality remained one of Hesse's fundamental values. He read Nietzsche and Jung, as well as Goethe, Novalis, Dostoevski, Freud, and other great writers, but always with a critical eye. *Although Hesse did not imitate Nietzsche, Jung, or anyone else, an understanding of certain basic concepts of Nietzsche and Jung can facilitate the approach to some of Hesse's difficult works.*

Nietzsche and Jung share some important beliefs which are also to be found in the works of Hesse. Perhaps the most important of these is the insistence upon the necessity of finding one's *own* path toward self-realization, and of accepting the dark, so-called "sinful" side of human nature in the process. Nietzsche called for a complete revaluation of moral standards entirely eliminating the Judeo-Christian morality which he felt represented a philosophy that valued weakness and conformity rather than strength and individuality, which he preferred. Hesse, too, continually rejects weakness and conformity. The concept which Nietzsche called *amor fati* ("Love of fate") is likewise shared by Hesse. This concept refers to a joyful acceptance of the world as it is; it is a highly affirmative

philosophy, and variations of it can be seen in Klingsor and Klein.

Jung, in more practical terms, refers to the inferior, animalistic side of our nature as the "shadow," and warns against the bad effects of simply attempting to repress it. This part of our human nature must rather be first understood, and then accepted, he maintains. Other of Jung's concepts are also useful in understanding Hesse, especially those of the "unconscious" and the "archetype." Jung believes that a large body of experiences remain in a person's unconscious (he objects to Freud's term "subconscious," which seems to him to carry derogatory implications). Each individual has elements which are part of his "personal unconscious"; that is, memories and emotions from his past which have been removed from his immediate conscious memory, but which may still exert an important and even decisive effect on his behavior unconsciously. There are also elements of the unconscious which are shared by everyone. Jung studied ancient symbols and myths, and analyzed the dreams of his contemporaries. He came to the conclusion that many symbols recur even though modern man may not have known of the ancient representations. Such symbols which have universal significance are said by Jung to be part of the "collective unconscious," and are called "archetypes."

Finally, Jung coined the term "anima" to refer to an unconscious feminine aspect within a man through which he can to some extent intuitively comprehend the nature of women. The references in *Demian* to masculine traits in a woman, or feminine traits in a man, are based on this concept, and many apparent allusions to homosexuality, which some critics are fond of pointing out, can likewise be explained on the basis of Jung's concept. The several aspects of personality, in Jung's formulation, must be integrated if a person, man or woman, is to attain fulfillment. They must accordingly always be considered as parts of a whole, and not as isolated components.

### Hesse's popularity

The history of Hesse's popularity in Germany and America is complex and, on the surface at least, enigmatic. He was a competent popular novelist and essayist during the first two decades of this century and enjoyed a certain following among the German reading public at that time. Upon the publication of *Demian* in 1919, he immediately became one of the heroes of one segment of the younger generation in Germany. His disillusionment with the war and his visionary, even mystical attitude toward the future contributed greatly to his popularity and to his success (although it should be noted that some Germans reproached him for his lack of patriotism during the war). His popularity in German-speaking countries remained high until the early 1930's, when Hitler assumed power in Germany. Because they were largely unpolitical, Hesse's books were not immediately burned and banned in Germany, but his work was not encouraged or even approved by the Nazi hierarchy. Many important intellectuals and writers, both German and non-German, praised Hesse highly. Among these are T.S. Elliot, André Gide, and Thomas Mann. After a brief period of popularity in Europe following the Second World War, Hesse's reputation began to decline, both among academicians and the younger generation of readers. At the present time, Hesse's reputation in Germany is at an all time low. The young radicals, especially, have no use for his writings since they associate them with the Romantic past—including Nazism!—which they desire to overcome and leave behind.

Hesse has been widely translated into non-European languages, and his reception in India and Japan, especially, has been consistently favorable, and not subject to the ups and downs which mark his popularity in Germany and in America. Hesse was proud of the fact that readers in Eastern countries appreciated his works, which contain many elements of Eastern philosophy.

The history of Hesse's reception in America is quite different from that of his reception in Germany. Although several of his works had appeared in translation throughout the years, he was all but unknown in this country when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946. The American press for the most part ignored him, even when he received this prestigious award. It was only in the late 1950's that Americans began to become interested in his work. Today, of course, he has become a cult figure. Hesse is without doubt one of the very favorite authors of college-age Americans. Similarly, most of the serious scholarly criticism on Hesse in recent years has been written in English, and most of the important books have been written by North Americans.

It is certainly easy to see why American youth is interested in Hesse. The problems with which he deals in his stories and novels have meaning for young people in this country today. His treatment of adolescence, the problems of growing up, authority, rebellion, the "establishment," sex, human relationships, and, to a lesser extent, drugs, is significant and "relevant." Likewise, many young people share Hesse's interest in Oriental philosophy and in a non-dogmatic theology. It must, however, be pointed out that many important elements of Hesse's thought are overlooked by the majority of his admirers. For example, one often sees a devotion to self-discipline and hard work directed toward the achievement of some specific goal in Hesse's work. Especially Demian, Siddhartha, and Joseph Knecht attain a remarkable amount of self-discipline while still quite young, and it becomes clear in the respective works that the success and happiness of these characters is possible only because of their earlier rigorous training. If Hesse does not share the Protestant ethic of hard work, he nonetheless sees and portrays in his novels the necessity of building one's life on a firm foundation. Many of his works also show the other side of the coin—the results of *not* building one's life on a firm foundation (e.g., Klein

and Knulp, who is much less happy than the more disciplined wanderer Goldmund). Hesse in no way respects bourgeois narrow-mindedness, complacency, and resistance to change at all cost; but neither does he express approval of destructive rebellion for its own sake. *The freedom of Hesse's characters is a reflection of a successful, integrated life; they are slaves neither to tradition nor to their own weaknesses.*

It is especially ironic that Hesse has become a folk hero and a model for an entire generation, for Hesse's most important theme throughout his mature works is the necessity of each individual finding his *own* way in life, rather than following the doctrine or teachings of an authority-figure, however noble or admirable such a figure may be. Often the incidentals of Hesse's novels and stories—rebellion against authority, sexual freedom, etc.—are religiously praised and faithfully followed by his young readers, who thereby completely lose touch with *the* fundamental aspect of Hesse's thought: the value of an individual's determining, choosing, and continually reexamining his own values. Surely nothing is more foreign to Hesse than the idea that "I have found the way, and there is no other." And this is indeed the narrow-minded philosophy of some of those who have chosen Hesse as their hero and mentor.

It is difficult to predict what direction Hesse's future popularity will take. More and more of his works are being translated into English — short stories, essays on various subjects, poems, autobiographical sketches, indeed almost anything will be eagerly purchased by his faithful reading public. Sooner or later a reaction must take place. Much of Hesse's short prose fiction is not especially rich or rewarding; his essays are to a great extent dated and have only historical interest; his range as a poet is narrow and poetry is in any event difficult to translate, or to appreciate in translation; and his autobiographical works are unquestionably among his least successful. It is to

be hoped that these minor works will enable the American reader to more fully appreciate the complexity of Hesse, without detracting from his truly great novels and short stories.

## "KNULP": A CRITIQUE

### COMPOSITION, PUBLICATION, AND TRANSLATION

The three stories which comprise this collection—"Early Spring," "My Recollections of Knulp," and "The End"—were published as a book in 1915 under the title *Knulp. Drei Geschichten aus dem Leben Knulps* (*Knulp. Three Tales from the Life of Knulp*). These were but three of several similar short prose pieces written by Hesse at Gaienhofen between the years 1904 and 1915. Hesse's interest in the subject matter of *Knulp*, though, goes back even further; it can be seen as early as the fragment "Peter Bastian's Youth" (1902). Each of the three stories was published in a periodical prior to the appearance of the book, "Early Spring" in 1913, "My Recollections of Knulp" in 1908, and "The End" in 1914. It can be seen, then, that these are "early" works of Hesse, and that they were not originally designed as a unified collection. An English translation by Ralph Mannheim was published in 1971. This translation is now available in paperback.

### "EARLY SPRING"

*Style.* The style of the story is poetic, even lyrical, and it is also Romantic. Many of the passages of both the narrative prose and the dialogue are phrased in a lyrical, highly emotional style. Although descriptive passages are invariably realistic, on one level, they are basically designed to capture a mood, as in the following sentence: "Through the small window panes a thin, uncertain beam of sunlight poured into the room, passed over the table and the cards,



played fitfully with the faint shadows on the floor and circled tremulously round the pale-blue ceiling." Here, as elsewhere, the English translation adequately captures the mood of Hesse's original German. One final device used to create the lyrical, Romantic style is the insertion of two of Knulp's songs into the text. The songs, it should be noted, are usually quite closely related to the context of the story in a functional manner.

*Point of View and Structure.* The story is told in the third person by an unknown, basically omniscient narrator. Dialogue is also common. The narrator is able to report many secret thoughts of Knulp and the other characters, although on a few occasions he expresses his uncertainty regarding a given question (e.g., the reason for Bärbele's falling silent as the time approaches when her evening with Knulp must come to an end). The structure of the story is extremely simple. There are two primary episodes, Knulp's visit with his old friend Rothfuss at the beginning of the story and his brief night out with the servant girl Bärbele in the latter portion. The middle section consists of various episodes (such as the visit to the tailor) marking a transition between the other two. The story creates the effect of a series of disjointed episodes, in keeping with Knulp's wandering nature, and the apparently loose structure is one of the primary factors contributing to the creation of this effect.

*Theme: Freedom of the Wanderer.* Throughout the book various aspects of this theme appear and reappear in different forms, and it is the central theme of "Early Spring." The title itself suggests a suitable time for travel: spring and summer are ahead, and these seasons are traditionally associated with travel and wandering. Reference is constantly made to Knulp's independence; once he is likened to a cat, the typical symbol of a totally independent spirit. And Knulp is indeed like a cat, accepting hospitality, but not becoming deeply attached or indebted to anyone. Knulp is quite happy with his life style, but he feels no need

to brag of his happiness, or attempt to convert others to his way of life. Rothfuss and Schlotterbeck, by way of contrast, both express envy of Knulp's freedom, while attempting to convince him of the superiority of their lives to his!

### ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SECONDARY CHARACTERS

*Rothfuss.* Knulp's old friend is portrayed as a typical burgher, settled and "happily" married with a good job and a secure future. He has no excitement in his life beyond an occasional beer and game of cards, nor does he desire any. He has no sensitivity to human relationships; his wife, as we see repeatedly, is basically a stranger to him. As is usual in *Knulp*, and throughout most of Hesse's works, the secondary figures exist primarily to throw light on the main characters. Rothfuss's function is *contrastive*. In practically every respect, Knulp — the unsettled, unmarried, unemployed, yet intelligent and sensitive wanderer — is the opposite of his friend.

*Mrs. Rothfuss.* She is a rather pathetic figure. Ostensibly happily married to a husband who has no serious vices, she longs for the romance and adventure of Knulp's life. Not that she would leave her husband for Knulp, far from it. But she makes a mild attempt to seduce Knulp, indicating her willingness to betray her husband's trust. From the perspective of Hesse's other works we can easily see Knulp's reasons for rejecting her without a second thought. She has voluntarily accepted the secure, bourgeois life style of her husband, because of the material benefits it offers. By showing an interest in Knulp she is betraying both her husband's trust and her own values. And Knulp — like all of Hesse's heroes — demands a fundamental personal honesty and consistency of himself and of those with whom he associates on a meaningful level. Although she is pretty, she is not the kind of woman who could attract Knulp.

*Schlotterbeck.* The tailor, like Rothfuss, is a burgher and hence Knulp's opposite. But whereas Rothfuss is happy with his life, Schlotterbeck is unhappy in every respect. He even goes so far as to express directly his envy of Knulp's freedom. At this point Knulp tells the tailor of his own child, whom he loves but is not allowed to visit. Knulp's free life, then, is contrasted with two rather different types of burghers: the happy but simple and gullible Rothfuss and the unhappy, cynical Schlotterbeck. It is made clear that Knulp's life, for all its shortcomings, is preferable to either of theirs.

*Bärbele.* She is a simple, natural person who feels society's demands to conform, but is still able to act with some independence and spontaneity. The reader is led to think that she is a girl with whom Knulp could have built a lasting relationship, and wonders why Knulp leaves the village without pursuing this possibility. The most important reason, of course, is not because of his aversion to Mrs. Rothfuss and his reluctance to get involved with her, but rather because Knulp's chosen way of life is simply incompatible with a permanent relationship of any kind. This realization arouses the reader's sympathy for Knulp, just as it was previously aroused for Rothfuss and Schlotterbeck. The explanation as to why Knulp has chosen this life — and, indirectly, the reason why he avoids a possible relationship with Bärbele (and, indeed, the reason why Knulp became a wanderer in the first place) — will be revealed later in the book when Knulp relates to Dr. Machold the story of his first, bitterly unhappy, encounter with a woman.

### "MY RECOLLECTIONS OF KNULP"

*Style.* The style is in most respects similar to that of "Early Spring." The prose is poetic and Romantic, and these characteristics are again emphasized by the inclusion of the texts of Knulp's songs, three in number. But this

Romantic tone is not uniform. The mood sometimes grows considerably more intellectual and serious than in the first story, when Knulp engages in "philosophical" conversations with his friend. The first sentence of the story already introduces a discordant note, by referring to Knulp's death and the narrator's lost youth and happiness. The basic Romantic tone of the story is, then, mixed with a more serious tone throughout.

*Point of View and Structure.* As the title indicates, the story is narrated in the first person by a former friend of Knulp's. The perspective is consistent; the narrator tells us only those things which he could legitimately be expected to have learned about his friend. Although basically episodic, the structure is somewhat more complicated than is that of "Early Spring." The very first sentence establishes the fact that the story is told in retrospect; the narrator is old and Knulp is now dead. The mood is thus dampened from the beginning. The frequent references to the various *themes and motifs* — *friendship, time and transience, happiness, sincerity* — give the story a unity which is lacking in "Early Spring."

*Freedom.* Knulp's devotion to freedom is no less present in this story than in the previous one, even if this freedom is now presented in a light which is less ambiguously favorable. When Knulp tells of his first loves, Henriette and Lisabeth, the reader begins to suspect that his freedom is not something to which he has always been committed. (The hints of Knulp's past given in "Early Spring" are greatly expanded upon in this story.)

*Love and Friendship.* In "My Recollections of Knulp" the themes of love and friendship are much more fully developed than was the case in the first story of the collection. Knulp's flair for making superficial friendships (male and female) is the same, but now we see the suggestion that he may be capable of forming deeper, more meaningful relationships. He was certainly genuinely at-

tached to his first two loves, and there is a strong implication that a firm bond of friendship could have developed between Knulp and the narrator, if the latter had been more respectful of Knulp's feelings. But at this stage we do not yet know Knulp's real reason for breaking off budding relationships with such consistency.

*Transience.* This is one of Hesse's first works to deal so directly with a problem which is central to much of his later work: *transience*. The narrator reports a very significant conversation in which Knulp observes that the enjoyment of beauty—of a girl, of a specific situation, or of anything of beauty—is heightened by the viewer's realization that the beauty will soon fade; the emotional commitment of the viewer to a thing of beauty, Knulp maintains, is increased by this realization. Several apparently insignificant sentences as well as the story of Henriette and Lisabeth contribute to the development of the theme of the relation of transience to Knulp's interpretation of the meaning of life. Knulp's narration of his dream also illustrates his conception of transience, specifically the precarious nature of human relationships. Everything is changed by time and however much a person may try, he cannot recapture the past.

*Sincerity, or Integrity.* This attribute of Knulp's character, which was briefly and indirectly alluded to in "Early Spring," is here developed more fully. The reader now sees Knulp from the subjective point of view of a specific person—the narrator—and his devotion to the concepts of sincerity and consistency becomes more apparent. Knulp explicitly formulates the high value which he places on these virtues when he is explaining that he respects the Salvation Army so much because, unlike teachers, priests, politicians, and the like, who invariably seem to be selfishly motivated, at least some members of the Salvation Army whom he has observed "were really in earnest."

## ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATOR

The narrator is the only significant secondary character in the story. In some respects he seems to represent Hesse himself. He is a man of basically bourgeois inclinations who attempts—in this case unsuccessfully—to lead the happy life of a carefree outsider; there is here a definite parallel to the situation in *Steppenwolf*, where Harry Haller is both drawn to and repulsed by the bourgeoisie. The narrator is very fond of Knulp and strives to be like him, to a certain extent. But he is unable to match his friend in several key areas: in the ability to make friends, to amuse people, and to maintain his independence in spite of a basic existential sense of insecurity. On one occasion the narrator remarks that he “had grown roots,” and thereby unconsciously betrays one ultimate reason why his friend Knulp left him. In brief, he is a man midway between Rothfuss and Knulp; he does not wish to attempt to live a settled life, but lacks the ability to adapt to the demands of a life of total freedom.

## “THE END”

*Style.* The style combines elements found in the first two stories of the collection. It often tends to be slightly philosophical, as in “My Recollections of Knulp,” but there are also poetical passages of a descriptive sort, as are found in “Early Spring.” The single song which is included is Romantic and nostalgic, but with a definite tragic element. The style changes toward the end of the story during Knulp’s conversation with God. Here it is light and the usual sense of reality disappears. Nature descriptions are used prominently to support the mood of the story. There is, for example, a progression in nature as the story progresses, from the reference to the October day of the first sentence, to the first frost on the ground when Knulp takes his final leave of Doctor Machold, to the storm which rages at the time of Knulp’s death.

*Point of View and Structure.* The point of view is again, as in the first story, that of a third-person narration. Here, however, the narrator seems to be truly omniscient. The statements of doubt present in "Early Spring" are missing. The greater certainty on the part of the narrator suggests the narrowing of Knulp's life as he approaches death, vis-à-vis the open horizons of his youth which were previously portrayed. The structure is simple and straight-forward. The story consists of two basic parts, the visit with Dr. Machold and the final period of wandering, ending in Knulp's death, each of which contains a number of episodes. The episodes of the first part consist of stories from the past which Knulp relates to the doctor. Knulp leaves and, appropriately, dies as a homeless wanderer in the open country. But even here, the emphasis, as in the first part of the story, is on Knulp's memory of the past and his attempt to interpret his life, rather than on the actual events of his life.

*Consistency and Sincerity.* Knulp is shown to be a sincere person, one struggling to find his own path in life and follow this path with consistency. For example, even though he hurt Lisabeth deeply he also loved her, and she loved him and was able to respect him for what he was. Knulp admits in his conversation with God that as death approaches he can honestly say that he is satisfied with his life as he lived it — because it was rich, and because he fulfilled the function of making people happy, but also, in more general terms, because he remained true to himself and to his wanderer's values.

*Transience.* This theme, developed to a considerable degree in "My Recollections of Knulp," is even more important here. Both the title and the last sentence of "The End" suggest death, and much of what is in between is related directly or indirectly to the fading, and ultimate disappearance, of things of beauty. Knulp's promising academic career, his early friendships, his truly carefree and happy childhood years, his faith in mankind, his willing-

ness to commit himself to a deep and lasting relationship, his young sweetheart, his child, his strong will and lively personality, and finally even his life itself are seen to be disappearing, or already to have died or slipped away. But, in retrospect, all of these things, and especially Knulp's life, which was so full of unhappiness and which nonetheless brought cheer to so many others, are felt to be all the more beautiful precisely because they were doomed to pass away.

### ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SECONDARY CHARACTERS

*Dr. Machold.* He is in some ways similar to Rothfuss from "Early Spring." An old acquaintance of Knulp's who is leading a successful bourgeois life, he is quite willing to help Knulp. But he is totally incapable of understanding his former friend. He is incapable of experiencing the intense emotions felt by Knulp, and is hence —within the framework of the story— like Rothfuss, a shallow person.

*Schaible.* The stone-breaker, although apparently a very minor character, fulfills an important function. We learn that he failed to attain his own limited ambition of working for the railroad, and that he has but loose ties to his grown children. Knulp's boyhood friends, then, are shown to be dead (Franziska) or to have had less successful lives than he himself, a mere vagabond.

*God.* There are many different ways to look at Knulp's conversation with God at the end of the story. On a realistic level it can, of course, be considered as merely the hallucinations of a dying man who has doubts about the value or success of his life. But the conversation certainly has another meaning, and one more in keeping with Knulp's character and the themes of the book as a whole. Discussions of religion earlier in the book have revealed Knulp's basic respect for it; he comments in "Early Spring" that the Bible contains much wisdom which could be useful to a person in interpreting life. But Knulp's interpretation



of God is not a "Christian" one. Probably the best way to interpret God in this context is pantheistically; God represents Nature, in the broadest possible sense. Knulp has been much closer to Nature than to people throughout his mature years; Nature is dependable, he has learned, unlike his fellow human beings whose word is not reliable. Nature is basically amoral, hence God's unwillingness to judge Knulp. Knulp has been sincere and consistent—like Nature—and accordingly God can strongly affirm the value of his life. At the very end God's own voice sounds like Knulp's mother's, Henriette's, and Lisabeth's, suggesting the attributes of birth and love which are characteristic of the *Great Mother*, a Jungian archetype. As Knulp dies he rejoins, peacefully and willingly, the earth and the whole of God's creation.

### THE COLLECTION AS A WHOLE

*Sources.* The sources of Knulp are more difficult to locate than are those of most of Hesse's works. The primary literary prototype is unquestionably "From the Life of a Good-for-Nothing," a Romantic tale by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff published in 1826. The resemblance is strong on the surface: both works deal episodically, in a style which is similar, with the life of a wanderer. Furthermore, the song "In a Cool Green Valley," which Knulp whistles in "Early Spring," is by Eichendorff. But Eichendorff's "Good-for Nothing" is carefree, whereas Knulp only appears to be. Knulp is basically a reflective person, one who is terribly aware of transience and of death; in many respects he is very modern, very much the product of the twentieth century.

Hesse's own life contributed much of the atmosphere, if not the details, of the book. Knulp's basic philosophy, his extremely high regard for independence, sincerity, and consistency, is Hesse's. *Knulp, the wanderer, the outsider, also represents one half of the split personality seen in the Steppenwolf, Harry Haller, who is at least partially a*

*self-portrait of Hesse.* In fact, the two characters of the second story, "My Recollections of Knulp," can be viewed as parallel figures to the two poles of Harry Haller, as he originally (incorrectly) interpreted them.

*The Unity of the Collection.* In spite of the fact that the tales were written over a period of some seven years and were originally published separately, the three together form a remarkably unified whole. The style is rather uniform. It may vary to reflect changes in mood or perspective, or to show Knulp's development, but the overall effect remains constant. (*In fact, this book, like others of Hesse's works, is sometimes faulted for having a style which is too uniform and as a result becomes monotonous.*)

The collection is also unified by the careful, consistent development of symbols and motifs. The use of nature imagery is an example of Hesse's craftsmanship. In each of the three stories the season in which the action takes place is given: mid-February, summer, and October, respectively. The sequence follows the traditional pattern: the chapter on Knulp's youth is set in the spring, the episodes from his maturer years are set in the summer, and his death takes place in the autumn. The descriptions of nature, which become more prominent as the book progresses, support the mood of the stories and invariably correspond to Knulp's current stage of development.

The problems of individual freedom and personal sincerity or integrity likewise run almost as leitmotifs throughout the collection. Knulp, who jealously guards his freedom and always remains true to himself, is continually contrasted with characters who lack either or both of these essential traits. Knulp is able at the time of his death to analyze his life — and honestly to come to the conclusion that, for all his faults, he is satisfied with what he has done, and what he hasn't done.

*Analysis of the Title Character.* The reader is supplied with ample information regarding Knulp's physical

appearance. Rothfuss's wife, we are told, was struck by such attributes as his "fine dark hair," the "childlike beauty of his face," and his "fine red mouth." His "delicate hands" are also mentioned on more than one occasion. Knulp's appearance is scarcely mentioned in "My Recollections of Knulp" but once again becomes important in "The End." In the final story both the doctor and the narrator comment on how much Knulp has aged. He is now nothing more than a "sick old man." Even more important than his physical appearance are Knulp's character, habits, and many talents. Many of the specific traits contribute to his outgoing personality. He is intelligent, proud, self-confident, well-mannered, cheerful, and has an excellent memory. He is also skilled in various arts related to music (he writes and sings pretty songs, whistles beautifully, plays the mouth organ, and is an accomplished dancer). One episode illustrates very well how Knulp utilizes his varied talents so effectively. One night, during his stay with Rothfuss, he sees an attractive servant girl —Bärbele— standing at the window of a neighboring house. When she begins to undress he sees that she will soon be going to sleep and realizes that if he is to strike up a conversation with her it must be done immediately. Yet if he calls out she would surely be startled and refuse to respond. So he quietly whistles a tune, thereby gradually attracting her attention before she comes to the conscious realization that anyone else is there.

Perhaps Knulp's most prominent characteristic is his fierce independence, a personality trait which is mentioned repeatedly throughout all three stories. This trait is not portrayed in an entirely favorable light. Unlike Demian and Siddhartha, two of Hesse's other heroes who guard their independence, Knulp is not always totally in control of the situation. His wandering is sometimes the result of a restlessness, or even of a vague existential fear, rather than a conscious or intuitive striving for a goal.

The reader is not told of Knulp's past —and of his explanation of why he is as he is— until near the end of the book, when this revelation is made in the course of a long conversation with Dr. Machold. Very much unlike Hesse's later heroes, Knulp adopted his style of life as a reaction to another person's actions, and in order to keep from getting hurt by betrayed trusts in the future. He became excessively attached to Franziska, made a break with his past life, and staked everything on her promise to become his sweetheart. He then saw his dreams crumble when she broke her word to him. As a wanderer, then, Knulp not only is striving for freedom and independence, he is also running away — from his old love, and from possible future entanglements.

Knulp is an enigmatic character, an anomaly among Hesse's heroes. His life is superficially happy, unlike many of the characters in Hesse's early works. He is independent and he retains this independence until the day he dies — even God cannot deprive him of it. He also retains his personal integrity, which figures in Hesse's early works are also frequently unable to do. Yet he is not happy, and is not able to find true fulfillment in his wandering life. This is not to say that he secretly longs for or envies the life of the bourgeoisie, far from it. He makes it perfectly clear that he would not consider trading his life for that of a Rothfuss or a Dr. Machold.

Unlike such later characters as H.H. (of *The Journey to the East*) or Goldmund, Knulp is not idealized to any substantial extent. When he is mature he finds himself confronted with more than one alternative, each of which is, in some important way, undesirable. Given the developments of his early years, he could not make his life turn out as he thinks it should. Once he had been betrayed by Franziska and had dropped out of school —and out of the society to which he belonged— his options were severely limited. Yet he can still say during his conversation with God that he is satisfied with his life, and he hears that

God is not dissatisfied. This, too, is atypical of Hesse; the early characters, for the most part, remain unsatisfied, whereas the later ones achieve genuine fulfillment. *It is difficult to interpret the true meaning of this apparent contradiction, and an explanation of Hesse's attitude toward Knulp must be sought in Knulp's conversation with God.*

When Knulp leaves Dr. Machold's company for the last time he returns to his boyhood home. There he reflects on his life. He laments the fact that because of Franziska he had not had the strength and the will to make something of himself, consciously and directly referring to his own conception of his life as a failure, and also pointing out that his inner strength, which theoretically could have overcome his external hindrances, was simply not sufficient. After he leaves Schaible he seems to grow depressed, thinking of his "botched" life. At this point he has totally lost his will to live. But God comes to his rescue. God, who as Knulp has said "can do us no harm," reminds Knulp first of the many happy days of his youth. The wanderer agrees that his youth was beautiful, but he expresses the wish that his life might have ended when his youth was past. Then God reminds him of Lisabeth, his second sweetheart, with whom he had enjoyed a deep, meaningful relationship, a tragic relationship, yet one, as God points out, in which the "kindness and tenderness . . . outweighed the harm." Knulp is convinced, but he has one final objection: why wasn't he able to make something of himself? God's answer is reminiscent of Nietzsche's doctrine of "amor fati": everything that has happened should have happened just as it did, and Knulp should not worry about what might have been. He has been a wanderer; he certainly would not have been happier as a burgher. And now, quite appropriately, he is to die in the open, alone but at peace with himself. Knulp's last objections are removed when God points out that his life has also had meaning for society — it has brought the burghers "a little homesickness for freedom."

And several burghers in the story are indeed brought this feeling by Knulp.

Knulp, then, has not made the most of his talents, or managed to become what he originally wanted to be, and he has not really been happy. But given the realistic limitation of himself and, especially, of his situation, he has done better than the other characters shown in the story. He has led a richer life, and has even been beneficial to society (although neither he nor society realized this at the time). He retained his freedom and his integrity and, most important, did not delude himself. For these reasons his life has been a successful one.

### RELATION TO OTHER WORKS OF HESSE

The stories of *Knulp*, taken together, form a definite transition between Hesse's early and middle periods. The collection appeared in 1915, one year after the publication of *Rosshalde*, the last of the early novels, and two years prior to the composition of *Demian*. *Knulp* clearly lacks the idealized, almost super-human qualities of *Demian* and *Siddhartha*. Yet he does manage to lead an independent and relatively happy life, unlike most of the characters of Hesse's early works. Stylistically the work most closely resembles Hesse's earlier prose, although similarities to such works as *Siddhartha* (1922) and *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) can also be observed.

*Numerous details throughout the book are reminiscent of events and characters from other works by Hesse. Knulp's early, unsuccessful love, for example, reminds us of Harry Haller's first experiences with women as described in the Magic Theater. Furthermore, Haller and Knulp had lasting negative effects from the early experiences, although the nature of the bad effects is, of course, quite different. The most important similarity to Hesse's later works is that between the two wanderers, Knulp and Goldmund. Each is attractive, finds some degree of happiness*

in his wandering life, experiences feelings of uncertainty, but finally dies secure in the feeling that his life has, ultimately, been successful.

### REACTION OF THE CRITICS

*Knulp* has probably received less serious criticism than any of Hesse's other important works. Several reasons for this neglect could be cited. The main reason is undoubtedly the simplicity of the stories; critics have a hard time finding anything "profound" to say about these extraordinarily simple, yet enchanting "tales from the life of Knulp." Hesse's first biographer, Hugo Ball, mentions the stories only briefly and in passing. It is especially surprising that Ball, who characterized Hesse as "The last knight of Romanticism," should pay so little attention to this work, which is in some respects quite "Romantic." GEORGE FIELD, who treats *Knulp* in even less detail than does Ball, points to Hesse's "preoccupation with the individual and his inner life" in his prewar writings (including *Knulp*). ERNST ROSE discusses the stories at somewhat greater length. Rose, too, stresses the Romantic aspects. He also briefly compares *Knulp* with two of Hesse's other wanderers, Peter Camenzind and Goldmund. MARK BOULBY'S brief discussion is similar, but more incisive. Boulby stresses the Romantic nature of the stories, and then goes into *Knulp*'s attitude toward the bourgeoisie. He sums up the book as follows: "a pleasantly written work of self-delusion and of regression into dreams, of romanticizing infantilism."

The author of the most recent book on Hesse, HANS JÜRGEN LÜTHI, discusses *Knulp* briefly and tangentially. Like many contemporary European scholars his perspective tends to be political: "Hesse is *Knulp*'s brother. His [Hesse's] entire oeuvre prior to 1914 avoids current political problems." Lüthi obviously defines the word "political" very narrowly. Several of Hesse's early works (though admittedly not *Knulp*) deal quite directly with social questions, especially problems of youth and education.

### CRITICAL COMMENTARY

Many objections to *Knulp* could be—and frequently are—raised by critics. The work lacks the realistic concern with such problems as education and marriage seen in many of Hesse's early novels, and it does not reveal any of Hesse's later self-assuredness in dealing with the problem of individual self-fulfillment. But *Knulp* has an undeniable charm and in it Hesse attains a rare synthesis of realism and idealism. *Knulp* is not a totally confused youth who drifts from one unhappy experience to another, like some of Hesse's early heroes, nor is he a "superman" who overcomes great physical or psychological adversity, ultimately managing to attain a difficult goal. He is rather a talented individual who encounters obstacles which he is unable to overcome completely, yet who does not allow himself to be annihilated by them either. *Knulp* is not a simple carefree wanderer. He experiences genuine anxiety, and, unlike Goldmund, he has no conception of a noble goal which he hopes to attain and thereby find peace and fulfillment.

Technically, *Knulp* is one of Hesse's finer prewar efforts. The style is simple and "Romantic," reflecting the general mood and tone. Yet it grows more reflective and philosophical when appropriate, to reflect *Knulp's* more serious side. The few secondary characters are admirably developed by Hesse to shed light on *Knulp* and his situation. It is clear that *Knulp* has made more of his life than has any of the other characters, and that he enjoys the author's admiration and sympathy.