

## "KLINGSOR'S LAST SUMMER": A CRITIQUE

### COMPOSITION, PUBLICATION, AND TRANSLATION

As was the case with *Knulp*, *Klingsor's Last Summer* contains three stories — "A Child's Heart" and "Klein and Wagner", in addition to the title story — which were originally published independently in periodicals. But unlike the stories of *Knulp*, those of *Klingsor's Last Summer* were written and first published during the same year, 1919, even though they appeared in three different periodicals. The entire collection was published as a book in 1920. The stories first appeared in English translation in 1970. This version, translated by Richard and Clara Winston, has been highly praised by critics and reviewers. It is now available in paperback.

### "A CHILD'S HEART"

*Style.* The style of "A Child's Heart," like that of most of Hesse's novels and stories, is straightforward and simple, and is an appropriate vehicle for bringing out the themes of the work. Perhaps the most important stylistic element in "A Child's Heart" is *repetition*. The work dwells at length on a very few things, discussing them over and over, from slightly different angles. This is in keeping with the child's point of view; his mind continually focuses on a single problem, considering it from many related perspectives. There are few descriptive passages and they, too, follow a similar pattern. A limited number of things (especially the house) are described in detail, and these descriptions always help to capture the mood of fear and dread expressed by the narrator.

*Point of View and Structure.* The story is narrated in the first person. The action took place some years earlier; we have, then, a story of childhood guilt told with the benefit of an adult's knowledge and experience. During the narration occasional references are made to the difference between the child's and the adult's understanding or interpretation of events or situations. The narrator's sympathy, however, remains totally with the child.

The structure of the story is entirely without complications. It consists of a chronological narration of the events. Appropriate subjective comments and interpretations are frequently inserted.

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

*Becoming Aware of Guilt.* Many of Hesse's works deal in some way with the problem of a young boy becoming aware of "crime" or "sin" and the concomitant feelings of guilt. This process is the main theme of "A Child's Heart." The fact that the "crime" is so insignificant shifts the emphasis to the more general problem of guilt in the abstract. *What* the offense was is relatively unimportant. The fact that the boy feels attracted to sin and almost compelled to incur guilt is the main issue. This problem has many ramifications. Allusion is often made to the Biblical story of the fall of Adam and Eve; the child's "sin" is his own personal equivalent of Adam's original fall from grace. It is also interesting to consider the relation of the problem as presented by Hesse to psychological theories of guilt (especially Freudian concepts).

*Father-Mother Polarity.* As is typical of Hesse, a clear-cut distinction is made between the realm of the father and that of the mother. The mother represents warmth, love, tenderness, forgiveness, and security; the father, on the other hand, is associated with coldness, power, justice, and fear. The child sees only the "reality": his mother is in fact tender and loving and is always available to com-

fort him, whereas the father is unemotional and aloof, and is also physically remote, dwelling, as he does, in his sanctuary in the upper portion of the house. This polarity also has symbolic value. The father is typically and archetypally associated with power, intellect, and discipline, while the mother represents more "natural" forces, such as love.

*Independence.* The child does not actually attain independence in the story, but he is concerned about it, even though he is still incapable of verbalizing his feelings. The best example of his attitude toward independence is seen when he remembers seeing the proud thief being led through the streets of the town. This man maintained an attitude of haughty defiance even though he was a prisoner. At the time, the child was very impressed by this and expressed the wish that he might some day be as independent of society's standards as the thief. The child, in other words, was unconsciously dissatisfied with the moral values of his parents and wanted to find his own. A Nietzschean strength and independence were a fundamental part of the morality which he had begun to develop.

## ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CHARACTERS

*The Child.* "A Child's Heart" is the last of Hesse's important works to deal primarily with childhood, and the protagonist is one of Hesse's most masterful portrayals of the world of children. He is clearly not destined to live a simple, happy life. He does not adapt readily to external circumstances as does his friend Oskar Weber, nor can he accept society's morality—with its inevitable guilt—as does his father. The fact that from his adult perspective he still sides with the child demonstrates that he has never become like his father.

The child takes an important step in his emotional development during the course of the events narrated in the story. He tells that the reason he went up to look for his father on that fateful day was to seek comfort; in the

past, after incurring guilt and confronting his father, he had often "emerged good and pure, . . . strengthened by the pact with power against the evil enemy." The episode of the figs leads to no such catharsis. The crime was insignificant and the child (unconsciously) felt that his own self-accusations and guilt feelings on the day it happened were sufficient punishment. His father's total lack of understanding of the situation bewildered him and, as he says at the end of the story, he was unable to forgive his father for this.

*There is a certain autobiographical element in the character.* Hesse was a sensitive and thoughtful child, like the protagonist, and his relation to his own parents was somewhat similar. The first-person narrator emphasizes the autobiographical element. Apparently even the actual events of the story are based to some extent on Hesse's life; a diary entry of Hesse's mother records that on November 11, 1889, "Hermann's theft of figs" was discovered.

*The Father.* This figure is both real and symbolic or archetypal. To some extent he is reminiscent of Hesse's own father, in so far as he is a man of the spirit and the intellect, and a strict yet just and, in his way, devoted father. He also expected his son to conform in every respect to the norms of the Christian, bourgeois society. But he is also a type, the stern father-figure who has standards so high that no one can possibly live up to them. The hostility in the father-son relationship has definite Freudian overtones.

*The Mother and the Sisters.* Many of the women in Hesse's works are seen to be one of two different types, the totally independent, amoral, liberated woman—Frau Eva in *Demian*, Hermine in *Steppenwolf*—and the totally docile and domesticated housewife—Emil Sinclair's mother and sisters, the landlady in *Steppenwolf*, and the women in "A Child's Heart." In spite of the mother's good intentions, she can offer no solace to her son in his hour of

greatest need. She represents a world of innocence, a world which is now totally foreign to the boy who has left innocence behind forever. Dread, or genuine fear, is foreign to the world of the child's mother. She has nothing to offer her son which he might use to combat this fear.

*Oskar Weber.* A typical Hesse secondary character, Weber stands in contrast to the protagonist. He is less reflective, and hence less susceptible to feelings of guilt and isolation. For him the world of crime and sin is a natural part of life. He participates, without having to experience the anguish suffered by the protagonist. He is, of course, not totally bad, as is Franz Kromer of *Demian*; he simply belongs to a different social group—to a different world—than the protagonist.

## RELATION TO OTHER WORKS OF HESSE

"A Child's Heart" is very similar to the first part of *Demian*, which was written two years earlier. The protagonist corresponds in many important respects to the young Emil Sinclair. Both are torn from a stage of innocence and security and exposed to feelings of fear and guilt. Neither commits a serious offense; Sinclair's is totally imaginary, and the child of the short story merely took some figs from his father's dresser drawer. Each seeks comfort from his mother, where it has always been found before, but without success. Each comes from a solid bourgeois family and begins at an early age to question the values and moral standards of the family. Each has a friend (Franz Kromer and Oskar Weber) who belongs to the dark, mysterious, outside world.

The symbolism of the two realms of the father and the mother is found in many of Hesse's later works. It is present in *Demian* in much the same form as in "A Child's Heart," and appears in similar form in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Goldmund's father is stern and hostile to emotion, as is the father of the protagonist of the story. Similar

symbolism, on a more abstract level, to be sure, is found in *The Glass Bead Game*, or *Magister Ludi*, as it is sometimes called in English. The first and second of Joseph Knecht's autobiographies clearly establish the tone of the realm of the mother and that of the father, respectively. From this perspective, Knecht's entire life takes on a new dimension; he, like the protagonist of "A Child's Heart," Emil Sinclair, and Goldmund, is seen to be searching for his ultimate place outside the realm of the father. Unlike the other characters mentioned above, all of whom find fulfillment in the realm of the mother, it is not clear what the ultimate fate of the protagonist is.

### THE JUDGMENT OF THE CRITICS

Unlike the second two stories of the collection, which have been widely praised and interpreted, "A Child's Heart" is rarely discussed by critics. Many critics do not mention it at all. ERNST ROSE, MARK BOULBY, and HANS JÜRIG LÜTHI make reference to it only in passing, and GEORGE FIELD'S treatment is scarcely more detailed. HUGO BALL'S somewhat longer commentary is quite subjective and stresses Romantic aspects. The reviewers of the English translation likewise tend to ignore it. The critics' silence is a clear indication that "A Child's Heart" is universally considered to be greatly inferior to "Klein and Wagner" and "Klingsor's Last Summer."

### CRITICAL COMMENTARY

The story may seem petty and trivial, and even unbelievable. The enormous sense of guilt engendered by some stolen figs could easily be called both highly improbable and a theme of insufficient substance for a story of some forty pages. Very little action takes place and the intensive examination of such a limited theme from so many sides may seem monotonous. But the story is certainly not without merit. The perspective—a sensitive child's introduc-

tion to guilt, told in retrospect by the protagonist after reaching maturity—is very interesting, especially since the protagonist's sympathies remain with the child. The psychological aspects of the story are also noteworthy. "*A Child's Heart*" is a good example of early interest in problems of Freudian psychology on the part of a great novelist.

### "KLEIN AND WAGNER"

*Style.* The style of the second story is rather different from that of the first. It is fast-moving; the language and imagery are vivid and reflect violent passions and moods which are constantly changing. There is a considerable amount of dialogue and effective use is made of indirect quotation in reporting Klein's confused thoughts. The variety of characters and situations is reflected in the language of the story, as is the case in such works as *Steppenwolf*. The fast-moving pace and richness of the language which are maintained throughout much of the story correspond to and reflect Klein's frantic but futile attempts to seize the richness of a new life.

*Point of View and Structure.* The point of view is that of an omniscient third-person narrator. This perspective is most appropriate for the highly complex plot and structure of the work and Hesse displays considerable skill in his utilization of it. The language of the narrator, for example, often tends to be emotional—although not to the same extent as that of the characters.

The story is usually called a *Novelle*, which is a sub-genre of prose fiction that was quite prevalent in Germany from about 1830 to 1930. A novella is typically longer than a short story and shorter than a novel; it usually is restricted to a single situation or conflict and often seems to represent an irrationalistic attitude toward life, largely because of its emphasis on chance. (For a more detailed discussion of the novella the reader should consult E.K. Bennett, *A History of the German Novelle*, Cambridge Uni-

versity Press; this valuable book is available in paperback.) According to these criteria, "Klein and Wagner" certainly seems to qualify as a *Novelle*. It is much longer than the typical short story, it centers on a single internal conflict in Klein, and chance plays a prominent role, creating the effect of an irrational interpretation of life. Externally the story is divided into five sections. The first one describes Klein's doubt and anxiety as he begins his new life; in the second one he sees Terecina and longs to join her world (while he continues to meditate on the writings of Schopenhauer and Goethe!). In the third chapter Klein further develops his thoughts on his situation; he observes that he must "die or learn to fly." The fourth chapter finds Klein getting closer to Terecina, yet growing more and more depressed. And the fifth chapter is devoted to the events leading up to his suicide, and to the suicide itself. Klein's grappling with opposites is an important part of the story, and each chapter has a careful balance of various opposites, thereby contributing to the effect.

## THEMES

*Struggle for Self-Fulfillment.* This typical theme of Hesse's is presented here in an atypical manner. Most of Hesse's heroes begin their search for their own path to fulfillment at an early age (Sinclair, Siddhartha, Goldmund); and those who begin to "find themselves" only later in life typically experience a gradual awakening followed by a careful conscious decision (Joseph Knecht), or proceed gradually after a sudden, but tentative beginning (Harry Haller). Klein, on the other hand, lives an unhappy life for many years and finally can stand it no longer. He feels totally alienated in his bourgeois setting and makes a complete and radical break, absconding to the South (Italy or Italian Switzerland, for Germans a land of romance, beauty, and adventure). But just as he felt unfulfilled as a simple clerk, he feels uncomfortable and out of place as a rich criminal living incognito in the



South. Since he is unable to find fulfillment in life he seeks it in death, and finally seems to find it there. Heinz Puppe has convincingly argued that Klein's development falls into three stages, pre-flight frustration, unsuccessful post-flight struggles to find himself, and, finally, a state of abandoning himself to fate, beyond the effects of his own emotions and limitations. Puppe further points out the close relationship between Klein's development and Eastern philosophy: like Dasa in the third autobiography of *The Glass Bead Game*, or Gotama, Siddhartha and Vasudeva in *Siddhartha*. According to this interpretation, Klein does find self-fulfillment, but, paradoxically, only in his ultimate self-denial.

*Guilt and Atonement.* On a more realistic, psychological level, the problems of guilt and atonement are dealt with. Klein sees himself torn between the two poles of "Wagner," Richard Wagner the artist who created Lohengrin (a figure whose past must not be revealed), and the school master Wagner, a "little" or common man like Klein who incurred the terrible guilt of murdering his family. Klein has mixed feelings about both of these Wagners. He cannot escape his feelings of guilt, not only the specific guilt related to his actual crime, but also a more general guilt such as that described in much more detail in "A Child's Heart."

*Two Poles of the Personality.* This is another familiar theme in Hesse. Complementary figures are frequently found in his works; examples are Narcissus and Goldmund, and, on a different level, Sinclair and Demian. A similar phenomenon, and one more closely related to the situation in "Klein and Wagner," can be seen in the two poles of Harry Haller, the civilized man and the wolf, which are constantly at odds. The same two poles are present in Klein. But whereas Haller saw a constant tension between the two with first one and then the other gaining the upper hand, Klein is unable to maintain any balance between the two. First the burgher totally dominates his personality

and when he is able to tolerate the situation no longer he gives in completely, and, at least superficially, the "wolf" takes total control of him. But he finds that he is unable to divest himself of his bourgeois attitudes and hence cannot enjoy his newly acquired wealth and freedom.

### ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CHARACTERS

*Klein.* He is a man of about forty, a clerk who had been unhappily married for some years. He has children, but is not deeply attached to them. He hates his name (it means "Little") because it reminds him of his inadequacies. As the story opens he has made good his escape. His wife, his children, his job, every external aspect of his bourgeois life has been left behind. But for some reason he feels no relief, no sense of peace or of freedom. He longed for freedom from the "serfdom" of his marriage, yet when he does superficially break free he is unable to appreciate and enjoy his condition because he finds himself unable to escape from his bourgeois apprehensions and guilt feelings.

There is but little development in Klein. His few happy moments are invariably interrupted by a sudden awareness of his feelings of dread, or of guilt. When he first sees Terecina, he verbalizes his problem: he wishes to become a part of her illicit, adventurous world, yet experiences difficulty leaving behind the morality of his old bourgeois life. He struggles to free himself, but to no avail. His *consciousness* repeatedly prevents him from joining the new world to which he seeks admittance. For example, when the innkeeper's wife comes to him to share a night of love, he is from the beginning *aware* of a feeling of guilt, of dread, even disgust. There is no logical reason for this, and no remedy. His relationship with Terecina is similar. From the very beginning he is both attracted to and repelled by her. He wishes to share her life, but is unable to do so.

Like Harry Haller, Klein at first sees the problem in terms of two opposites, represented by his wife and Terecina, his former job and his present role as criminal. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that one reason Klein is unable to jump from one extreme to the other is that the extremes (like Haller's two selves) do not really exist. They are merely part of a larger continuum, part of the unity of existence, just as "Wagner" embodies both the esoteric and mysterious beauty of *Lohengrin* and the vicious criminality of the school teacher. When Klein finally commits suicide, he feels he is merely recognizing the unity of existence. There is no significant difference between opposites, even between life and death, so long as one "lets himself fall."

*Terecina*. She at first seems to be the exact opposite of Klein's wife, sensual, mysterious, very unbourgeois. When Klein first sees her, he is struck by her yellow hair—a traditional symbol of sensuality—and at this point she is indeed the exact opposite of Klein's wife. Later her yellow hair is repeatedly mentioned and, furthermore, she is often associated with Castiglione, which reappears throughout the story to suggest the danger and romance symbolized by gambling. Yet she combines many traits. Whereas at first she seems cool and emotionless, later she is seen to be capable of wild emotions. She passionately pursues her gambling at Castiglione, yet it is pointed out that in so doing she looked like a "housewife," suggesting a comparison with Klein's wife. The apparent polarity between her and the wife, like each polarity in the story, is ultimately dissolved.

## RELATION TO OTHER WORKS OF HESSE

"Klein and Wagner" is closer to *Steppenwolf* than to any other of Hesse's major works. The characters Klein and Haller both see themselves as being torn between two poles, the bourgeoisie and an uncivilized element. As a middle-aged man, each attempts to break free of the bonds

of bourgeois life and of bourgeois morality. Each has a beautiful young girl to help him and at one point each considers stabbing her with a knife. Each also comes to see that his original idea of the two poles was an inaccurate oversimplification.

The solution, ultimately chosen by Haller and Klein are, of course, quite different. Klein's death is reminiscent of the deaths of other characters in Hesse. Joseph Knecht also drowns, and Knulp's death in the snow is in some way similar. The thoughts which go through Klein's mind at the time of death are similar to ideas expressed toward the end of *Siddhartha*, although this novel does not describe the actual death of the title character.

### JUDGMENT OF THE CRITICS

The story has been positively received for the most part. At one extreme is THEODORE ZIOLKOWSKI who calls it one of Hesse's "finest novellas." Ziolkowski stresses the development of Klein's character in his brief but excellent discussion. ERNST ROSE likewise praises the story, comparing it favorably to a famous German drama which has a similar subject. GEORGE FIELD points to the autobiographical elements—the collapse of Hesse's marriage and his flight to the South, as well as a few more specific points—and observes that the work is related to *Demian*, but is less successful than the novel.

By far the most detailed discussion of the story is given in an article (in German) by HEINZ PUPPE, "Psychology and Mysticism in 'Klein and Wagner' by Hermann Hesse." Puppe discusses the relationship between the external events, which seem almost to constitute a clinical examination of abnormal psychology, and what he feels is the underlying thematic element of the story: Klein's gradual movement toward an Eastern loss of self and merging with a kind of cosmic unity. Puppe says: "The important thing is that Klein lets himself fall unconditionally in his

final moments. The suicide is no longer a flight." Klein has overcome life's illusion—the "Maya" of the third autobiography in *The Glass Bead Game*. Field's discussion contains a brief assessment of Puppe's argument.

### CRITICAL COMMENTARY

The story is quite complex. The style, structure, characterization, and intermingling of themes reflect the increase in complexity vis-à-vis the first four stories discussed in this Monarch Note. And yet, paradoxically, the complexities are all resolved at the end when Klein "lets himself fall," and no distinctions seem to exist any longer. Technically the problems are handled very well and on this level the story must be judged an unqualified success.

There is, however, some doubt regarding the narrator's ultimate attitude toward Klein. Without any question the suicide is described in positive terms; the reader must believe that Klein, like Knulp, finds peace as he dies. Yet the narrator does observe that the suicide was "childish . . . comical and rather foolish," and points out that Klein might just as easily have "fallen" into life as into death. He seems to be saying that Klein is in effect taking the easy way out: Unity can, of course, be found in death as well as in life, and in fact death is the simpler of the two alternatives. Klein is unable to attain a synthesis in life (as does Siddhartha) and unwilling to continue pursuing it (as does Harry Haller). He finally manages to find this synthesis in death but—and here is one final paradox—only by sidestepping the problems of life.

### "KLINGSOR'S LAST SUMMER"

*Style.* Style is one of the various components which contribute to the effectiveness of any work of literature, and it is the most important of these components in "Klingsor's Last Summer." The style of the story is "Expressionistic." It conveys a feeling of exuberance and excite-

ment. The imagery is wild and colorful. The syntax is sometimes distorted to reflect the powerful emotions which are so often expressed. Sentences like the following are common: "Below him, dizzingly precipitate, the old terrace gardens dropped away, a densely shadowed tangle of tree-tops, palm, cedars, chestnuts, judas trees, red birch, and eucalyptus, intertwined with climbing plants, lianas, wisterias."

The style is, however, by no means uniform. The many moods of Klingsor (and the other characters) are reflected by appropriate stylistic modulations, and the "Preface" and the final chapter, "The Self-Portrait," are written in objective narrative prose. Various poems are periodically included, a device which provides still further stylistic variation.

Unfortunately the kinds of stylistic effects which are at work in the story are difficult to capture in translation, and the ecstatic tone characteristic of much of the story does not come off nearly so well in English as it does in German. As a result, the language of the English version of "Klingsor's Last Summer" may seem contrived in places, and undoubtedly will have limited appeal for many readers. *This is the fault of neither Hesse nor the translators, but is rather a direct result of the differences between English and German which in this case simply cannot be reconciled.*

*Point of View and Structure.* The story is told in the third person, by an anonymous narrator. In the preface it is clear that the narrator is an individual and not abstract and omniscient. The tone is that of a reporter who is reporting facts and dispelling false rumors, to the best of his ability. And the same tone is present in the final chapter, although here the narrator has more private information about Klingsor at his disposal than would normally be expected. But this perspective is totally abandoned in the central chapters of the story, which without exception seem to be related by an omniscient narrator. In this

central section the language of the descriptive passages is often the image-laden language that Klingsor might use. For example, the sentence "There a fat cardinal floated like a goldfish in the sun" is an artistic (and highly Expressionistic) description of a simple natural phenomenon. Although the narrator gives the reader no tipoff, in these passages he is indirectly reporting or suggesting Klingsor's thoughts or perspectives. Letters of Klingsor's are also inserted in the narrative. The point of view, then, like the style and the treatment of images and motifs, reflects great diversity, in keeping with the most important themes of the story.

The structure of the story is also far from simple. It is divided into ten chapters, each of which has a title. The range and diversity of the chapters is considerable. There is the objective preface, several Expressionistic vignettes depicting an episode relating to Klingsor, two letters written by him, one of his poems, and the fascinating—and unique—final chapter.

In some ways the structure of "Klingsor's Last Summer" is similar to that of "Klein and Wagner." The story is long, concentrates on one specific situation, and displays an irrationalistic attitude toward life; it is then, like the preceding story, a novella. The two also have in common a series of rapid alternations of mood as a brief segment of the life of the mercurial title character is portrayed.

*Themes.* There are a number of related themes in "Klingsor's Last Summer," the transience of beauty, the attempt of the artist to arrest this transience, the similarity of love to art. But it is unwise to separate them and discuss them individually since they are all closely intertwined and are basically different manifestations of a more central theme: the unity of all things.

This conception of unity expressed in this story is quite different from that found in "Klein and Wagner" or

*Siddhartha*. It is based upon a reverence for the Great Mother (the life cycle: birth, fertility, death) and hence more closely resembles the conception of unity represented in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Whereas Klein and Siddhartha ultimately find unity in a sense of serenity, for Klingsor and Goldmund it consists in accumulating many different experiences which eventually form a unified whole.

Klingsor's two main interests in life are art and love, and both are inexorably related to time. The narrator comments reflecting Klingsor's feelings: "Not a thing on earth that he should not have painted. Not a woman in the world whom he should not have loved. Why did time exist." Time, then, is a tyrant which tries to prevent him from being able to experience love and art to the fullest possible extent. But, in keeping with the general theme of unity, even this apparently simple principle has another side; as always, the *opposite* of any statement must be equally true: "Nothing ought to come again. Why should it?" asks Klingsor when his friend Martha laments the passing of time. On one occasion Klingsor himself can curse time, because it robs us of opportunities for experience, but on another he can defend it, precisely because only the passing of time makes different experiences possible. But love and art are also the means used to thwart time. By making the most of love and art, the evil effects of time are pushed aside, if not totally overcome.

Klingsor, like Goldmund, is a person ruled by emotion. He is an artist, and furthermore an artist devoted to the wild emotions of Expressionism. His commitment to art is total, for art is the epitome of what he feels to be the essence of life. It is, for him, basically a powerful emotional explosion, yet it also can function to combat time and create the illusion of eternity. The emotional aspect of art is continually stressed in the story, for example, Louis's discussion with Klingsor at the end of the chapter entitled "Louis." They see a statue of Schiller and Goethe—the two greatest writers of German Classicism. They



lament the fact that the (emotional) artistic greatness of these literary giants has been obscured by pedantic literary historians and express the fear that a similar fate awaits them.

Klingsor retains his devotion to the emotions. He rejects the "Eastern" solution offered by the Armenian in the chapter "The Music of Doom," a solution followed, to a greater or lesser extent, by several of Hesse's characters: Vasudeva, Siddhartha, Narcissus, H. H., and most clearly, by Dasa. Klingsor points out that he does not live in the East, but rather in the West, where a violent, emotional affirmation of life is the only path which can be followed if a person is to retain his integrity.

Klingsor's ultimate attainment of his own kind of unity is expressed by the narrator when the creation of the self-portrait is described: he "conquered and was defeated," "killed and died," "gave birth and was born." He rejects the flight into a philosophical realm where transience and death can be denied, as he must do if he is to remain true to the primary values to which he has sworn allegiance: emotion and experience, love and art.

## ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS

*Secondary Characters.* Although several characters appear in the story, most of them are relatively unimportant. Autobiographical references can be seen in many of the figures; especially in the poet Hermann and the artist Louis the Cruel, who is in some ways modeled on Hesse's artist friend Louis Moilliet. In this story some of the secondary characters parallel and complement the main figures, but others (e.g., the Armenian) fulfill the more typical contrastive function.

*Klingsor.* The name is taken from that of a magician who appears in the medieval German epic poem of *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach; this figure also appears in

the Romantic novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) by Novalis, a writer who was greatly admired by Hesse.

The autobiographical elements in the character are very strong. Klingsor is an artist, in the broad sense, and hence represents Hesse, a literary artist. He is also a painter, and at the time the story was written Hesse had just become an enthusiastic and rather proficient painter. Klingsor's love of the country in which he lives corresponds to Hesse's love of his new home in Italian Switzerland to which he moved just prior to writing the story. And perhaps of greatest significance, the changing moods of the title character, his devotion to art and love, death and rebirth, correspond to a mood prevalent among many Europeans, and shared by Hesse, immediately after the First World War.

Klingsor's most prominent traits are his love of extremes and his belief that, paradoxically, a unity is to be found in the extremes. As a person he is violently opposed to moderation or mediocrity. He is said to "burn the candle at both ends," shunning the safety of moderation; and, as we see in the description of his intense desire to retain all ten of his lives in the childhood game, he invariably plays any of life's games not only to win but to win by the largest possible margin. He is a great artist and a great lover. His two primary interests in life are creating art and making love and he has been eminently successful in both areas.

But he does not try to maintain an even pace; for Klingsor the old cliché is certainly true: variety is the spice of life. In fact, it is made clear that the "ups" in his life would not seem as high, the successes not as rewarding, if there were not an equal number of "downs," which increased in intensity as his life progressed. These violent changes in mood and fortune are not only consistent with his philosophy of life, and even desirable, they are also *necessary* for him as an artist. Without experiencing the

wide range of emotions, he would not be able to create the rich artistic works which were his stock and trade and which make life so meaningful to him. The value of suffering for his artistic creativity is seen in the final chapter. His magnificent self-portrait is a representation of all his experiences, especially his suffering.

Klingsor is very much a man of the moment. He does not like to plan ahead in any way. As he says in the very revealing letter to Edith, he "does not believe in tomorrow," and he "regards every day as his last." Furthermore he continually affirms his life. As he explains in the same letter, there will be more women to love and more pictures to paint in the future, but nothing in the future can cause him to experience even the slightest pang of regret over something which he did—or did not—do in the past.

### RELATION TO OTHER WORKS BY HESSE

Points of similarity can be seen between Klingsor and several of Hesse's other characters. He shares Goldmund's devotion to love and art—or to the Great Mother—and his determination to live life to the fullest. A more superficial similarity to Klein also exists: each is a volatile personality who attempts to extract the ultimate experience out of life. (Klein, of course, fails in his attempt and in the end takes the "Eastern" path rejected by Klingsor.)

Two of Klingsor's more general traits are typical of Hesse's characters: only the best is good enough for him, and he resolutely insists on following his own path to fulfillment. Like Demian, Siddhartha, Goldmund, and Joseph Knecht, Klingsor is no ordinary person. He has attained a remarkable degree of success in his chosen field of endeavor and he works intensely to maintain this level of achievement. (He does, however, differ from the above-named characters in that discipline is foreign to him; he never works at his art consciously, but always because of a *feeling of compulsion*.) With the exception of H.H. in

*The Journey to the East*, each of the heroes of Hesse's later works seeks and finds his own unique and independent path to fulfillment. This is also true of Klingsor. He has lived a full, rich life and has left behind great works of art, including his self-portrait.

### JUDGMENT OF THE CRITICS

There is a remarkable degree of consensus regarding this story. Critics (especially ZIOLKOWSKI, FIELD and BOULBY) praise it highly. The following factors are constantly cited in discussions of any length: the autobiographical aspects (Hesse's residence in Southern Switzerland in 1919; his newly-found preoccupation with painting; and many intimate details); and the wild exuberance of the Expressionistic style. The discussion of Field is the most detailed and contains much useful material on the themes of the story, and on its relation to Expressionism. HERBERT W. REICHERT discusses it briefly; *Reichert sees Nietzsche as a possible model for Klingsor*.

### CRITICAL COMMENTARY

The American reader of Hesse is fortunate insofar as most of his prose works lend themselves to translation, and have been translated skillfully and faithfully. "Klingsor's Last Summer" is an exception. The style of the story renders translation totally impossible. The reader must accordingly make allowances for the awkward and inflated language which occurs periodically in the story. A reader with even a little knowledge of German could profitably compare a paragraph or two of the original with the translation to see the difference and get an idea of the problems involved. The first paragraphs of the chapter "Klingsor" are a good passage upon which to base the comparison.

If the language problem of the translation can be overcome, this story can be appreciated as one of Hesse's

finest. *Many aspects of it will appeal to young readers: the strong emphasis on creativity, the important role of love, the high regard for independence, for "doing one's own thing."* In no other work of Hesse's are the emotions valued more highly vis-à-vis the intellect. Hesse consistently avoids intellectual solutions in his works; Goldmund is closer to the "truth" than Narcissus; Siddhartha comes to *feel*, rather than understand, the unity of the universe; Joseph Knecht leaves the sterile utopia of Castalia for uncertainty and death, in the real world. But Klingsor is even more emphatic, in both words and deeds, in his rejection of reason and of the intellect. He insists on the greatest possible variety of direct experiences.

### UNITY OF THE COLLECTION

The three stories of *Klingsor's Last Summer* are not bound together to form a unified whole to nearly the same extent as are those in *Knulp*. One critic, George Field, remarks that at first glance the only thing the three stories seem to have in common is that the stories (in the German original) all begin with the letter "K." Closer examination, however, does reveal certain themes which are found throughout the three stories, as Field goes on to point out. In the first place, all three are highly autobiographical, even though these elements appear in strikingly different perspectives in the three stories: the fairly close correspondence of the child's situation (in "A Child's Heart") to that of the young Hesse; the very general correspondence of Klein's flight South from his former bourgeois existence (in "Klein and Wagner") to Hesse's flight following the dissolution of his family life; and the parallels between the Expressionist artist in "Klingsor's Last Summer" and the Hesse of 1919, striving for personal freedom and artistic expression.

The stories, like many of Hesse's works, all portray important crises. But the resolutions are much less complete and satisfying than are those of the novels which

immediately precede and follow them, *Demian* and *Siddhartha*, respectively. Klein and Klingsor meet their deaths, even though they do achieve some degree of satisfaction and self-fulfillment, and the protagonist of "A Child's Heart" creates the impression that the events described in the story have left wounds which will not heal. These factors reflect the period in which the stories were written, a year of personal crisis and new beginning for Hesse, following his domestic upheaval; and, politically, for all of Europe, following the terrible war. This, then, is the element which forms a subtle but significant unifying thread in the stories: the feeling of a crisis which is met and overcome, but not without scars having been left behind; a new beginning, but one not without traces of bitterness or remnants of failure and inadequacy.

## GUIDE TO FURTHER STUDY

### ESSAY QUESTIONS AND MODEL ANSWERS

#### 1. Compare Knulp and Goldmund.

*ANSWER.* The two wanderers have much in common. In his younger years, each is handsome, well-mannered, artistically talented, and popular with men and women alike. Each chooses the free and independent life of a wanderer and spends much of his life on the road, without forming any permanent attachments. Each ages prematurely, at least partially as a result of the demands of his difficult, unsettled way of life. Each approaches death questioningly, but reveals in a significant conversation at the time of death that he is satisfied with his life and is able to die in peace.

Many differences between the two characters can also be listed. Goldmund is in general a less orderly person than Knulp; the latter's meticulously kept roadbook would have been totally foreign to Goldmund. Knulp is in several respects the more limited of the two. On a superficial level, this can be seen in Knulp's reluctance to leave Southern Germany; Goldmund had no such phobia of wandering far from his native region. Goldmund is also more capable of experiencing deep emotions. He had no serious traumatic experience as did Knulp which keeps him from wishing to form deep, meaningful relationships. Goldmund does in fact form such a relationship with Narcissus and often tries to do so with other people whom he encounters. It is circumstances—or fate—which prevent this, and not his own doubts, as is the case with Knulp.

2. Discuss the importance of Nature in *Knulp*.

*ANSWER.* Nature is a very significant part of the world of *Knulp* and Hesse effectively uses Nature imagery to support the development of his themes in the work. In the second story, "My Recollections of Knulp," it is mid-summer. Knulp is at the pinnacle of his fortunes and the descriptions of Nature reveal a pleasing, fertile landscape. Frequent reference is made to the open country, suggesting Knulp's freedom. But even here Nature is not all beautiful; the theme of transience is suggested by the sprig of migronette which Knulp breaks off and puts in his hat.

In "Early Spring" the role of Nature is ambiguous. As the story opens the weather is terrible and Knulp is on the road. We see immediately, then, that Knulp must pay dearly for his free life of wandering; Nature does not always cooperate by supplying him with good weather. But soon Knulp's fortunes change, as does the condition of Nature. When Knulp takes Bärbele dancing, the two take a casual stroll by the river on a beautiful spring evening.

In the final story, "The End," Nature is unrelenting. At the beginning a kind of Indian summer prevails; the weather is beautiful, but the harvest is about to be concluded and everywhere Nature gives evidence of the approach of winter. Winter does indeed come and Nature grows less and less hospitable as Knulp's end draws nearer. A sudden reversal, however, takes place at the conclusion. The storm which is raging as Knulp dies ceases to be hostile when Knulp finally finds peace with God.

3. Compare the attitudes of Knulp and Klingsor toward transience and beauty.

*ANSWER.* Allusion is first made to this important problem in "My Recollections of Knulp." Knulp displays his awareness of the problem and his sensitivity to its implications when he makes the observation that the enjoyment of beauty is greatly increased by the realization that



the beauty will soon fade and disappear. Knulp is very much aware of the transience of beautiful things, including human relationships, and to a large extent it is this awareness that keeps him from forming a meaningful relationship of his own, in spite of the fact that he maintains that transience heightens beauty, he will not enter a relationship, which will have to end sooner or later, because he is afraid of getting hurt. "The End" shows how everything beautiful in Knulp's life slipped away without Knulp having fully partaken of it.

Klingsor's case is quite different. Like Knulp, he verbalizes and reflects upon the problem, but he does not intellectualize it to the extent that his awareness of transience destroys his appreciation of beauty and his ability to accept it on a basic emotional level. He lives for the day, neither regretting the mistakes or losses of the past nor contemplating the changes which time will inevitably bring about.

4. Compare the end of "Klein and Wagner" with the end of "Klingsor's Last Summer."

*ANSWER.* The end of "Klein and Wagner" comes as a surprise. The events of the first four chapters did not lead the reader to expect Klein to find peace and harmony through suicide. There is, on the other hand, no suspense in "Klingsor's Last Summer"—both the title and the "Preface" tell us that Klingsor has died; and furthermore, the story ends on a very non-decisive note—Klingsor's actual death is not described.

The language of the concluding paragraphs of each story is different from the general tone of the language found in the story. The sense of frustration and indecision conveyed in the first part of "Klein and Wagner" is not present at the conclusion, since Klein's dilemma has been solved and he has found peace. A somewhat similar change takes place in "Klingsor's Last Summer." The highly emo-

tional, "Expressionistic" language of the central sections is abandoned in favor of an objective narrative tone. This change reflects the peace which Klingsor experiences following the completion of his self-portrait. He seems to have been totally drained by the strenuous creative process and his state of tranquility is reflected in the abrupt and unusual end of the story.

5. What points do "A Child's Heart" and *Demian* have in common?

ANSWER. The events of "A Child's Heart" closely correspond in detail and in theme to an episode in *Demian*. The protagonist of the story commits an offense which is ultimately trivial and experiences tremendous guilt feelings. He suddenly can no longer find comfort in his previously warm relationship with his mother and he fears the discipline of his strict father to an even greater extent than usual.

Up to this point the situation in *Demian* is almost exactly parallel. Emil Sinclair finds himself blackmailed for an offense which he did not commit, and yet he is blackmailed through his own fault. He has the same fears as the child protagonist. Emil's guilt is related to a boy who is of a lower social class, a member of the "other," "dark" world; the protagonist of "A Child's Heart" makes up a story involving a similar friend in his attempt to exculpate himself.

Both works are concerned in a basic way with the problem of a young boy's first sensation of guilt. The nature of the offense is immaterial, and in each case the crime is minimal, to stress the more general psychological aspect of the problem. Even though the solutions are radically different, the problem is presented in a remarkably similar manner in the two works.

## TOPICS FOR RESEARCH AND CRITICISM

### Specific Stories from the two Collections

Characterization in *Knulp*

Importance of the songs in *Knulp*

Freudian Elements in "A Child's Heart"

Structure of "Klein and Wagner": A detailed analysis

Characterization in "Klein and Wagner"

Colors in the story "Klingsor's Last Summer"

Klingsor's affirmation of life

Guilt in *Knulp* and "A Child's Heart"

The two collections, *Knulp* and *Klingsor's Last Summer*, as reflections of pre-war and post-war Europe

Nature imagery in *Knulp* and in the story "Klingsor's Last Summer"

Importance of the "South" as a setting in "Klein and Wagner" and "Klingsor's Last Summer"

"Klein and Wagner" and "Klingsor's Last Summer" as *Novellen*

### The Two Collections in General

(These topics may be limited to include only a number of stories.)

Lyrical style of the stories

Dreams in the stories

Process of aging in the stories

The outsider in the stories

God and religion in the stories

Illness in the stories

- Guilt and anxiety in the stories
- Male-female relationships in the stories
- Attitude toward death in the stories
- Attitude toward criminal behavior in the stories
- Attitude toward bourgeois family life in the stories
- Portrayal of women in the stories
- Element of chance in the stories

### Comparisons with Hesse's other Works

- Pantheistic elements in *Knulp* and *Peter Camenzind*
- Nature imagery in *Knulp* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*
- "My Recollections of *Knulp*" and *Steppenwolf*
- Transience in *Knulp* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*
- Knulp's* and *Goldmund's* views on religion
- Knulp's* and *Goldmund's* attitudes toward the bourgeoisie
- Knulp* and Harry Haller as outsiders
- Knulp* and Siddhartha: the inability to love
- The deaths of *Knulp*, *Klein*, *Goldmund*, and *Joseph Knecht*
- Crime and guilt in *Demian* and "A Child's Heart"
- Role of the father in "A Child's Heart," *Demian* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*
- Terecina and Hermine: a comparison
- The "two worlds" of *Klein* and *Emil Sinclair*
- The "Mark of Cain" in "Klein and Wagner" and *Demian*
- Secondary characters of "Klein and Wagner" and *Steppenwolf*
- The final visions of *Klein* and *Siddhartha*
- Klingsor* and *Goldmund*: A comparison
- "Klingsor's Last Summer" and *Steppenwolf*: A comparison of form and structure
- Role of art in "Klingsor's Last Summer" and *Rosshalde*
- Christian morality in the collection *Klingsor's Last Summer* and in *Narcissus and Goldmund*
- "Maya" (illusion) in "Klein and Wagner," "Klingsor's Last Summer" and the third "Life" of the *Glass Bead Game*

### Broad Comparative Topics

*Knulp* and Romanticism

*Knulp* and *From the Life of a Good-for-Nothing* by Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff

The outsider artist-bourgeois polarity in "Klein and Wagner" and *Tonio Kröger* by Thomas Mann

"Klein and Wagner" and the drama *From Morn to Midnight* by Georg Kaiser

Expressionistic elements in the story "Klingsor's Last Summer"

Existential elements in the short stories

The "Great Mother" archetype in the stories

Freudian elements in the stories

Nietzsche's "Amor fati" in the stories

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### English Editions

*Knulp. Three Tales from the Life of Knulp*, translated by Ralph Mannheim. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971. This good, reliable translation is now available as a Noonday paperback.

*Klingsor's Last Summer*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970; now available as a Noonday paperback. A good, reliable translation (the student should, however, be aware that the style of the title story makes it extremely difficult to render into English).

### Books on Hesse's life and works

Most of the recent criticism on Hesse has been done in English by North American scholars. Eight books are readily available to the student. The first, *Hermann Hesse and His Critics. The Criticism and Bibliography of Half a Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), by Joseph Mileck, contains a concise survey of Hesse's life and works followed by a detailed annotated bibliography. Excellent summaries of the contents of all important criticism of Hesse prior to 1957 can be found in this valuable book.

The first comprehensive survey of Hesse in English was *Faith from the Abyss: Hermann Hesse's Way from Romanticism to Modernity* (New York: New York University Press, 1965; now available in paperback),

by Ernst Rose. This book contains detailed summaries, with quotations, of most of Hesse's works, including the early novels and the major short stories. The book is, however, too short to do justice to the subject and hence often tends to be superficial. Rose's treatment of the stories discussed in this Monarch Note is more detailed than that of most other interpreters.

The first significant original study to appear in English was Theodore Ziolkowski's *The Novels of Hermann Hesse. A Study in Theme and Structure* (Princeton University Press, 1965; now available in paperback). This excellent book offers detailed interpretations of the major novels, beginning with *Demian*, as well as separate preliminary discussions of several of Hesse's major themes, including "Magical Thinking," "Timelessness," and "Humor." It closes with a discussion of Hesse's position between Romanticism and Existentialism. Ziolkowski often refers to Hesse's untranslated essays and letters to support his interpretations, thereby offering the American reader insights into important aspects of Hesse's thought which would otherwise be inaccessible. He also stresses connections between Hesse and other writers. Of particular interest is Ziolkowski's discussion of the symbolism of *Demian* and the structure of *Steppenwolf*. In his opinion, *Narcissus and Goldmund* is Hesse's least successful novel. The short stories are not treated individually.

Also by Ziolkowski, the pamphlet *Hermann Hesse* (New York: Columbia University Press Paperback, 1966), offers a good introduction to the author and can be highly recommended. The short stories are dealt with briefly, but effectively.

A very comprehensive survey of Hesse is offered in Mark Boulby's *Hermann Hesse. His Mind and Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967). Most of Hesse's important prose is discussed here. Although the emphasis remains on the major novels, two early works, *Peter*

*Camenzind* and *Beneath the Wheel*, also receive in-depth treatment. The interpretations are invariably balanced and convincing. Frequent references to minor works help form a well-rounded picture of Hesse. The book has an excellent index and with its help the reader can easily locate a discussion of important concepts and symbols in Hesse's works. Sections on the short stories are short but valuable.

An excellent book is *Hermann Hesse* (New York: Twayne, 1970; now available in paperback), by George W. Field, the only complete, systematic survey of Hesse's life and works available in English. Since it covers Hesse's entire career, it does not discuss the major works in as much depth as do Ziolkowski and Boulby. The book has an extensive bibliography of books and articles on Hesse. A particularly valuable chapter is devoted to Hesse's poetry and non-fictional prose. The treatment of *Klingsor's Last Summer* is detailed; *Knulp* is not discussed in depth.

The most recent survey to appear in English is Bernhard Zeller, *Portrait of Hesse: An Illustrated Biography*, translated by Mark Hollebhone (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971). This book is of significantly less value than the other books on Hesse discussed above. It is a rather unreliable abridgment of a documentary biography originally written in German. The illustrations, however, will be of interest to many readers.

Finally, *The Impact of Nietzsche on Hermann Hesse*, a short study by Herbert W. Reichert (Mt. Pleasant, Michigan: The Enigma Press, 1972) can be recommended as a useful introduction to a complex topic. Nietzschean aspects of *Klingsor's Last Summer* are considered by Reichert.

Two books in German deserve mention. *Hermann Hesse. Sein Leben und sein Werk* by Hugo Ball (new edition, updated by Anni Carlsson and Otto Basler, Zurich: Fretz & Wasmuth, 1947); this study, which originally



appeared in 1927, was the first important book on Hesse and has been very influential. *Hermann Hesse. Natur und Geist*, by Hans Jürg Lüthi (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970), is the latest major study of Hesse by a European.

The only important article on the short stories discussed in this Monarch Note is Heinz W. Puppe, "Psychologie und Mystik in 'Klein and Wagner' von Hermann Hesse," *PMLA*, Vol. 78 (1963), pp. 28-35. A detailed discussion of Puppe's argument is given above, in the section on "Klein and Wagner."

### Articles of interest to readers of Hesse's short stories

The following articles are of particular interest, although not all deal explicitly with the short stories. All are written in English, but some, marked by an asterisk, quote from Hesse in the original German.

\*Benn, Maurice. "An Interpretation of the Work of Hermann Hesse." *German Life and Letters*, Vol. 3 (1949-50), pp. 202-211. Good general discussion of Hesse's main works, stressing the Nature-Spirit dichotomy.

\*Brunner, John W. "The Natur-Geist [Nature-Spirit, i.e., Mother-Father] Polarity in Hermann Hesse." *Helen Adolf Festschrift*, ed. Sheema Buehne, et. al. New York: Ungar, 1968, pp. 268-284. A survey of this important concept in all of Hesse's works.

Butler, Colin. "Literary Malpractice in Some Works of Hermann Hesse." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (1971), pp. 168-82. An extremely critical general study; questions Hesse's capabilities as a writer.

Colby, Thomas E. "The Impenitent Prodigal: Hermann Hesse's Hero." *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (1967), pp. 14-23. Sees Hesse's major protagonists as Prodigal Sons who fail to return to the Father (i.e., to traditional authority).

- Engel, Eva J. "Hermann Hesse," in *German Men of Letters*, Vol. 2, London: O. Wolff, 1963, pp. 249-274. An introductory survey.
- Fickert, Kurt J. "The Development of the Outsider Concept In Hesse's Novels." *Monatshefte*, Vol. 52 (1960), pp. 171-178. The conflict between the individual and society as reflected in Hesse's heroes.
- Koester, Rudolf. "Self-Realization: Hesse's Reflections on Youth." *Monatshefte*, Vol. 58 (1965), pp. 181-186. Hesse's treatment of youth and the struggle for identity.
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- Otten, Anna. (Editor) *Hesse Companion*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970. The editor gives a good survey of Hesse's works, which is followed by chapters on Hesse, for the most part reprinted from other important studies of Hesse. The *Hesse Companion* also offers a sample of critical commentary on Hesse—for the most part favorable—and contains a vocabulary and glossary for the benefit of students who wish to consult the original German of some of Hesse's works. It also contains an extensive bibliography. *In short: a very valuable book, although none of the chapters specifically deals with the short stories.*
- Schwarz, Egon. "Hermann Hesse, the American Youth Movement, and Problems of Literary Evaluation." *PMLA*, Vol. 85 (1970), pp. 977-987. Discussion of Hesse's popularity in America and Germany, within the context of the more general problem of literary evaluation.
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*tive Literature*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961). An early, but still valuable study of several key themes in Hesse's writings.

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Ziolkowski, Theodore. "Saint Hesse among the Hippies." *American German Review*, Vol. 35 (1969), No. 2, pp. 18-23. The best short description of Hesse's current popularity.

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