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Hermann Hesse's Orient:
Western Crisis and Eastern Redemption

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Translations by Sofia Bach unless otherwise indicated.

Abstract

The German-born Nobel-Laureate author Hermann Hesse enjoyed three major waves of popularity in the twentieth century. The first surge in reception took place in the Weimar Republic following the Great War. The second, arose mostly in Germany during the period of Nazi rule and just after the Second World War. Finally, the third surge happened in the 1960s and 1970s, when Hesse reached a large readership at the time of the American Counterculture movement. In all these receptions, Hesse's novels were seen as guides to help navigate crises in western civilisation. The resolutions offered in Hesse's novels, particularly *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf* and *The Indian Life* (the appendix to *The Glass Bead Game*) are either anchored in a narrative Orient, or influenced by Vendānta and Buddhist philosophies. Framing the research within reception theory (Jauss 1967), the study of crisis in the West (Spengler 1919; Graf and Föllmer 2012) and Orientalism (Said 1978; Sardar 1999), I argue that Hesse's readers across each of these waves of reception share a sense of social and existential crisis, and that Hesse's novels functioned as a means of resolving this sense of crisis in the diverse socio-cultural environments of the West. They did so through the invocation of various understandings of the East as the Oriental other. Further, by way of conclusion, I suggest that a new wave of Hesse reception is in the making, and that these earlier surges of popularity can help us understand what Hesse's Orient might offer in today's pervasive sense of global crisis in academic and socio-cultural spheres.

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Introduction

“I have no right to call myself one who knows. I was one who seeks, and I still am, but I no longer seek in the stars or in books; I am beginning to hear the teachings of my blood pulsing within me. My story is not pleasant, it is not sweet and harmonious like the invented stories; it tastes of folly and bewilderment, of madness and dream, like the life of all people who no longer want to lie to themselves.”
-Hermann Hesse, *Demian*

The novels of the German Nobel-Laureate Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) belong to the canon of modern western literature; however, they have not been uniformly received since they were first published in the early twentieth century, Germany. Indeed, their reception in the West can be understood in terms of four major waves defined by the context of the readers rather than by a continuing popularity of the literary content. The first two surges of popularity happened during Hesse’s lifetime in Germany, (1) after World War I, and (2) during and after World War II. Then, (3) in the 1960s, Hesse reached to large readership in the United States during the Counterculture movement. Finally, (4) in the last few years, multiple papers, books, and journal articles have been published dealing with Hermann Hesse and his works, this time not in a specific location, but rather on a global scale. It is my thesis that we can view the reception of Hesse’s writings in terms of waves of popularity; that Hesse’s readers across these waves share a sense of social and existential crisis. They also share a central feature, namely the attempt to resolve the sense of personal and social crisis arising from different environments through the invocation of variously understood versions of the ‘East’ with the help of Hesse’s works. Moreover, the dominant reception of Hesse in the wake of the post-WWII global youth movements represents an escalation of Hesse’s popularity from the level of ‘national’ to ‘world’ literature, and that the figure of Hesse himself, came to symbolise the modern western pilgrim of crisis, over and above his

individual works. Finally, I suggest that a new wave of Hesse reception is in the making, and that these earlier waves of reception can help us understand what Hesse's Orient offers to today's sense of global crisis (assuming the current wave of reception is symptomatic of a new social crisis).

Literary specialists and critics have often labelled Hesse a second-rate writer who tends towards clichés (Decker, *Hesse* 7). Nonetheless over the past century his work has reverberated among different generations in ways that suggest an importance unseen by these experts. Hesse's writings have been translated into thirty-four languages during his lifetime, and many more translations appeared posthumously (Decker, *Hesse* 15). Throughout the decades, Hermann Hesse has often been, and still is, linked to a younger readership. Reading *Demian*, *Siddhartha* or *Steppenwolf* seems to resonate with problems of coming-of-age and of the search for the true self. What is it in his stories that breaks through the barrier of time and culture, and resonates with young readers from various decades and backgrounds?

Most of Hesse's writing deals, in some degree, with inner conflict and the search for a sense of authentic identity. Many of his stories, such as *Siddhartha* (1922), *Journey to the East* [*Die Morgenlandfahrt*] (1932), *The Glass Bead Game* [*Das Glasperlenspiel*] (1943), and to some extent, *Demian* (1919) and *Steppenwolf* (1927), find resolution with the help of some kind of Oriental influence. The most striking example of this is Hesse's novel *Siddhartha: an Indian Poem* [*Siddhartha: eine indische Dichtung*] published in 1922. This novel tells the story of the spiritual journey of the protagonist Siddhartha, a Brahmin who lived at the time of the Buddha Gautama (he even meets the Buddha but refuses follow him). Siddhartha experiences many walks of life but ultimately rejects all teachings, finding enlightenment as a ferryman by the river. On its appearance *Siddhartha* was criticised harshly by literary critics but enjoyed great success amongst the general public. Such mixed reactions were typical for Hesse's novels, particularly for those written in the interwar period. The

success of his *Demian*, *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf* occurred over and over, throughout many generations of readers and seems to be reignited once again today. Theodore Ziolkowski pointed out in 1969 that Hesse's works have enjoyed “three main waves of enthusiasm [...] since Hesse emerged as a serious writer around 1917: in Germany after World War I and again after World War II, and in the United States during [the 1960s]” (Ziolkowski, “Saint Hesse” 20). In this introduction, I will give a brief overview of these receptions, including the contemporary wave of popularity; then, I will present the questions that this thesis will aim to answer.

Historical and Contextual Background

The Four Receptions

Early in his career, during the late 1910s and 1920s, Hesse’s talent was already recognised and admired throughout Europe and even as far as Japan (Sorell 11). However, there are few published studies of his lifetime reception, which is a gap this thesis will begin to address. Each major biography mentions that Hesse received numerous letters from readers all over Europe, often struggling with the reality of a world at war and seeking guidance from this self-reflective novelist.¹ Volker Michels, in the preface to the collection of Hesse’s letters to his readers *Die Antwort bist du selbst*, estimates that the author received close to 35 000 letters from his readers during his lifetime (Michels, *Die Antwort bist du selbst* 9). Hesse compulsively answered thousands of such letters. Walter Sorell calls Hesse “[...] one of the most prolific letter writers in the age of the telephone” (73). Furthermore, the countless

¹ Biographies of Hermann Hesse used as reference here are by: Hugo Ball *et al.* (1927), Georges Wallis Field (1970), Walter Sorell (1974), Ralph Freedman (1979) and Gunnar Decker (2018).

collections of his correspondence with various famous people and intellectuals only add to the unpublished readers' letters stored at the two Hesse archives.² Unfortunately, having access to only published material for this thesis, I will have to use Hesse's letters and replies to his readers to analyse the themes of their concerns, and the role the Orient played for them. This, in turn, will allow to build a sufficient base upon which further archival research can be expanded.

Hermann Hesse's first major wave of popularity occurred immediately after the end of WWI, with the publication of his *Bildungsroman*, *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth* [*Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend*] in 1919. He published this book under the pseudonym of Emil Sinclair, who was also the story's protagonist. Yet, fairly quickly, Hesse was discovered to be the true author of the novel. *Demian* was written in a few months, during the final year of the war, and is, in part, a product of the beginning of Hermann Hesse's mid-life crisis, which was a transformative period in his life and impacted his writing. In *Demian*, the readers first encounter Hesse's new "Weg nach Innen" ("the path within"), a narrative style which would be a distinctive feature of his following novels, mainly *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*. This new style seems to have disregarded the fast pace with which the modern world tried to run away from itself and turned inwards, in an intensely emotional world beneath the calm and introspective pace of the story. A feature that seems to be inspired by Hesse's interests in Buddhist and Vedantin writings, which he was studying at the time. This was further interwoven with a heavy sense of melancholy and a longing for an undefined past. This narrative style resonated with the readers in a post-World War I Europe, who were startled by the height of destruction and violence caused by the newly mechanised

² Some of the letters from Hesse's readers are stored the Deutschen Literaturarchiv in Marchbach and the remaining at the Schweizerischen Landesbibliothek in Bern.

and dehumanised battle forms, and who also were feeling this saudade. Ziolkowski writes: “Yet as an emotional experience the war of 1914-1918 seems to have penetrated deeper into the human heart than subsequent wars. The reason, possibly, is simply that war had become too efficient and impersonal” (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 87).

Demian is also a product, in part, of the author’s dealings with a language crisis. Hesse believed in an eternal reality, which he could not express in terms of ‘everyday reality’. He first articulated this conflict in a short essay titled *Sprache (Language or Speech)* in 1917. Hesse’s struggle with language came a few years after the more general phenomenon of the *Sprachkrise* faced by the generation of early twentieth-century German writers (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 72). This crisis of language consisted of a sense that “language, ravaged and trivialised by thoughtless use and conditioned to describe everyday ‘reality’, no longer suffices to express reality of a higher order” (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 70). The *Sprachkrise* of modern literature was, similarly to Hessian themes, anticipated by German Romanticism and boosted by Nietzsche (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 70). The logic behind the phenomenon was that, if language was no longer an adequate tool to express the distinctions of modern science, it could not possibly satisfy the requisites of literature, which deals with more tenuous subjects as, for example, the conception of light consisting simultaneously of particles and waves. The most famous figure of the German *Sprachkrise* is Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose *Ein Brief [Chandos Letter]* (1902) ignited the final break of modern German literature from the nineteenth century (Rath 78). Ziolkowski characterises von Hofmannsthal’s letter as “the most despairing statement of the language crisis” (*The Novels* 73). Hermann Hesse was aware of this general language crisis in the early twentieth century, and, albeit belatedly, he shared the characteristics of this phenomenon of modern German literature. However, Hesse differentiates himself from the modernists’ *Sprachkrise*

in that his language crisis became acute only after his two realities came into conflict during the First World War (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 74).

Hesse's readership was drawn mostly from the middle-classes. In Germany during the first two periods of popularity, Hesse was read primarily by the *Bildungsbürgertum* – the educated middle class – so was his writer friend Thomas Mann. Hesse's works were celebrated particularly by those of his generation who were in the forefront of the pioneering German youth movement, the *Wandervögel*, which represented a generationally inspired radical rejection of aspects of strict German middle-class upbringing in favour of self-discovery in the natural settings of hikes and 'Wanderungen'. The American Counterculture reception was also carried by the educated middle-class: the rise in numbers of college students in the Sixties fuelled the rebellious youth movement that celebrated Hesse's works in the new continent. In a way, Hesse is the middle-class pilgrim of crisis. His life and literature epitomise the *deutsches Bürgertum* [German bourgeoisie], and this is mirrored in the childhood Emil Sinclair, the protagonist of Hesse's novel *Demian*: he lives in a big house, he is educated, his family is pious, his father is scholarly and values order and comfort. Early in the novel Sinclair is bullied by a working-class boy from his town who belongs to "the dark world", away from the "light world" of Sinclair's family home (Hesse, *Demian* 7).

Hesse's second wave of reception, which happened mostly after the Second World War, but was perceptible throughout the Nazi regime, is not too dissimilar to the first.³ The heightened horrors of WWII and the expanse of the destruction and death throughout Europe was shocking to all. The most basic human values seemed to have been lost in the Third

³ Although Hesse's popularity boomed after WWII, he remained quite popular during the conflict and was not censored by the Nazi government until later in the war. Hesse's final novel *The Glass Bead Game* was completed in late 1942 and sent to his publisher, who had to get the Propaganda Ministry's approval. After several months of negotiation, a publication ban was issued by the Rosenberg Bureau and made Hesse officially a proscribed author in Nazi Germany.

Reich and the revelation of the concentration camps and the extent of the Holocaust horrified the world. After the end of the War, under the occupying powers, the link with Nazism was broken and a new era began with a younger generation of writers. This cultural movement was striving for a complete break with Germany's past. Hesse's neutral position through most of the war turned him into an enemy of both camps. He was heavily criticised by both the Allies and the Nazis during the war (Decker, *Hesse* 632). However, he was still popular among German (and non-German) readers, who found wisdom in his novels in the tumultuous period of 1933-1955. This time, his readership consisted of mostly older Germans, who have been acquainted with his 'path within' after the First World War.

The third surge in the reception of Hesse's work was most strongly apparent in the United States, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. However, Hesse was known to young people of the Counterculture throughout the western world. The opposition to the Vietnam war and the disillusionment towards their parents' compliant behaviour in an era of increasingly "one dimensional society" (Marcuse 1964) led this young generation to revolt against the established system. In 1949 *Time Magazine* noted that Hermann Hesse was virtually unknown in the United States despite having recently received a Nobel Prize for literature (1946). Yet within twenty years of the publication of this article, Hermann Hesse achieved the status of literary cult figure for the American Counterculture (Ziolkowski, "Saint Hesse" 19). *Demian* was the first of Hesse's novels to be published in the United States, in 1923 it was translated by N.H. Pridem and published by Boni and Liverlight. It was not immediately popular in this new continent, but from 1965 to 1970, there were thirteen printings of this novel by numerous publishers including Boni and Liverlight, Harper & Row and Bantam Books (Marrer-Tising 27). *Siddhartha* was by far the most successful of Hesse's novels in the United States, mainly during the years of Counterculture movement. The first American translation was released in a small cloth edition by New Directions in 1951, 29

years after its original publication. This was followed by several printings by various publishers. By 1974, New Directions published the twenty-fourth reprinting of *Siddhartha*, by which point over two million copies had been sold (Marrer-Tising 29). In 1965 alone, over 100 000 copies were sold.

The rise of popularity of *Siddhartha* coincides with the anti-establishment and anti-war movements in the United States. It also comes simultaneously to a wide-spread rejection by the younger generations of traditional Christian religions and the consequent turn towards Oriental spirituality and the occult. Theodore Roszak in *The Making of The Counter Culture* notes that this movement differentiates itself from the mainstream by its turn to exotic rituals and spirituality as a form of rebellion from its previous generation (134). *Siddhartha* supplied these young readers with many desired Oriental symbols and it also glorified love, a theme cherished by the Flower Children (Marrer-Tising 30). The members of the 1960s Counterculture adopted *Siddhartha* as their Bible, and its story as their doctrine (Matussek 125). Rejecting learning from teachers and glorifying individualism, the character Siddhartha – and by association, its creator, Hermann Hesse – became guru figures of this American interpretation of Zen Buddhism. Ironically, Siddhartha and Hesse became the teachers of this rebellious generation which made up the Counterculture movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The novels of Hesse were cherished by this rebellious generation and the interest in the Orient allowed members of this movement to navigate their own crisis. Hesse's popularity waned sometime after the mid-1970s, as the members of the Counterculture generation aged. In most cases, those who constituted this anti-establishment movement turned to conservative and capitalist middle-class values. Some, less numerous, got lost in the excesses of drugs and alternative communes and cults. Ralph Freedman attributes the decline of Hesse's popularity in the United States to the end of the Vietnam War (in 1975), the economic hardships which made job security more important than "visions of self-

consciousness detached from mundane pursuits and directed toward individual freedom”, and the general ‘demythification’ of the interior universe that Hesse created (Freedman 12).

Finally, the contemporary reception of Hesse’s works started taking place about fifteen years ago. Hesse’s life and work seem to have once more awakened a wave of interest. However, in this case, his renewed popularity is taking place mainly in scholarly discussion among contemporary academics. Several dissertations and theses have been written with Hermann Hesse and his literature as subjects of research.⁴ Academic articles and books on Hesse’s life, work and reception, have also enjoyed a renewed boom of publications in recent years. Among these are included peer-reviewed works published in the last decade and a half, such as Anne Staquet’s “*L’Orient dans l’utopie de Hermann Hesse*” (Le Philosophoire 2014), Gunnar Deckers’ “*Hermann Hesse und Indien: Von äußeren und inneren Ost-West-Passagen*” (*Sinn und Form: Beiträge zur Literatur*, 2015), and John Zilcosky’s *Uncanny Encounters* (2016). A potential catalyst for this current reception was the 125th anniversary of Hesse’s birth in 2002. This ‘*Hermann Hesse Jahr*’ was celebrated by a year of festivals, concerts, talks, lectures and readings all around the globe (Stephenson 4).

More recently, in 2012, the 50th anniversary of Hesse’s death was commemorated. This event brought renewed attention to the recent academic discussions around Hesse’s works and influence, but it also brought a renewed interest from the general readership. Articles celebrating Hesse’s life and reception multiplied. An example of such non-academic

⁴ A list of few of such postgraduate writings includes: Barto, Jacob Matthew. “The Poetics of Affirmative Fatalism: Life, Death, and Meaning-Making in Goethe, Nietzsche, and Hesse”. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 2017]; Lee, Victoria B. “Journey to the Unconscious: An Examination of Paths to Enlightenment in Hermann Hesse’s Works”. MA thesis, Mississippi State University, 2016 (-); Manthripragada, Ashwin Jayant. “Constituting a Self through an Indian Other: A Study of Select Works by Stefan Zweig and Hermann Hesse”. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2014 (-); Maples, Thomas C. “Siddhartha, a Hermeneutic Analysis of the Individuation Process.” Dissertation, Saybrook University, 2011(-); Stephenson, Barry. ““Veneration and Revolt’: Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism.” Dissertation, University of Calgary, 2005 (-); Tekel, Rose M “The Pilgrim without a Map: The Religious Vision of Hermann Hesse”. Dissertation, Concordia University, 2006. (-)

articles is Matthias Matussek's "*Ich mach' mein Ding*" in the influential and widely read German weekly news journal *Der Spiegel* (vol.32, 2012) and Adam Kirsch's article in *The New Yorker* "Hermann Hesse's Arrested Development" in the 19 November 2018 issue. This latest surge of Hesse-popularity is still in the making today, not only in academic discussions, but also in the cultural sphere. The nature of the current crisis which fuels this resurgence of Hesse's novels could be environmental, ideological, spiritual, or even geographical. This will be discussed briefly in the conclusion and will offer grounds for the expansion of this thesis into a dissertation.

What is notable, and of importance for this research, is that within all these four receptions, from academics to hippies, from the early twentieth century to just last year, there is a recurrent focus on the Orient in Hesse's work, especially in his most famous novel, *Siddhartha*, but also in *Demian*, *Steppenwolf* and *The Glass Bead Game*. However, as each wave of popularity took place in a different time in history and amongst different readerships, each was characterised by its own sense of crisis, and yet each characterised this crisis in terms of a civilizational opposition between West and East. What is more, that "East" is different in each case.

The Western Conceptions of Orient

The interwar period in Germany saw a particular interest in things oriental, some of which had disastrous consequences. Ideas of race and their origins were borrowed from Indian mythology and recycled to fit the growing political and ideological tensions of the time (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 296). The idea that the 'Aryan' race is superior to all and comprises the European aristocracies, dates back to Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's infamous essay "*Sur l'inégalité des races humaines*" (1855). This work is one of the earliest examples of scientific racism, which would be further expanded by the Nazis during the Second World War. However, this idea gained new heights in the Weimar Republic and led

to the antisemitic ideology of the National Socialist Party. The notion of an Aryan race comes from the Indo-Iranian tradition. In Sanskrit, the root *ārya* means honourable or noble. It has also been used as a religious and cultural denomination in the Vedic period in the Indian region for the higher casts, presumably originating from northern India. The term encountered in the R̥g Veda was misinterpreted by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars into a racial denomination. These ideas influenced the Nazis which saw Aryans as the direct precursors of the blond, blue-eyed Germans, superior to all other racial groups.

Yet, not all appropriations of the Orient during the interwar period were as problematic. The Weimar Republic saw a dramatic rise of translations of Indian and East-Asian material into many European languages, which resulted in a higher accessibility to eastern spiritual and philosophical concepts of the 'Enlightened Other'. India, and the Orient writ large, were for Hesse's generation a conceptual site of solace and resolution (or at least escape) from western civilisation's spiritual crisis. Yet, the geographical and cultural reality of the Orient had nothing to do with the notions of purity, catharsis and spirituality attached to it. In fact, it was often a source of shock for these early twentieth-century orientalists, and Hesse is no exception to the rule. When he travelled through India and Southeast Asia in 1911, the writer was disillusioned and disappointed of what he found in the real Orient, on top of suffering a long bout of dysentery, as the entries in his *journal intime* recount (Zilcosky 51).

The Indian Orient was a major point of interest for the Counterculture movement, which stemmed in the United States and quickly expanded globally. Theodor Roszak, author of one of the earliest major studies of this cultural phenomenon *The Making of A Counter Culture* (1969), argued that the wide-spread rejections of all society's norms by the youths of the 1960s is a result of the technologically advanced civilisation (Roszak 15). The 1960s

youth recognised cherished values in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*: a rejection of authority, of the mainstream norms, of mass media and of western religions (Manthripragada 92; Marrer-Tising 281). This period in history also saw a renaissance of interest in religion and spirituality, but instead of traditional Judeo-Christian religions, the youth movement turned to exotic religions, the most popular of which was Zen Buddhism (Marrer-Tising 281). Unlike Hesse's previous audience, the Counterculture adherents flooded the geographical Orient, travelling to a range of specific locations. Spiritual pilgrimage to India was championed by Counterculture idols such as The Beatles and known as the 'Hippie Trail'. Geographical India and the Buddhist philosophies and practices found in its culture also played a major role for the Beatniks (who along the Hippies and few other sub-cultures formed the Counterculture movement). In 1962, Beatnik-leader poet Allen Ginsberg travelled to India to seek spiritual growth and immersed himself in meditation... often under the influence of psychedelic drugs (Jackson 61). Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*, with its rejection of norms, its wandering and seeking of spiritual awakening in the shape of a fictional representation of the life of a buddha, spoke to this generation and encouraged travels to the region where the action is assumed to be taking place (although, Hesse does not mention any specific locations in his story). The countercultural Orientalism was symptomatic of a generational crisis, and in this research, I will analyse what role the Orient, and specifically Hesse's Orient plays in this crisis.

Theoretical Framework and Terminology

Reception Theories

Since this research is anchored in the study of reception, I will briefly introduce the main two theories of this field: Konstanz' School "Reception Aesthetics"

(*Rezeptionsästhetik*) and the American "Reader Response Criticism". In my research, I will

merge aspects of both theories in order to have an adequate methodology to study the German and American receptions. Reception Aesthetics emerged from the Konstanz School, which was founded by the German literary theorist Hans Robert Jauss and his colleague Wolfgang Iser (Buchanan, *Jauss*). In 1967, Jauss gave his ground-breaking lecture “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory”.⁵ Through seven arguments, Jauss urged philologists and literary historians to broaden literary analysis beyond a work’s historical moment of conception, so as to include the past and present reception and impact of the text, a theory he termed ‘Reception Aesthetics’:

In the triangle of author, work and reading public, the latter is no passive part, no chain of mere reactions, but even history-making energy. The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its audience. For it is only through the process of communication that the work reaches the changing horizon of experience in a continuity in which the continual change occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production which surpasses them (Jauss 8).

For Jauss, literary analysis should understand a text as a continual, circular system of production in constant interaction with the audience, their present experience of the work and the text’s past reception and conception (Jauss 8). Jauss’ call for the inclusion of the study of reception within philology coincided with the sudden popularity of the works of Hermann Hesse in the West, due to the Counterculture movement. This renewed heightened interest among the general public gave the scholars the ideal case-study to answer Jauss’ call and expand the study of literature through the analysis of readers’ response. And so, as Ashwin Manthripragada puts it: “instead of looking at Hesse’s work in terms of the years he was writing them, scholars began to look at Hesse’s work primarily in terms of its Counterculture reception” (83).

⁵The original German article is: Jauß, Hans Robert. “*Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*.” Konstanz: Univ.-Verl., no. 3, 1967. (1967)

A decade later, Peter Uwe Hohendahl published the first English version of “Introduction of Reception Aesthetics,” translated by Marc Silberman.⁶ Although generally focused towards *Germanistik*, this chapter offers valuable notions for studying Hesse’s global receptions as well. Reception aesthetics are not only focused on the reader, but also on the processes of literary communication between the author and its audience; it is a type of literary history interested in the interaction between the audience and the artists (mostly writers) (Hohendahl, “Introduction” 35). “Impact studies [...] offer new formulations for the problems of evaluation and history”(Hohendahl, “Introduction” 35). In the case of this research, it allows to acquire a new vision into the ambiguous feelings towards Orientalism in today’s academic reception. Hohendahl explains that reception cannot be contained uniquely to textual analysis as in Jauss’ views, but rather it should be included in the broader context of literary, moral and socio-political positions. These would allow us to understand the inherited body of reactions and appropriations (“Introduction” 38). “This extension implies that scholarly criticism itself becomes part of the field of investigation in that it considers itself a major subject in the study of reception” (Hohendahl, “Introduction” 38). This notion is interesting for this study for two reasons: first, it includes the study of the scholarly reception during Hesse’s lifetime, which strongly contrasted with the general public’s reception, and secondly, it entails as part of the study of Reception Aesthetics the scholarly discussion which forms the core of Hesse’s contemporary wave of popularity.

The Konstanz School had a significant influence on the Anglo-American Reader-Response Criticism, which similarly prioritises the role of the reader in both founding the meaning of the text and assessing its critical worth. The major difference between this mode

⁶ This article was first published in German in 1974 as an introduction to Hohendahl’s *Sozialgeschichte und Wirkungsästhetik* (Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. *Sozialgeschichte Und Wirkungsästhetik: Dokumente Zur Empirischen Und Marxistischen Rezeptionsforschung*. Athenäum-Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1974).

of literary criticism and Reception Aesthetics is that the former gives greater emphasis to the socio-political and cultural differences between the readers. Unlike the Konstanz School theory, the American theory recognises that factors such as gender, age, class and race influence the way readers respond to a text (Buchanan, *Reader-Response Criticism*). This idea, particularly the focus on age and class, is central in understanding the role of the Orient for the many generations of Hermann Hesse's readership, as their background will impact their understanding and use of this literary Orient.

Crisis and Decline of the West

The overarching theme of this thesis is the notion of crisis in the West. It is embedded in Hesse's work and receptions and is the central framework of this thesis. The crises among the multiple waves of reception, also reflect Hesse's own dealings with several crises throughout his lifetime. Indeed, he was often dubbed 'a poet of crisis' or a 'pilgrim of crisis' (Freedman 6). Hermann Hesse was born in 1877 in a devout pietist family, members of a German Protestant sect who rejected the established Church in favour of a zealously inward striving of virtue (Kirsch). Hesse was born during an era of transition: the many small Germanic empires have recently been merged to a new Germany by Bismarck, and this new nation saw the persistence of feudal institutions in the context of modern capitalism (O'Hagan 60); the industrialisation and mechanisation of Europe was quickly changing its social and cultural landscapes; and the old traditional and religious standards of values were shifting to new, modern, scientific and rational mores. Hesse would witness many such shifts of values throughout his long life, as the twentieth century brought new revolutions, wars, and economic crises.

This notion of transformation, of shedding of old values would be integral to his thought process and to his writing. The many transformations of Siddhartha's life in the novel by the same name are symptomatic of Hesse's own dealings with change. The protagonist

goes through various attendant lifestyles and with each he inherits new, sometimes contradictory, sets of values. Siddhartha is born to a Brahmin family, the highest caste in the Indian system, and generally understood as the priests' and teachers' caste. Siddhartha was a promising young pupil, who recited the Vedas, recognised ātman within himself and worshiped the creative principle that is Brahman. However, feeling dissatisfied with his family's religion and in the hope of attaining nirvāṇa, or spiritual illumination, he leaves his home, to become an ascetic beggar and joins the śramaṇas. In this stage of his path, he fasts, renounces all possession and rejects all bodily urges to reach the spirit's enlightenment. Eventually, he meets the Buddha Gautama personally and is very impressed with his elegance and teachings. Nonetheless, Siddhartha decides not to join his orders because even though Buddha's wisdom is inarguable, his philosophy does not account for the distinct experience of each individual. Siddhartha's quest must be carried alone. Here, Hesse's own rejection of teachers, gurus and spiritual leaders is undeniable. Siddhartha crosses the river where he meets the ferryman who will play an important role in the story's conclusion, but the protagonist's path to enlightenment has not yet come to an end.

He would meet a beautiful courtesan, with whom he would fall madly in love. In order to be able to afford her love and earthly pleasures, he becomes a successful merchant, forgetting all his ascetic and priestly values. He rejoices in drink, sensuality and gambling. However, reaching middle-age, he realises that this luxurious lifestyle is merely a distraction from his spiritual quest. He leaves his riches, Kamala, and their son behind, and returns to the river. He contemplates suicide but falls asleep in a trance-like dream where he is saved by the sound of the universe, Om. He reunites with the ferrymen and lives simply by the river. Having grown old, through meditation and communion with the river, Siddhartha reaches nirvāṇa, where time and space lose their meaning as he becomes the 'Exalted One'. These numerous shifts in lifestyle and values aiming to find spiritual fulfilment are emblematic of

Hesse's own experience and struggles to find inner peace. This is also what resonated with readers in tumultuous times of transition throughout history. The crisis was endemic to Hesse's life, to his works, but also to his readership.

Hesse's contemporary, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), wrote on this sense of crisis. Born in 1880 in Germany, Spengler was an important historian of the early twentieth century. He wrote the famous *The Decline of the West*, of which the first volume was published in the summer of 1918, a few months prior to the Armistice that began the process of ending the Great War. Writing simultaneously with Hermann Hesse, Spengler professes a pessimistic future for the western civilisation and presents a theory of the evolution from cultures to civilisations and their inevitable disintegration. Spengler presents the West as one of many civilisations that make up the higher cultural order, which itself is comprised of several self-contained histories. The recognition of multiple civilisations is a significant departure from the general focus of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century German historiography, and contributed greatly to the later field of multi-culturalism (Rojek 424). Spengler's notion of 'cultures' is organic (in the mystical rather than biological sense), it is cyclical and goes through prescribed stages of 'spring, summer, autumn and winter' and then, fades away (Spengler and Helps vii). For Spengler, 'civilisation' is the final stage (winter) and the one leading to decline, it is a period when the soul of the culture has exhausted its potential and becomes mummified in the society of the megapolis (O'Hagan 63; Spengler and Helps x). Unlike some of his late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century contemporaries, Spengler did not perceive the western civilisation to be following a path of progress and advancements, but rather as being in its later phase of disintegration (Spengler and Helps 74).

Spengler started composing his *magnum opus* before the Great War, completing it by 1917. The conflict left its trace on the pessimistic course taken by the theory, and it also

shaped the public's response to it, which was "laudatory and fulsome" (Rojek 420). The first volume of *The Decline of The West* was an immediate success throughout the occident, but most particularly in Germany, where it quickly achieved sales of over 100,000 (Becker 458). Stuart Hughes in his *Critical Estimate* tagged 1919 the 'Spengler year', mentioning that "Everyone seems to be reading him; everyone was wondering just who he was" (89). In a similarly way to Hesse, Spengler's impact is best understood through his reception. The First World War was a war of destruction like no other in scale and technological sophistication. Consequently, the incredulity and bewilderment at what was widely understood as a collapse of western civilisation was the most common response to the calamity. "Readers of Spengler's [*The Decline of The West*] were gripped by a desperate need to be supplied with answers to their state of frantic confusion about the ruins of the western ideal of progress" (Rojek 420). This major work was mostly forgotten until America entered the Second World War. Spengler's theory of the 'decline of the occidental civilisation' began to re-emerge amongst the general public, fuelled by the anxieties resulting from another World War. Spengler's popularity waned again, until a decade later, public concerns about the Cold War triggered the fears that western civilisation was facing its doom. Chris Rojek writes of a 'double life' of Spengler's thesis. Just like Hesse's writings, "[...] in normal times, [*The Decline of The West*] is assumed to be dead and buried. But in times of disturbance and diplomatic hyper-tension, it rises from the dead and, superficially, seems to present insights that are rediscovered as if they are fresh and uncanny in their relevance" (Rojek 423).

Although Spengler does not explicitly use the term 'crisis', it is, in fact the core subject of his theory and the igniter of its multiple successes. Spengler's work and reception have eerie resemblance with Hermann Hesse's: both wrote in time of crisis, both recurrently become popular in western societies in time of social unrest and are otherwise forgotten, and both sought to resolve the sense of social and/or individual conflict. Where they diverge, is in

their approaches: Spengler wrote of societies and political themes in an academic style, with an aim of educating the audience about their own civilisation; Hesse relied mostly (but not only) on the narrative and poetic medium and preferred to seek solace from the crisis in the individual rather than the social. Hesse characteristically disbelieved in trying to change societies or governments, his aim was to change the individual; he wrote on this matter: “*Wir müssen nicht hinten beginnen bei den Regierungsformen und politischen Methoden, sondern wir müssen vorn anfangen, beim Bau der Persönlichkeit, wenn wir wieder Geister und Männer haben wollen, die uns Zukunft verbürgen.*” (Hesse, *Gesammelte Werke* 10: 467).⁷

This is potentially an aspect of his broad appeal throughout many cultures and generations: the distrust of politics and religions and the implicit idea of self-help as a means to redemption.

All surges in reception of Hesse’s work coincided with social unrest. After the First World War, the mechanisation and horror of the four-year conflict had left a deeply damaged society, and a fragile economy in Germany. The time of the Weimar Republic is notably known for its turbulences in the political, social and economic spheres (Morgan 48). After the fall of the Third Reich, in 1945, the world was taken aback with the extent of the horrors of the Nazi government and the six-year World War. The Counterculture era, from the early Sixties to the mid-Seventies, was marked with a rejection of technocracy, of colonial wars (specifically the Vietnam war) and of the model of post-war suburban constriction, all of which typified the *Pax Americana*. The mechanisation of the world and the experts’ rule which allowed the Vietnam war, world hunger and injustice, was no longer desired by the

⁷ “We should not start at the end, with the forms of government and the methods of politics; rather we should begin at the beginning, with the construction of the person, if we want to have spirits and men again, who will vouch for our future.”

youth of the time, who looked Eastwards to find another system of mores. Finally, in contemporary time, we see once more a turn towards Hesse and the Orient. Yet, as we are still within this current reception, we have not yet taken the necessary step back to look and review this ‘time of crisis’. Are we currently dealing with another of such shifts in values in our occidental societies? Is the global environmental crisis leading us to seek solace once more in the spirituality and practices of our Other, this conceptual Orient? How does psychoanalysis play in this reception, why does it have such a central role? These are only few questions that this research will pose and explore in the concluding section.

Research Questions and Organisation of Chapters

This review of the contexts of the waves of reception of Hesse and of the theoretical notions in which the research is anchored reveals significant gaps in research to date. Although the subject of the Orient in Hesse’s works and life has been dealt with thoroughly in academic publications, no one has yet researched the impact and understanding of that Orient among all his readership. Also, to my surprise, unlike Hesse’s life story, his lifetime reception is very poorly documented (outside of the two main Hesse archives) and still requires a published comprehensive study. Finally, no one has yet delved into the current surge in academic (and non-academic) works dealing with Hermann Hesse, latest major product of which is the lengthy and detailed biography by Gunnar Decker, *Hesse: The Wanderer and his Shadow* (2018). The reasons for this contemporary reception are still to be inquired, and so is the role of the Orient within it. In this research, I will attempt to fill, at least partially, these three gaps in the study of Hermann Hesse. My thesis consists, primarily, in presenting an exhaustive study of the role of the Orient in Hesse’s surges in reception, and in understanding what role this turn Eastwards played and still plays for each one. I will use the published letters written by Hesse in response to his readers to deduce the themes of the

correspondence and to analyse his lifetime receptions. This study, that is, will lay the foundation for further PhD research, for which essential archival work in Switzerland and Germany will enable me to shed light on this understudied subject. Through my analysis of the first three receptions, I will attempt to understand the nature of the contemporary rise of interest in Hesse's life and work and pave the way for a more in-depth analysis of the (hypothetical) current crisis in the academic sphere, which will be expanded in my dissertation.

All waves of Hesse's popularity have something in common: they seem to occur at times in history, when people – either of a whole society, or specific sub-groups or generations within a society – experience a collapse of past standards of value. This was already observed as early as in 1969 by Theodore Ziolkowski, who wrote of the post-World Wars and Counterculture receptions: “Many young Germans in 1919 and 1945 rejected the order that had brought about, or permitted two world wars, just as many today question a society that has produced poverty, racial inequality, and the war in Vietnam” (“Saint Hesse” 20). This leads me to query: why do Hesse's works appeal to larger readerships in times social crisis? Why are we seeing a new surge of popularity today? And most importantly, because the subject of the Orient is recurrent all these receptions, what role does the Orient of Hesse's novels play for these readers? To quote Ziolkowski once more: “anyone wishing to understand the phenomenon must be concerned not so much with what Hesse actually says in his works as with what his readers think or like to believe he says” (1969 “Saint Hesse” 20). What do these four generations believe Hesse is saying? In this thesis, I will answer these questions by studying the connection between the “Orient” of the three past receptions and Hesse's Orient. I will argue that through the reception of Hermann Hesse's work, one can understand the role the Orient played for societies in crisis.

What to Expect

In the opening review section, I briefly cover the relevant analyses of Hesse's works in their social context. This is followed by a description of the theoretical framework within which this thesis is anchored. In addition to the reader reception theory outlined above, the concept of 'Orientalism' is discussed in detail. The notions behind Orientalism and multiple Orientalisms will be dealt with through an overview of Edward Said's seminal work, and through some responses that this work generated. I will funnel this overview to focus mainly on the latest discussions of German Orientalisms. Then, I will close the Literature Review on the Counterculture movement in the United States, where Theodore Roszak's theories will be analysed for the purpose of my argument.

Chapter 1 deals with the first Hesse-reception in Germany, during the interwar period. This chapter will offer some contextual background of the Weimar Republic reception, which will include a recounting of some aspects of Hesse's life. The understanding of the general feeling of impending collapse of the western civilisation will be analysed and used to understand the setting of *Demian*'s publication and success. I will argue for the link between Hesse's own dealings with the Orient, its depiction of it in his tales, and the role it played for its readers through the interpretation of Hesse's replies to his readers' mail.

The following Chapter "Hesse and the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich" questions how Hesse's conflicted state about the Nazis and his neutral position as a Swiss citizen during the Second World War turned him into an enemy to both German patriots and the Allies camps. Yet, the many letters he received from his German readers during the war show that his refusal to denounce the Nazis, was a way to remain read by and present for his audiences in Germany. He would be harshly criticised by *émigré* group, who saw in him an opportunist and a betrayer. Hesse would eventually be censored in Germany by the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party). Hesse's inner emigration during the Second

World War seems to be an aspect that reverberated with some readers and is reflected in his writings. Hesse experienced another surge of popularity after the Second World War, when his *magnum opus* *The Glass Bead Game* [*Das Glasperlenspiel*] (1943) reached larger audiences and Hesse was awarded the Nobel prize for literature (1946). In this chapter I will analyse his position, the conflicts surrounding him and the letters he received from his readers to understand the nature of this surge, and the importance of Oriental spirituality in navigating the crisis that the Nazi regime and The Second World War brought upon the German readership.

Chapter 3 deals with the massive Counterculture reception of Hesse in the United States. Within a couple of years, Hermann Hesse went from being virtually unknown in the New Continent, to being an idol of the youth movement of the Sixties. His novels became must-read items that were widely discussed amongst all spheres of the Counterculture. In this chapter, I will present the necessary overview of what the Counterculture was, of the social and ideological crisis of the Vietnam war years, of the religious renaissance witnessed in that period – particularly in its obsession with exotic and oriental religions. I will then build my argument over what significance this ‘Hessomania’ had for the American Counterculture and its generational crisis. This argument will allow us to understand how the Orient in Hesse’s *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf* functioned as a signpost leading to the Hippie Trail and its ‘spiritual growth’ through mind-expanding drugs.

Finally, I will conclude my thesis with a synthesis of the three former receptions in order to link these phenomena to the one we are witnessing today, not only in academic discussions, but also among the educated general public. This thesis will offer an extensive understanding of the earlier reception of this German author and will argue for its use of the Orient as a tool to navigate various crises experienced by the three readership groups.

Literature Review

In this initial section, I will present a review of the theoretical and historical works that are necessary to lay the foundation for my arguments. This literature review serves a general purpose of locating my thesis within the broader academic discussions, but also highlighting where these discussions come short. Relevant literature will be further discussed in individual chapters, as to allow the readers to understand the specifics of the subjects analysed in the three chapters. The general aim of this research is to understand which role the Orient played to the experience of crisis in various receptions of Hermann Hesse. The approach is interdisciplinary, with literary and postcolonial studies providing the guidelines with reference to contemporary sociological theory. Hence, in this section, I give an overview of some major biographical and philological analyses of Hesse's works, I introduce the main themes of 'Orientalism', and I give some background on the American 'Counterculture' and its generational identity crisis.

Analyses of Hermann Hesse's Works

A multitude of biographies and carefully organised analyses of themes found in Hesse's novels have been published throughout the decades. However, it is not until the 1970s, after Jauss' paper (1967) on the importance of the reception of literary works in philology, that the focus of the studies shifted to include the reactions of the Counterculture readership. A few such studies and biographies offer compelling analysis and information that is necessary to the good understanding of this research. Hugo Ball, a dada artist and a dear friend to Hermann Hesse, authored the first biography for the occasion of Hesse's fiftieth birthday. He titled it *Hermann Hesse: Sein Leben und sein Werk* [*Hermann Hesse: His Life and His Work*] (1927). In it, he offers a chronological detailed account of Hesse's life up until 1927. He describes the very Pietistic family values of each Hesse family member

and how that impacted the author during his childhood (Ball et al. 10–12). Ball introduces the reader to Hermann Hesse's grandfather, Hermann Gundert, who has been an immense influence on the young's author imaginary Orient. This grandfather lived a great part of his life in India as a missionary and was a passionate scholar of Dravidian languages and Indian mythologies (Ball et al. 11). Ball's biography is noteworthy, in that it is the first of many and the only one written by such a close friend of the author. Ball offers interesting interpretations of each major novel written by 1927 (*Hermann Lauscher*, *Peter Camenzind*, *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf*) and connects the dots between Hesse's highly autobiographical style and the actual events of his life. This biography is a useful reference to contemporary understanding of Hesse's life and work, however little is mentioned on the reception of his novels.

Since then, many more biographies of the author's life have been published, the latest of which is Gunnar Decker's *Hermann Hesse: Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* (2012), whose English translation by Peter Lewis *Hermann Hesse: The Wanderer and His Shadow* (2018) is an important source material for this thesis. This extensive recount of Hesse's life and multiple personal crises shows a very careful and meticulous engagement by the biographer with the many archived and private sources. Decker does not present Hesse's life story in a strict chronological manner, but rather organises it in themes. This source allows to go in depth in Chapter 1 on the many tensions at play in Hesse's life during WWI and in the years following. The recount of an extended mid-life crisis and its many symptoms are documented in this biography, along with the conflictual reception Hesse received during WWII. This biography is, at this day, the most extensive published account of Hesse's life. However, although providing some interpretation of the themes in Hesse's novels, it mostly focuses on the events of his life.

Theodore Ziolkowski, on the other hand, dedicated a good part of his academic career to the study and analysis of Hesse's novels and their reception. His *The Novels of Hermann Hesse* (1965) is divided into a study of themes in Hesse's novels and a study of the structures of a few specific works such as *Siddhartha*, *Demian*, *Steppenwolf*, *Narziss and Goldmund*, *Journey to the East* and *The Glass Bead Game*. This study's focus on crisis as a major theme of Hesse's works offers valuable insight into the way Hesse navigated his own existential crisis. This, in turn, serves to expand the analysis of the existential crisis among his post-WWI readers, who recognised themselves in Hesse's novels. Ziolkowski details the multiple periods of crisis in Hesse's life, from his childhood years, when he was institutionalised in a mental asylum, to the interwar period, when he battled with a prolonged mid-life crisis. Ziolkowski links these periods to Hesse's 'veiled' autobiographical novels. He also dedicates a whole chapter to the crisis of languages experienced by Hesse, and its impact on Hesse's post-WWI works. His analysis, along with Decker's biography, allow me to build the argument on the nature of crisis felt by Hesse and his audience after The Great War. Ziolkowski also analyses the use of the Orient in *Siddhartha* and concludes that it is a geographical metaphor for the 'landscape of the soul' (*The Novels* 176). Although his analysis is specific to the protagonist Siddhartha, and per extent Hesse, I believe that this idea can be expanded to understand this novel's success in the Weimar Republic and in the American Counterculture of the 1960s. The importance of the Orient in Hesse's works and in this thesis requires some background information on the post-colonial and literary discussions on Orientalism, starting with the seminal critique of Orientalism by Edward Said.

Orientalisms

The study of the reception of the many facets of the Orient by the West owes primarily to the critical input of Edward Said. With the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978, Said

introduced a new set of critical categories into the scholarly discussions of the global relations between a the colonising West and a the colonised East (*Orientalism* 5). Said expands on Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' – a form of authority in which certain cultural forms predominate over others – to qualify the position of Europe and the United States vis-à-vis the broad geopolitical locales that are contained within "the Orient" (Said, *Orientalism* 7). Said defines Orientalism "as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient", and then develops three key aspects: the academic, the imaginative and the institutional (Said, *Orientalism* 3). Said presents the academic aspect as the most readily accepted of the three: "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient [...] either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (Said, *Orientalism* 2). Related to this first meaning is a second and more general one, the imaginative: "Orientalism [as] a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and [...] 'the Occident,'" a distinction which has been accepted by "a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators [...]" (Said, *Orientalism* 2). This Saidian definition would be the one that, at first glance, fits Hesse's Orient: an imaginary, romanticised East that is, in Hesse's view, crucially different from the grim reality of the West. Finally, the institutional meaning, is what Ashwin J. Manthripragada characterises as "Said's path-breaking discovery and his central subject of analysis" (3). This third meaning has deeper historical and material characteristics than the former two, it supposed that Orientalism can be discussed and studies as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient (Said, *Orientalism* 3). It that western style of authority over the Orient which Said criticises. This last definition leads to his argument that Orientalism, as an inherent part of the modern occidental political and intellectual culture, has less to do with the Orient per se than with the western societies that generated it (Said,

Orientalism 5–6). In the context of this research, the basic ideas of this insight will be used to understand the Orient within Hesse’s reception.

Said’s *Orientalism* sheds light on some important power dynamics. In using Gramsci’s notion of hegemony mentioned above, Said argues for a study of ideas, cultures and histories through their configuration of power. “The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of hegemony [...]” (Said, *Orientalism* 5). The Orient was ‘orientalised’ without its consent by the nineteenth-century European through politics, literature and all forms of cultural trends (Said, *Orientalism* 6). The label ‘oriental’, just as the label ‘exotic’, which is thoroughly analysed in Dorothea Figueira’s study *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (1994), is imposed upon Europe’s Other. Although Figueira does find several problems with Said’s methodology and argumentation – such as Said’s premise that Occidental writers approached the Orient as nationals first, and then as individuals (Figueira 56) – she expands on Said’s notion of the silenced and colonised Other. Figueira argues that by projecting themselves through the Orient, the nineteenth-century European authors appropriate it for their own purposes, “[...] but they also rethink the Self through the Other so as to expand their own cultural boundaries and those of their society”(Figueira 12). Simultaneously, Figueira argues that in their attempt to grasp the notion of the Other, or the Orient, the writers also appropriate it and colonise it, coming to similar conclusions as did Said in *Orientalism*.

Ziauddin Sardar tackles some of the major issues with Said’s theories in his work also titled *Orientalism* (1999). Sardar argues that Said’s notion of ‘the Orient’ is both too limited and too general (70). “It is limited to the Middle East and suggests that it is unique both in the way it is represented by the West and the kind of imperialist or oppressive writing produced about it. [...] Orientalism was by no means limited to Islam and Muslims; it was applied, with and without changes and modifications, equally forcefully to all other Orients [...]”

(Sardar 70). Yet it is also too broad, since it overlooks such factors as time, history, disciplines and genres, and consequently, makes it limited in its analytical and explanatory powers (Sardar 70). The aim of Sardar's book, however, is not merely to criticise Said and those who followed his footsteps, but to present a new approach to and definition of Orientalism, which befits the modern discussion. Sardar interprets Orientalism as "a form of inward reflection, preoccupied with the intellectual concerns, problems, fears and desires of the West that are visited on a fabulated, constructed object by convention called the Orient" (Sardar 13). Consequently, a history of Orientalism would focus on the history of the ideas that impacted the West, leading to the speculative and imaginative creation of a body of images and understandings of the East. This places the emphasis on the imaginative construction of the East in the West, rather than on the political and social encounters of the two civilisations, or on the West's ongoing political involvement with the Orient. Hence, Orientalism is not an outward gaze towards a fixed Orient, because the existence of such 'Orient' is illusory. It is merely a reflection of the West's "intellectual concerns, problems, fears and desires [...]" (Sardar 89). In such a way, Sardar shifts the focus from the Orient into its creators. According to Sardar, this Orient (of Orientalism) is a shifting, ambiguous compendium, that reflects what the writer or observer wishes it to be at that exact moment.

This understanding of Orientalism resonates with the Orient of Hermann Hesse's novels and their reception. The theory that 'the Orient' is a fluid construct dictated by the West explains the incongruous depiction of the East in Hesse's *Siddhartha*, and that of his travel diary and notes from trip around South-East Asia in 1911. The real geographical Orient was deceptive, dirty and materialistic, according to Hesse ("Tagebuch Der Indonesienreise" 336–37). The Orient of *Siddhartha*, on the other hand, was a place of wisdom and enlightenment. It seems that Hesse's narrative Orient was a representation of the extreme opposite of the grim European reality at the time of the novel's composition (in the reconstruction years after

WWI). Sardar accurately defines this type of ‘Orient’ as a concept separable from any geographical area, and which essentially stands for ‘Elsewhere’ (24). Writing twenty years after the publication of Said’s seminal *Orientalism*, Sardar concludes that the subject of Orientalism is no longer limited to what was conventionally understood as the ‘Orient’, but includes many types of imaginary geographies (vii).

Where Sardar challenges the notion of a ‘fixed Orient’, later scholars such as Suzanne Marchand, Todd Kontje and Robert Lemon challenge the notion of a ‘fixed and homogenous Occident’. Marchand’s *German Orientalism*, published in 2009, is the first detailed account of the German intellectual tradition dealing with the Orient, which in this case refers mainly to ancient India and the Near East. In this study of German Orientalist scholarship between 1750 and 1918, the argument the author presents is twofold. On the one hand, Marchand portrays *Orientalistik* as a religious reinvention rather than a discourse of empire. The scholarly movement was part of the ongoing discussion stemming from the religious Reformation and was hence not a secular field, but rather inscribed itself within the tradition of Christian Humanism (Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* xxviii-xxix).⁸ On the other hand, *German Orientalism* challenges the discourse’s presumption of a foundational binary distinction between ‘Europe’ and ‘the Orient’. Marchand rejects the view of German ‘Orientalism’ as a single shared discourse, and instead writes of a multitude of ‘Orientalisms’, which she analyses through a biographical approach of various scholars as individuals, rather than parts of a discourse. In doing so, Marchand’s study of the milieu shows that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century academic concern about the Orient was

⁸ Reformation or Protestant Reformation refers to the religious revolution that took place in the Christian Church during the 16th century. Its two central activists are Martin Luther and John Calvin. The Reformation led to the reformulation of several basic tenets of Christian faith and resulted in the division of Christendom between Roman Catholicism and the new Protestant traditions (“Reformation”).

ancient and philological, rather than modern and imperial (*German Orientalism* 102). This study focuses on figures that have been influential in shaping Hesse's imagination, such as Karl Eugen Neumann, whose German translations of Buddhist text were fondly read by Hesse. Marchand even notes that: "In the 1920s, [Neumann's...] work [was] lavishly praised by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, and Edmund Husserl" (*German Orientalism* 277). Marchand's rooting of German Orientalism in Protestantism sheds some light on Hesse's relationship to the East, given his highly Pietistic background. Nevertheless, this study of German Orientalism focuses only on the scholars of the field, which Marchand limited to "the men (and they were mostly men) who invested time and effort in actually learning to read and/or speak at least one 'oriental' language" (*German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* xxiii). As a consequence, she excludes a number of influential figures who shaped the field and the German Romantic movement from a non-specialist (*i.e.* not knowing an oriental language) standpoint, including artists, authors, and philosophers such as Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Novalis, and Martin Heidegger. In doing so, Marchand omits these major figures that inspired Hermann Hesse's imagination and writing. It is well documented through autobiographical writings that Hesse was a fond reader of German Romantic novels in his youth, and that these considerably shaped his writing style (Spano 13).

Todd Kontje, in *German Orientalisms* (2004), shares a similar position to Marchand's vis-à-vis Said's arguments in *Orientalism*. However, unlike Marchand, Kontje focuses mainly on the Orient in the symbolic literary landscape of German culture (1–2). He centres his work on one national tradition within Europe (Germany) and its interaction with the 'symbolic geography' of the Orient (v, 1). This notion of 'symbolic geography' resembles very closely Said's 'imaginative geography,' in that they both refer to a speculative rather than a factual divide (Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered" 90; Kontje 1). Where geography in

its conventional definition is understood to be in the realm of facts, 'symbolic geography' finds its home in the literary imagination (Kontje 1). In *German Orientalisms* Kontje shows that Germans, or more specifically German writers, tended to both identify their country "with the rest of Europe against the Orient and allying themselves with selected parts of the East against the West" (3). In attempting to make a distinction between the geographical location – Germany is positioned in central Europe – and cultural symbolic geography, Kontje uses a term borrowed from Thomas Mann, and which has had a long history for German identity: '*Das Land der Mitte*' (the land of the middle) (1). This denomination expresses an interest in overturning the customary dichotomy between Occident and Orient that Said considers intrinsic to the discourse (Lemon 7). In defining German interactions with, and use of, the 'eastern landscape', Kontje disputes Said's reasons for neglecting German colonialism in *Orientalism*. Said claims that the German scholarship during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century could not sustain a close partnership between the Orientalists and a "protracted, sustained *national interest* in the Orient" (*Orientalism* 19). Kontje responds to this statement first, by highlighting the fact that Germany, as a unified nation-state came to be only at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1871. Hence, if 'national interest' stands for "a direct material stake in foreign colonies in the East," Germany did not have any, because, for the first two-thirds of nineteenth century, there was no Germany *per se* (Kontje 2). Secondly, Kontje explains that if "[...] we define *national interest* more broadly as an intellectual effort to locate and preserve a sense of communal identity, then we can indeed speak of a German national interest in the East" (Kontje 2). The fact that, as a culture, Germans were lacking a unified nation-state and an empire, contributed to the formation of a peculiar German Orientalism (Kontje 2). Orientalism, from this point of view, deals more with western ideology and the consistency of a Orientalising discourse than the geographical location of the Orient. (Kontje 12). His study focuses on narratives set in the western world

that refer to the Orient rather than those set in the East. Consequently, this excludes one of the central works of my research, *Siddhartha*, but other important novels for this thesis, such as *Demian* and *Steppenwolf* do comply with these criteria. Ideas and concepts put forth in *German Orientalisms* are important to understand the various dynamics at play in this discourse. A common point to both Kontje's and Marchand's stances, is the emphasis on the plurality of Orientalisms, stressing the multiplicity of voices coming from the heterogenous body that is Europe throughout its different periods in history (Kontje v; Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* xxi).

In *Imperial Messages* (2011), Robert Lemon builds on notions put forth by Sardar, Kontje, and other scholars of Germanophone Orientalism such as Lisa Lowe (1991) and Andrea Polaschegg (2005). He draws on the shift of focus from the Orient unto its creators to analyse late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Orientalisms of Austria-Hungary. Using a methodology borrowed from Kontje, he works with particular ideas of a specific time and place, rather than offering a panoramic view of the phenomenon of Austro-Hungarian Orientalism (Lemon 8). Lemon clearly distinguishes between Austro-Hungarian and German Orientalisms. He explains that Germany did end up belatedly acquiring some small territories in the East, where Austro-Hungary never had outwards colonial interests and hence, is the true challenge to Saidian Orientalism (4–5). Although my thesis deals with German and American Orientalisms, arguments put forth in Robert Lemon's *Imperial Messages* are useful to grasp the nature of Hermann Hesse's Orient. Lemon seeks to demonstrate that literary fictions dealing with the Orient by such authors as Franz Kafka, von Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Robert Musil “subvert received notions of national and cultural identity and thus problematize the very practice of Orientalism” (1). Lemon then presents the use of the Orient in these three authors as an act of introspection and self-criticism rather than a celebration of the Occident's superiority over the ‘Other’. This idea of removing the Orient completely

from its geography, be it ‘symbolic’ or ‘imaginative’, is useful in analysing Hermann Hesse’s interaction with the location of his stories and is rooted in the tradition of German Romanticism. Hesse, along with many of his contemporaries, was strongly influenced by Romantic novels and ideals in his youth, and remnants of Romanticism can be recognised in his use of the narrative Orient. Indeed, Wilhelm Halbfass argues that the German Romantic movement was marked by self-criticism and the desire to link the western religious traditions to an older more ‘pristine’ Indian origin (Halbfass 69). “The Romantic interest in India was inseparable from a radical critique of the European present” (Halbfass 83). Similarly, the Orient for Hesse and his reception does not always deal with the notion of a place, but rather with the escape from the crisis setting of the West throughout different times in history. This desire to find solace in the Other – the Oriental Other – tells more about the state of affairs in Germany, The United States and the West at large, than about any purported imperial impulse.

The Counterculture Movement and the Hesse Phenomenon in America

Although the term ‘counterculture’ has emerged in the field of sociology, it has come to be used almost exclusively in reference to the 1960s global anti-establishment and anti-war movement. The Counterculture grouped under the same umbrella the Beatniks, the Black Power movement, the New Left activists, the hippies and other sub-cultures. The movement consisted mainly of children of the middle-classes who rebelled against their parents’ political passivity and social conformism (traits which resulted from having experienced the chaos of the war years) (Decker, *Hesse* 6). Theodor Roszak authored one of the earlier major studies of this cultural phenomenon *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1968). Although the reference is primarily to America, Roszak acknowledges that the generational antagonism of the 1960s achieved international dimensions (1). In this analysis of the Counterculture,

Roszak argues that the wide-spread rejection of all society's norms by the youth of the 1960s is a result of the development of the technocratic civilisation (Roszak 15). The young, more than just dealing with immediate political emergencies such as the Vietnam war, had come to realise that their struggle was against less obvious, but all-encompassing opponent, which Roszak termed 'the technocracy' (4). Technocracy is "the social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration" (Roszak 5). In other words, it is a sophisticated product of the technological progress and of the 'age of reason'. In a technocratic society "[...] those who govern justify themselves by appeal to technical experts who, in turn, justify themselves by appeal to scientific forms of knowledge. And beyond the authority of science, there is no appeal" (Roszak 5). So, a technocratic society is built around a hierarchy of experts who assume authoritative influence over even the most personal aspects of life (Roszak 7). The bewildering complexity to which citizens of such society are confronted becomes itself a threat to democracy. Roszak presents technocracy as a type of totalitarianism, where all spheres of life are given to the care of experts and where freedom of choice is but a make-belief. According to Roszak, the technocratic society agrees that the experts are those individuals whose role is legitimised by the system, which in turn needs them in order to avoid falling apart (207). This circularity allows the technocratic status quo to generate its own justification: "the technocracy is legitimized because it enjoys the approval of experts; the experts are legitimized because there could be no technocracy without them" (Roszak 207).

The power of technocracy and the celebration of the scientific ethos give rise to another problematic, which Roszak termed 'the myth of objective consciousness'. This myth, central to a technocratic society, holds that the only way to access reality is via a state of consciousness devoid of any subjectivity or personal involvement (Roszak 208). 'Reliable knowledge' can only be gained by experts, who reach it via objective consciousness. Their

knowledge is reliable because “it is scientifically sound, since science is that to which modern man refers for the definitive explanation of reality” (Roszak 208). Objective consciousness, like any mythology, “is an arbitrary construct in which a given society in a given historical situation has invested its sense of meaningfulness and value”(Roszak 215). According to Roszak, this myth of objective consciousness is problematic because it is a belief which blinds us from other ways of gaining access to reality. “The rejection of affective and poetic responses to the world and the imposition of the myth of objective consciousness leads to a dangerous distortion of our relationship with reality” (Partridge 5).

Yet, like any other myth, objective consciousness can be questioned and overcome by a cultural movement that finds meaning and value elsewhere (Roszak 215). This is the case of the Counterculture: where the technocratic civilisation embraces an objective consciousness, the Counterculture stemming from it turns instead to subjective experience (Partridge 5). The members of that movement turn to mysticism, drugs and occultism as a way to subvert technocracy and to advocate for the epistemological importance of subjective experience. The popularity of Hermann Hesse’s highly emotional, somewhat spiritual and introspective novels befits the rebellious prerequisites to defy the technocratic standards. Roszak argues that in turning away from objective consciousness, the Counterculture also sheds light on the “entire episode of our cultural history, the great age of science and technology which began with the Enlightenment, standing revealed in all its quaintly arbitrary, often absurd, and all too painfully unbalanced aspects” (Roszak 215). Roszak offers his own definition of the Counterculture as: “a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of a barbaric intrusion” (Roszak 42). He does not see the methods or revolts of the Counterculture as a complete solution to the ailments of the technocratic society, but rather as the beginning of a revolution away from technocracy (Roszak 215).

An aspect of the Counterculture movement which is central to my analysis of Hesse's reception of the Sixties, is the turning away from Judeo-Christian religions and toward eastern practices and traditions. Roszak dedicates a whole chapter of *The Making of the Counter Culture* to this phenomenon, focusing on the role of Allen Ginsberg's and Alan Watts' involvement with Zen Buddhism and to a lesser extent, Hinduism. The Counterculture differentiates itself most strongly from the mainstream through its unprecedented penchant for the occult, the magical and for exotic rituals, which have become the core of the movement (Roszak 124–25). This shift was already noticeable with the post-war young, amongst the Beatniks led mainly by the poet Allen Ginsberg. Of their spiritual quest, Roszak writes: "The ecstatic venture to which Ginsberg and most of the early Beat writers have been drawn is unexceptionally one of immanence rather than transcendence. [...] it is a this-worldly mysticism they seek [...]" (129). In Roszak's understanding, Zen Buddhism attracted the youth culture because of its potential for 'adolescentization' (Roszak 134). If vulgarised, the tradition's characteristics are very similar to those of teenagers: a commitment to silence, to paradox, to volatility and to antinomian values. The revolt of the young people against technocracy seemed to be mirrored in what Zen tradition pushed forth. The amoral attitude of American Zen tradition of the late 1950s and 1960s emphasised immanence, in particular when it came to sexual practices, unlike earlier appropriations of eastern religiosity. Although Hesse did not actively inspire the 'free-spirit' sexual attitudes of the Counterculture, he did play an important role in shaping the movement's understanding of eastern religions.

Most biographies of Hesse and critics of the Counterculture touch on the subject of this author's success amongst the American youth of the 1960s. However, few investigate the reasons for, and effects of, this sudden rise of popularity amongst the Counterculture. One of such rare studies is Carlee Marrer-Tising's 1982 dissertation titled *The Reception of Hermann Hesse by the Youth in the United States*. This study presents a thematic analysis of Hesse's

work and of its significance for the youth movement in America. Marrer-Tising develops a systematic study of themes central to the Counterculture movement and compares them to similar themes in Hermann Hesse's novels. In her introduction, Marrer-Tising divides Hesse's young American readership of the post-war era into two groups. On the one hand, there are "the hippies, drop-outs or passive university students", who tend to overemphasise Hesse's role as the guru of the movement and the importance of drugs in his works (Marrer-Tising 21). On the other hand, we find the "active, politically radical students", theirs is a tendency to overaccentuate "the aggressive passage in such works as *Demian* and *Steppenwolf*" (Marrer-Tising 21). This duality is recurrent in her analysis of Hesse's reception among the American youth culture. For the aim of my thesis, I will only focus on the seventh chapter of her exhaustive study: "The Spirit of the East".

In this section, the author describes the state of religiosity in the United States in the post-war years. America witnessed a religious renaissance in the Sixties and Seventies, and in most cases, the youth movements turned to exotic traditions instead of Judeo-Christian religions. According to Marrer-Tising, "Exotic religions are, understandably, more appealing to a rebellious [...] mentality precisely because they are not accepted by the mainstream of society" (Marrer-Tising 281). The most widespread eastern tradition to be introduced in America is Zen Buddhism. Its introduction and popularity are indebted to Beat poets, writers and scholars, such as Allen Ginsberg, Alan Watts and D.T. Suzuki. Along with Zen, other eastern religions and practices like Taoism, Tantra, Hinduism and Sufism have prospered in the USA (Marrer-Tising 281–82). Needless to say, most of the youth movement involved in the practice of any one of these exotic religions, had a very superficial understanding of its core precepts. "The young do not by and large understand what these traditions are all about. One does not unearth the wisdom of the ages by shuffling about a few exotic catch phrases – nor does anybody learn anything about anybody's lore or religion by donning a few talismans

and dosing on LSD” (Roszak qtd. in Marrer-Tising 282). Indeed, the two of the three most flagrant traits associated to the youth culture of the era are: (1) their turn to towards the spiritual East, and (2) their use and glorification of ‘mind-expanding’ drugs.⁹ Marrer-Tising sees this turn from the mainstream as a reaction to the ills of the modern society. With “the ravaged environment, the supremacy of the machine over man, materialistic values [...],” it has become obvious that “the spiritual side of man’s [sic] nature has not kept pace with the technological advances of modern civilization” (Marrer-Tising 282). Previous generations have emphasised reason and intellect to the detriment of spirituality, and in an attempt to recover a lost aspect of our humanity, the Counterculture turned away from rationality and towards the mystical. Several characteristics of the eastern religions that resonated particularly with the youth movement of that period are analysed in Marrer-Tising’s dissertation. These are: the ‘inarticulateness’ of Oriental religions – closely build on Roszak’s notion of ‘adolescentization’; their non-institutionalism, the notions of affective self and unity of spirit and the presence of humour (in contrast of the ‘seriousness’ of the scientific world-view) (Marrer-Tising 287–95).

These aspects that made eastern spiritual traditions compelling to the youth of the Counterculture are also central to Hermann Hesse’s novels. Themes such as self-realisation, humour, totality and unity, non-institutionalism, and nature and wandering are at the core of the Hesse corpus (Marrer-Tising 270). Hesse was well acquainted with Oriental philosophies and Hindu and Buddhist texts, yet he did not abide to any specific religion. Many tended to falsely label him a Buddhist, especially those superficially acquainted with his novel *Siddhartha*. Hesse strongly denied this, declaring: “I could only laugh at this [...] for at the

⁹ The third trait is their sexual emancipation.

bottom I know that there was no profession of faith that I was farther from than this” (qtd. in Marrer-Tising 305). However, Hesse would avow a few years later that he believed that there was a ‘grain of truth’ concealed in Buddhism, but he did believe self-realisation could be attained through any ideological institution (qtd. in Marrer-Tising 305). Marrer-Tising, like many other Hesse scholars, concludes that Hesse’s work appeals to young readers during times of social crisis (380). Being born in a period of transition – in a newly founded Germany and at the beginning of the industrial world – Hesse was fascinated with transitoriness of society and the effects it has on its members (Marrer-Tising 380). The young members of the Counterculture have been very receptive to Hesse’s ideas in his works, “since Hesse felt oppressed and threatened by somewhat the same social ills which are plaguing them” (Marrer-Tising 380). Although Marrer-Tising presents a very detailed and well-structured study of common themes in the 1960s youth movement in American and in Hermann Hesse’s novels, she fails to make an argument on the reasons for and the essence of Hesse’s renewed popularity. She does give a thorough thematic overview of his works and of the Counterculture, but she does not acknowledge the full impact of Hesse’s Orientalism on the American Counterculture readership. The second chapter of this thesis will attempt to fill the gaps left open by Marrer-Tising’s dissertation and will expand on the importance and role of the Orient for the Counterculture’s crisis – once more, a crisis to which Hesse’s novels seemed to offer solace.

Chapter 1: Hermann Hesse in The Weimar Republic

The first half of the twentieth century was a tumultuous time in European history, particularly in Germany. This period was marked by rising modernisation and industrialisation, the First World War and its aftermath, economic inflation and depression, the rise of the Nazis, and the Second World War. Hermann Hesse, who is often tagged ‘the pilgrim of crisis’,¹⁰ found great success in this tumultuous era and continued to exert his greatest influence and find his largest readerships in times of crisis. What is common to these early German receptions is the sense of social and political tumult experienced by both the readers and the author himself. A noticeable characteristic of Hesse’s writing and its reception was the evocation of the ‘East’ as a site of escape from a sense of looming crisis in their German societies.

Hesse’s first literary success occurred before the Great War, in 1904, as a result of the publication of his novel *Peter Camenzind*. This first edition was followed quickly by five others and earned Hesse 9,000 marks – an amount much higher than Hesse’s annual salary at the time (Decker, *Hesse* 219). To give a scale of the success of *Peter Camenzind*, the first printing was sold out within just fourteen days (Decker, *Hesse* 232). Following this first best-seller, Hermann Hesse’s popularity would remain steady both in Switzerland and Germany up until the break of the First World War. However, Hesse’s ambivalent stance to patriotism and the war would make him infamous to both German partisans and the resistance. Initially, Hesse was supportive of Germany’s role in the war, which he thought should be won speedily. Yet, he was repelled by the implication of war on the civilisation (Decker, *Hesse*

¹⁰ Freedman, Ralph. *Hermann Hesse: Pilgrim of Crisis: A Biography*. Cape, 1979.

308–09). Hesse wrote numerous articles in newspapers which reflected his ambivalent stance, but his most infamous war essay was published in November 1914, in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* under the title (inspired from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony) “O My Friends, No More of The Tones!” [*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!*]. This essay was an attempt to bring together intellectuals from opposing camps, instead it was received with much criticism by both pro- and anti-war critics. That which was intended to calm the war hysteria only inflamed the situation, “[Hesse’s] suggestion that war must ultimately have its objective as peace in which all the nations of Europe could live together once more was seen as treasonous” (Decker, *Hesse* 310). So, Hesse’s popularity among general audiences waned quickly after 1914.

It did resurge exponentially after the war, with the publication of *Demian* in 1919. Hesse’s own personal struggles transpired through this fictional narrative and resonated with the audiences of the Weimar Republic, an era characterised by economic uncertainty and a fatal sense of crisis (Graf and Föllmer 37). The overruling of the Kaiser and the monarchic system at the end of WWI, set place to the new democratic form of governance of the Republic. As Weitz notes in his study of the Weimar Republic, the majority of the German population held powerful antidemocratic feelings, dubious of the economic destiny of a democratic government (129). The years of economic crisis in the interwar period were many, and Germans experienced a world ‘turned upside down’; the accelerating modernisation and the relative economic stagnation created anxieties felt through all social classes. The debauched ‘golden years’ of the Weimar Republic, were only a desperate reaction to a growing social anxiety whose motto was: “better to enjoy life now than live for the future” (Weitz 146–47). Works prophesising an impending collapse of the western society (or civilisation), such as Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* or Hermann Graf

von Keyserling's *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* were extremely successful in this period and will be touched upon later in this chapter.

As Hesse was composing one of his most acclaimed works, *Siddhartha*, in the early 1920s, the German stance towards him was two-sided: on the one hand, he was seen as a 'writer of crisis' and helped readers navigate their post-war trauma; on the other hand, he was harshly criticised by German nationalists who were still bitter about their loss (Decker, *Hesse* 432). Hesse's avoidance of any real involvement in the conflict of the First World War and his vacillation between a semi-pacifist position brought him little sympathy from either the radical left advocates or the far right which would eventually come to power in 1933. The responses to Hermann Hesse's works varied between two extremes; he was either venerated or despised. Ziolkowski noted in 1969 that: "Hesse is not a writer who commands a cool intellectual or aesthetic appreciation: his works require an 'either-or' commitment" ("Saint Hesse" 21). This observation was already true to Hesse's lifetime receptions. When *Siddhartha* was finally published in 1922, the responses were numerous. German critics and intellectuals largely dismissed this novel to be merely a flirtation with the exotic and overlooked the parable of the whole humanity within it. However, countless young Germans found in this story a wisdom that allowed them to negotiate the crisis environment of the Weimar Republic. It seemed as though the exotic setting allowed a more honest depiction of an individual's 'path within'.¹¹¹² *Siddhartha* goes through eight stages of life, one per chapter, which reflects the Buddhist notion of the Eightfold Path. However, this is only a superficial

¹¹ From *Weg nach Innen*, a narrative style that Hesse adopted after the First World War, and also the title of a compilation of poems and stories, including *Siddhartha* published in 1931.

¹² The turn inwards in German literature did not originate with Hesse, rather it is directly inspired by his predecessors the German Romantics, particularly by the works of Novalis. Novalis' famously wrote: "*Die Tiefen unsers Geistes kennen wir nicht – Nach innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg*" (2:103). Hesse was deeply impacted by Novalis' writing during his youth, even writing a small piece about the Romantic writer in an article on 'New Romanticism' in 1899 (Decker, *Hesse* 163).

reference, which could have been recognisable from the popularised form of Buddhism available in Germany at the time, but in no way does it reflect the actual precepts of the Buddhist path of the liberation from *samsāra* (the wheel of rebirth).¹³ It has often been argued that *Siddhartha* is essentially a depiction of Christian values in Oriental disguise,¹⁴ the Orient portrayed in the novel resonated with many young German readers of the post-WWI era. The searching for self-realisation, the rejection of the outside world, and rejection of any kind of teaching figure central to the novel's narrative spoke to a generation whose return from the war left completely disillusioned about society, faith and humanity. There is surprisingly little interpretation of Hermann Hesse's literary Orient during the Weimar Republic and the readership's reception of it. I will attempt to fill this gap by analysing published letters written by Hesse in response to his reader's mail and correlating them to Hermann Hesse's own struggles of mid-life crisis, and the general social crisis of the era. This chapter will explore the role of the Orient for Hesse's post-World War I re-emergence in the framework of the crisis environment of the Weimar Republic.

The First World War and Mid-Life Crisis

Up until the break of the First World War, western civilisation considered itself to be at the summit of the world. The prosperous and peaceful era of *La belle époque* that lasted from 1871 to 1914 stood in stark contrast to the socio-political disaster that was the Great War. The war, with its unexpected scale, shattered the West's 'civilized image of itself'

¹³ Some, such as Husain Kassin [*Toward a Mahayana Buddhist Interpretation of Hesse's Siddhartha* (1974)] have attempted to offer a Buddhist reading of *Siddhartha*, however, they often come short in showing more than an aesthetic link based on the German Orientalist tradition.

¹⁴ A few works that support this claim are: Ernst Rose's *Faith from the Abyss: Hermann Hesse's Way from Romanticism to Modernity* (1965); Mark Boulby's *Hermann Hesse: His Mind and His Art* (1967); George Wallis Field's *Hermann Hesse* (1970); and Robert C. Conrad's "Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, eine indische Dichtung, as a Western Archetype" (1975).

(Rojek 420). Initially, the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, in June 1914 did not affect life in the cosmopolitan cities. When the hostilities finally broke, they were welcomed with a national frenzy on both sides. Even Freud, who rarely commented on political matters, “despaired of the ‘obduracy’ of people, of the ‘inaccessibility to the most forcible arguments’, the ‘uncritical credulity’ and ‘logical bedazzlement’ of the war-mongers and their cheer-leaders” (qtd. in Rojek 422).

Everybody expected the war to be over in a few weeks, at most a few months, but it dragged for four excruciating years. The fatalities of war reached nearly the 10 million – out of every eight men who served, one never returned – 21 million were wounded and countless family members and friends were left behind to mourn their dead (Cabanès 172). It was estimated that half of the men who died in the conflict were never found or were unidentifiable (Rojek 420). Hence, as well as resulting in unprecedented number of battle-dead, the First World War produced a level of cultural dislocation and trauma that rendered conventional approaches to mourning and healing obsolete. The scale of erasure and technological sophistication of The Great War was unrivalled. The Armistice signed on November 1918 and the subsequent peace treaties are the major markers of the end of the conflict, however, the return to peace could not be pinpointed to a specific date. Cabanès writes on this matter: “In reality, 1919 constitutes at most a step [...] in the transition period of several years, characterised by the return home of soldiers and prisoners of war, the pacification of the belligerent nations and the far slower demobilisation of minds and attitudes [...]” (172).

1919 was also the year that *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth* [*Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend*] was first published in Germany. Hermann Hesse wrote this novel during a time of individual crisis that coincided with the First World War and continued well into the interwar years. The complete transformation of the traditional civilisation as a result of the war, was also, internally its cause. Ziolkowski argues that

Europe's view of reality just prior to the Great War had undergone deep-lying changes, which made it completely incompatible with the structure of western (and particularly German) society at the time (*The Novels* 87). During the interwar period in Germany and Austria, many writers turned with morbid fascination to the past, seeking to expose flaws of the 'vanished age', "to unmask beneath Prussian austerity or Viennese gaiety the dark powers that unleashed a holocaust of unsuspected proportions upon the world [...]" (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 88). Along such writers as Robert Musil, Joseph Roth, Thomas Mann and Hermann Broch, we also find Hermann Hesse. *Demian*, was written in a few months in the year 1917 as a direct response to Hesse's reaction to the war and his first dealings with a mid-life crisis, psychoanalysis and subsequent revaluation of his beliefs. This *Bildungsroman* follows the coming of age of the youth Emil Sinclair from about the age of 10 to 20 (approximately from 1905 to 1915, although no dates are mentioned). Throughout the novel, many mentor-like figures appear as Emil goes through the many stages of self-cultivation, but the only constant in *Demian*, a mysterious boy just a couple years his senior. Many interpreted *Demian* to be Emil's demon or 'Daimon'.¹⁵ The choice of name could not be a coincidence, given his role as a dark mentor, bringing Emil from his Christian dual view of the world as divided into good and bad, to the Nietzschean ideal of the realm beyond such distinctions. In *Demian*, Hesse expresses his view of the war through *Demian*: "Perhaps it will be a great war, a very great war. The new world is beginning and the new world will be terrible for those who cling to the old" (*Demian* 130). Hesse also paints his belief that the war is symptomatic of a deeper societal transformation: "Deep down underneath [the political aims of the war] something was taking shape. Something akin to a new humanity. [...] The objectives like the goals [of

¹⁵ From Greek mythology, *Daimons* are lesser beings such as fallen angels but also sometimes spirits of heroes. This term which later was assimilated mean 'demon' in the sense of a malevolent mythical being did not always have a negative connotation in Ancient Greece.

the war] were quite fortuitous. Their [The soldier's] most primitive, even wildest feelings were not for the enemy; their bloody task was merely an outward radiation of the inner soul, the divided soul filled with the lust to rage and kill, annihilate and die so that it might be born anew" (*Demian* 133). *Demian* was the first of many novels written in the style of the 'path within', the turn away from the external tumult, to deal with the inner-crisis and try to achieve inner-realisation. A more detailed analysis of the plot and its oriental and mystical aspects will be dealt with further in this chapter, however, here I would like to focus on Hesse's existential crisis at the time.

Hesse's appeal to the post-war audience was due, in great part, to his own psychological collapse of 1916-1927 which is reflected in his novels. This period of crisis, that was posthumously diagnosed as a prolonged mid-life crisis (Spano 5), led Hesse's work to a new direction. When the First World War broke out in 1914, Hesse was living with his first wife Mia (Maria) Bernoulli and their three sons in Bern in Switzerland. They had moved there from Gaienhofen (Germany) two years prior in the hopes of saving their marriage and finding a peaceful environment for Hesse's work and Mia's psychological troubles. Their hopes were unfulfilled, and by 1914 Hesse was living in a state of morbid alcoholism and of contradictory emotions, avoiding his conflict-ridden household on every possible occasion (Ball et al. 146).¹⁶ The war seemed a timely interruption of his grim daily life, and so, as a good German patriot, he voluntarily reported to duty at the German consulate in Bern (Decker, *Hesse* 306). As his application was rejected on the grounds of 'extreme short-sightedness', he offered his services as a welfare officer for German prisoners of war in Bern. He worked for the War Welfare Organization by supplying reading materials to German

¹⁶ „[...] der Dichter Hermann Hesse lebt, als der Krieg ausbricht, in einer todesseligen Trunkenheit; in Widerspruchsgefühlen, die nicht mehr zu unterscheiden sind ; zerfleischt von einem dunklen Traumleid, dem er nachhängt, und zugleich von den Dissonanzen seines familiären Lebens“ (Ball et al. 146).

solders imprisoned in enemy countries, editing a newspaper for them, and founding a publishing house dedicated to their needs (Stelzig 132). Hesse was strongly opposed to what he called the ‘phony-patriotic psychosis’; yet, unlike real antiwar activists, such as his close friend Hugo Ball, Hesse would not come out openly against the conflict (Decker, *Hesse* 308). Rather, as Freedman puts it, “Hesse took both steps at once, denouncing the war with one stroke of his pen and supporting, however reluctantly, with the other” (166). This dual impulse would eventually be a trait that attracted a vast array of post-war readers, since while criticising the war, Hesse also empathised with its victims. However, during the first years of the conflict, this ambiguous stance led Hesse to be criticised by and alienated from both the German government and its supporters and the anti-war resistance groups.¹⁷ As Decker puts it: “The idea that the Great War was a disaster was at complete variance with the general mood of the public in Germany in the autumn 1914. Hesse, who up until now had been pampered by the press, now experienced firsthand how the pendulum could swing” (*Hesse* 311). This widespread rejection after the steady success that Hesse experienced was deeply felt in his life and work. He was already feeling the first symptoms of a personal crisis prior to the war. Freedman notes that during the two years leading to the First World War, Hesse’s state of mind, which amongst other things, prompted him to move to Bern, was showing the weight of a real and imagined isolation. “Total rejection and full acceptance were both at stake at a moment when a crisis in the world was reflected as a crisis within” (Freedman 167).

¹⁷ Hesse was opposed to both the patriotic German intellectuals of the Manifesto of the 93, and the figures of the *Widerstand* such as Stefan Zweig, Heinrich Mann and Leonhard Frank (Decker, *Hesse* 308). The Manifesto of the 93 came about on 4 October 1914, when ninety-three prominent German scientists, artists and scholars endorsed a proclamation declaring their unconditional support of German military actions during WWI (Decker, *Hesse* 307; World War I Military History List).

The year 1916 marked a turning point for the author's writing career, of which *Demian* (published in 1919) is the first major product (Spano 5; Decker, *Hesse* 325; Ball et al. 157; Stelzig 130–31; Field 43). That year, Hermann's father Johannes passed away, his wife Mia Bernoulli showed signs of a neurological disease, and their three-year-old son Martin was ill with meningitis (Decker, *Hesse* 726). All this coupled with the strain of the Great War on his career and political life resulted in the nervous breakdown of the thirty-nine-year-old Hesse. Eventually, Hesse was referred to the psychoanalytical practitioner J.B. Lang, a pupil of Carl Jung. From this time onwards a lifelong friendship ensued, documented by a rich correspondence between patient and psychiatrist. (Stelzig 130). His encounter with psychoanalysis and dream therapy would be a cathartic experience, that not only helped him navigate his crisis, but also deeply impacted his work (Ball et al. 161–62). The importance of dreams, symbols and inner development in *Demian* are exemplary themes taken directly from his experience with psychoanalytical therapy.

Although the term 'mid-life crisis' was not coined until 1965 by Elliott Jaques in his article "Death and the Mid-Life Crisis",¹⁸ many believe that the tumultuous period between the years 1916 and 1927 marked Hesse's prolonged mid-life crisis (Spano 3). Hesse himself called this period "*die zweite große Wandlung meines Lebens*" ("Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf").¹⁹ Towards the end of the Great War, in 1917, he would write in a letter to Felix Braun: "*Der Krieg hat mich in neue Beziehungen zur Welt gebracht, wie jeden, aber mich nicht politisiert. Im Gegenteil. Äußere Welt und innere scheiden sich mir noch schärfer als*

¹⁸ Elliott Jaques defines 'mid-life crisis' as: "a major psychotic depression commonly occurring [in men] between ages thirty-five and sixty-five [...] and triggered by such events as the death of one's parents, a loss of sexual potency, a stagnancy in career and relationships, and, most significantly, one's intimate confrontation with one's own mortality" (Spano 5–6). The symptoms of this psychological crisis include depression from feeling overwhelmed by the certainty of death, a compulsion to remain young and deny death, an obsession with health and appearance, and an indulgence in sexual promiscuity to prove youth and potency (Jaques 506)

¹⁹ "The second great transformation of my life."

sonst, und was mich interessiert, ist lediglich die innere” (qtd. in Michels 94).²⁰ This turn inwards and away from the external world would become characteristic of his mid-life crisis works. Following the war, Hesse became increasingly pessimistic about the future of democracy in Germany. Articles and essays such as *If The War Lasts Two More Years* [*Wenn der Krieg noch zwei Jahre dauert*] (1917) and its sequel *If The War Lasts Five More Years* [*Wenn der Krieg noch fünf Jahre dauert*] (1918), *The European* [*Der Europäer*] (1918) and *A Glimpse into Chaos* [*Blick ins Chaos*] (1920) clearly express Hesse’s disillusionment with the external world. This culminated with Hesse’s formal disassociation from his motherland and his new Swiss citizenship in 1923 (Field 74). The artist’s troubled period continued well into the 1920s. By 1919, Hesse put Bern, his marriage to Mia and his family behind to start anew in Ticino, the southern Italian-speaking area of Switzerland. ‘The path within’ (*Der Weg nach Innen*), the experimental autobiographical style initiated by *Demian*, and embodied by *Siddhartha*, would be further developed in his writing throughout the following decade (Stelzig 160; Field 71).

In 1921, Hesse experienced a severe writer’s block after attempting to write what would become *Siddhartha* and plunged once more into a deep depression. In this novel, Hesse attempted to synthesise eastern and western philosophies and present a parable of life. Ziolkowski compares the geography and narrative of the novel to “the landscape of the soul” (*The Novels* 146). Hesse found it difficult to compose this novel, as it is the product of his coming to terms with India. In his journal entry of 1920, Hesse writes:

My preoccupation with India, which has been going on for almost twenty years and has passed through many stages, now seems to me to have reached a new point of development. Previously my reading, searching and sympathies were restricted exclusively to the philosophical aspect of India – the purely intellectual, Vedantic and Buddhistic aspect. The Upanishads, the sayings of the Buddha, and the

²⁰ “The war brought me into a new relationship to the world, just as everyone else, but it has not politicised me. On the contrary, the outer and inner worlds are to me more divided than ever, and what interests me, is only the inner world.”

Bhagavad Gita were the focal points of this world. Only recently have I been approaching the actual religious India of gods, of Vishnu and Indra, Brahma and Krishna. And now Buddhism appears to me more and more as a kind of very pure, highly bred reformation – a purification and spiritualization that has no flaw but its great zealotry, with which it destroys image-worlds for which it can offer no replacement” (qtd. in Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 149–50).

This revaluation is consistent with Hesse’s development, it was already apparent in *Demian*, when Sinclair (‘the poet’ and protagonist) criticised Pistorius (‘the analyst’ and prodigious organ player) in arguing that an abstract vision of the world is insufficient for those who require substance and life. Two years later, after a complete revision of his views of India, and following a year-long writer’s block, Hesse was able to complete his novel. Decker writes: “The impulsion to write this story was twofold: Hesse’s deeply personal self-reflection about the meaning of his own life, an attempt to overcome his existential crisis at being a father, a husband and a writer – yet at the very same time it is also a treatise on the future of Europeans” (*Hesse* 429–30). He did not complete the book until 1922 and was disappointed by the response of his friends and critics. In a letter to Romain Rolland, his closest friend at the time, Hesse wrote: “With no book hitherto have my personal friends left me in the lurch so much as they have with *Siddhartha*. Hardly any of them have taken the trouble to write so much as a line to me about the book [...] You are right: among my colleagues, there are very few who are capable of savouring and understanding *Siddhartha*” (qtd. in Decker, *Hesse* 446). The period when *Siddhartha* was published coincided with the severe hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic. This also justifies its poor reception among his friends and colleagues. Having survived the First World War, the November Revolution of 1918-1919, and now living through this new economic crisis, they found little to attract them in the novel’s escapism. *Siddhartha*’s exotic setting, liaisons with courtesans and the theme of reaching illumination through meditation did not resonate with Hesse’s circle in this environment. Also due to the inflation, Hesse’s whole income, which depended on royalties, was reduced to worthless sums by the time they were received in Switzerland (Field 74).

Difficulties and inner unrest continued for Hesse up until about 1927, the year he published *The Nuremberg Trip* [*Die Nürnberger Reise*] and *The Steppenwolf*. The latter is considered the final product of this ‘great transformation’, where the use of eastern spirituality to navigate one’s inner tumults is recognisable once more. The year 1927 is also marked by the appearance of the author’s first biography, written by his dear friend Hugo Ball, who passed away shortly afterwards. Finally, Ninon Dolbin, who would become Hesse’s third wife and life companion, moved into Hesse’s Casa Camuzzi that year, to work as his secretary (Decker, *Hesse* 727). This return to stability was noticeable in the diminishing role of India and Oriental patterns in Hesse’s later writings (Spano 446). The Orient was no longer necessary to solve the crisis within, but it could still help navigate the tensions of the external world. Such was the case with his later novel *The Journey to the East* [*Die Morgenlandfahrt*] (1932): the East itself no longer serves the individual quest, but rather the collective. It is the ideal of service and of the resolution in the communal (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 254). In the *Journey to the East* and *The Glass Bead Game* (1943) “we no longer have a hero striving toward a vague ideal, but a central ideal that the narrator tried to define and express” (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 254). Hesse’s mid-life crisis and his consequent turn inward as a mean to navigate his own conflicted state was, in part, inspired by his studies of Hindu and Buddhist philosophies and mythologies. This was imprinted in his novels, which have been understood by many readers and critics to be very thinly veiled autobiographies. This sense of crisis in Hesse’s life spoke to his readers, and they too were inspired to find solace to their inner tumults through Hesse’s characters.

Hermann Hesse’s Orient

Hermann Hesse’s interest in Indian spirituality finds its roots in his childhood. His upbringing was strewn with Indian influence, but Hesse’s fascination with the Orient would

always remain in the realm of the imagination. He characterised his only trip Eastwards, in 1911, as “a series of Indian disappointments” (qtd. in Zilcosky 51). Hermann’s maternal grandfather, Dr. Hermann Gundert was a German pietist missionary who lived a great part of his life in Madras, India. He was a high-spirited and educated man, well-learned in a multitude of Indian languages such as Bengali, Hindi and Malay (Sorell 17). As a child, the author was fascinated with his grandfather, about whom he wrote in *Childhood of the Magician* [*Kindheit des Zauberers*] (1923): “This man [...] was hidden in a forest of mysteries, just as his face was hidden in the white forest of his beard [...]; people from many lands knew him, visited and honoured him, talked to him in English, French, Indian, Italian, Malayam and went off after long conversations leaving no clue as to their identity [...]” (Hesse, *Autobiographical Writings* 8–9). In this short autobiographical story, Hesse recounts his childhood fascination with the Indian books and statuettes of Indian deities in his grandfather’s cabinet; they were his first introduction to the Orient and shaped his growing imagination. Both Hesse’s parents lived in India as Pietist missionaries before moving back to Calw, Germany, and they continued serving their faith from the homeland. The religious zeal of his family would eventually repel the young Hermann Hesse from any religious dogmatism and lead him to rebel against his parents. Indeed, although religion and faith are themes present in almost all his novels – Demian’s rejection of Protestantism and turn towards Gnosticism (*Demian*); Siddhartha’s quest of truth through Brahmanism, asceticism and Buddhism (*Siddhartha*); Goldmund’s experience of the Catholic monastery and his friendship with his mentor and cloister teacher Narcissus (*Narcissus and Goldmund*) – Hesse refused to subscribe to any one Church or religious group, instead abiding to a faith of his own, expressed in his novels and created through bits from the many religions of the world pieced together.

John Gray observes that unlike Hermann Gundert, who retained a theistic trust in a divine power, Hesse was part of a generation who lost faith in such power as a result of witnessing the horrors of the First World War (Gray). As an adult, Hesse's interest in India took a more intellectual turn and his studies of theosophical writings and of Schopenhauer's philosophy led him back to the same few Indian sources, in particular the Bhagavad Gītā and the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta (Boulby 122; Carnahan 1).²¹ The Bhagavad Gītā was first popularised in Germany in the nineteenth century, after August Wilhelm Schlegel published a Latin translation of the Sanskrit tale in 1823 (Hay). However, one of the most important texts that paved the way for the German fascination with the imaginary India is Friedrich Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808). The Schlegel brothers were key figures in shaping the notion of the mystical India in the German Romanticism, which in turn impacted Hesse's imagination and literary style in the early stages of his writing career (Manthripragada 17). Hesse's formative years also coincided with a new availability of German translations of numerous Buddhist works. Karl Eugen Neumann published translations of earliest Buddhist texts in 1892. In the next twenty years, Neumann proceeded to translate and publish further texts with an astonishing productivity. Like many other authors and intellectuals of his time, Hesse familiarised himself with the sayings of the Buddha through Neumann's translations, but also through Paul Deussen's and Leopold von

²¹ Boulby notes that Hesse would come to prefer Schopenhauer to Nietzsche around the time of the First World War (121). Figueira in *The Exotic* writes about Schopenhauer's affinities with Buddhist philosophy:

With Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Buddhism became a real force in the intellectual life of Germany. Schopenhauer's Indian Schwärmerei is a fascinating example of East-West philosophical reception. He wrote at a time when European Indological research was in its infancy, and pedagogical and scholarly tools were scarce. However, Schopenhauer made good use of what was available. Perhaps no other Western philosopher has been influenced as much by Eastern religious thought as Schopenhauer. Nevertheless, we must ascribe to his system a definite independence even though he recognized Buddhists as his *Glaubensgenossen* and took great satisfaction in having come to similar theories before actually having studied Buddhist philosophy (96).

Schröder's translations of works on Vedantin philosophy and Indian mythology (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 277; Boulby 121; Carnahan 3).

The turn towards Oriental philosophy would be more recognisable in the post-war years, but even before his mid-life crisis, Hesse read and studied the tales of the Bhagavad Gītā, and referred to them often in his letters and short stories during his multiple periods of depression (Decker, *Hesse* 314). One of such occurrences happened as Hesse was being faced with the consequences of the First World War, which led him to seek answers to his conflicted personal state and more broadly, to the problem of war itself. During this time of crisis, he turned to Indian philosophy, as he had often done by the past, and used the tales and morals of the Bhagavad Gītā to help him navigate the stormy waters of his psyche. In a letter to his family written in December 1914, Hesse tackles the problem of war with reference to this section of the Mahābhārata:

*Was die intellektuelle Stellungnahme zum Krieg überhaupt betrifft, da steht das Beste, was ich kenne, in der alten Bhagavad Gita. Ihr Inhalt ist die Lehre, die Gott Krishna einem Fürsten erteilt, der nicht in den Krieg ziehen mag, weil er das grausam und unnütz findet. Nun macht ihm Krishna klar, daß er seine Pflicht tun muß, die ihm seinem Stande nach zukommt, und dabei kommt das famose, ganz christliche und fast Luthersche Wort vor, daß jeder seine eigene Pflicht zu tun habe, nicht irgendeine fremde, und daß besser sei, in eigener Pflichterfüllung zu sterben als sich um seine Pflicht zu drücken (Hesse, *Gesammelte Briefe* 1: 254-255).²²*

Hesse used this ancient tale, which he had encountered as a child, and again as an early twentieth-century Orientalist, in an attempt to resolve his own conflicted state and understand the terrors of the world around him. Such a response is an exemplary manifestation of the escapist behaviour that Hesse and his readers turn to in time of personal and social crisis.

²² “As far as an intellectual response to this war is concerned, the best advice I know comes from the old Bhagavad Gita. I am thinking in particular of the lesson that the God Krishna imparts to a prince who is loath to go to war because he finds the whole enterprise cruel and pointless. Krishna tells him in no uncertain terms that he must do his duty as befits his station in life, and in the process he utters the splendid, quite Christian, and almost Lutheran dictum that everyone is required to do his allotted duty, and not someone else's, and that it is better to die in the course of fulfilling this task than to shirk one's responsibility” (Hesse qtd. in Decker, *Hesse* 314).

What the western religions – specifically the Lutheran-Pietistic tradition in the case of Hesse – had to offer, was not sufficient to grapple with the failure of the western society and the destruction and chaos brought about by the First World War. The Orient, in this instance embodied by the Bhagavad Gītā, offered an alternative set of values and a justification for war. What is significant in the passage quoted above, is that Hesse explicitly compares the moral taught by Kṛṣṇa (Krishna) to the Lutheran notion of duty (*Pflicht*). This shows that he was not free from the western social structures, and that he could only see this Hindu text through Lutheran lenses, no matter how hard he tried to distance himself from his childhood religion. In this way, Hesse’s reading of the Bhagavad Gītā in the early months of the war, is merely an attempt to fill the gaps of Protestantism: it is the exotic “Other” that can save “us”, the West. This Orient has nothing to do with the actual geographical and cultural Orient, rather it is a projection of the West’s ‘Other’ towards which Hesse and his readers turn when the western socio-political frameworks (religions, traditions, peace, etc.) come short. It is a literary and an imaginary Orient created by the West. This ‘imaginary Orient’ is not a new creation of occidental civilisation, but has a long tradition of being the Other that allows the West to define itself (Manthripragada 1). Figueira in her study of the exotic in European literary tropes observes that: “the East has historically functioned as an object of desire within the scholarly and artistic reception. [...] Desire is always for something but is engendered by an experience of lack with the subject for which the desired object provides imaginary compensation” (Figueira 9). This lack represented by the imaginary East sets in motion “a complex, often contradictory process of idealisation and rejection, desire and disavowal, on the level of the imaginary” (Figueira 9).

In Hesse’s case, as seen in the example of the letter to his family, he addresses his conflicted state on the question of war by referring to an Indian epic, but within the framework of Protestant understanding of one own’s duty in the world. This use of the Indian

Other is recurrent in Hesse's life and is perceptible in his novels, essays and correspondence. Another example which embodies Figueira's argument in the Hesse corpus is his choice of situating the narrative of *Siddhartha* in an Indian locale. Hesse wrote *Siddhartha* in the midst of a mid-life crisis, narrating the fictitious life story of a man who rejected his family, religion, and eventually his partner and child, in quest of the "Absolute Truth". In situating this narrative in the Orient, Hesse placed into this narrative space what he lacked in his life: the resolution of his family and personal crises, as far away possible from the tumult of the post-WWI modern society. Hesse was never at ease in the role of husband and parent and projecting his possible resolution into the Oriental landscape of *Siddhartha* is one manifestation of the process of desire and disavowal characteristic to the West's portrayal of the Orient. The novel's conclusion in the protagonist's achievement of mokṣa (enlightenment) through reunification with the 'All' is also Hesse's attempt to provide imaginary compensation to his own spiritual unrest. Like Emil (*Demian*) before him, and Goldmund after, Siddhartha passes through the phases of saint and profligate on his road to fulfillment. The dichotomy between the world of spirituality and that of sensuality and bestiality is recognisable in *Siddhartha* and the other novels Hesse wrote in this period of crisis.

Mathew Spano argues that Hesse looked to the Indian spiritual writings such as Upaniṣad, the Bhagavad Gītā, The Laws of Manu, the Buddha legend and the Bodhisattva path to compensate for his *puer/senex* duality, which was at the origin of his mid-life crisis (Spano 13–15). In the individuation process, *Puer aeternus* refers to the Jungian archetype of an adult man whose emotional life remained at a teenager stage. Emil Sinclair (in *Demian*), with his adolescent self-discovery and Siddhartha, up until his second crossing of the river (after leaving behind Kamala and his merchant life) exemplifies Hesse's *puer*. *Senex* on the other hand, is the 'wise old man' archetype, it is usually late to emerge in the individuation

process and is the elderly father figure, sometimes a destructive figure or a mentor, such as Demian (Emil's 'dämon'), Siddhartha on the verge of suicide prior to his second river crossing, or Narcissus, the 'death' figure in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. The author's conflicted state between these two stages during his mid-life crisis is recognisable in his novels of the period. "Hesse arguably used Indian spirituality as a way to compensate the narcissistic, heroic ego of his *puer* personality as well as the overwhelming, life-negating qualities of the *senex*" (Spano 14). Spano also observes that "Following his mid-life crisis, one notices the diminishing role of India in his works" (Spano 446). In each of the major novels during Hesse's mid-life crisis (*Demian*, *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*), India was present in some form and served various purpose. *Siddhartha*, which was written in a time of personal and social tumult, is the novel that epitomises Hesse's interest in the Indian other. *Siddhartha* glorifies the solitary dogged struggle on a man, who rejects any teachers or gurus and follows his inner vision to achieve ultimate fulfilment. In order to achieve this end, Hesse uses an Indian setting and terminology, confirming this paradigm of projecting on the exotic Other the desires of the western man. In the case of the German refugee during the crisis of the Weimar Republic, the desire is to find inner solace and escape from the civilised world and from the crisis within the self. Decker accurately observes that in attempting to synthesise eastern and western thinking, Hesse was looking for a 'European Nirvana', and formulating what that was the quest of his lifetime (Decker, *Hesse* 429).

Orient in The Weimar Republic and Hermann Hesse's Reception

In his 1965 work on Hesse, Theodore Ziolkowski notes that one of the boldest reactions to the late nineteenth century, was a renewed interest in the Orient. "With the reaction against positivism and the advent of modern mysticism that is so conspicuous in the works of Maeterlinck, Yeats, Hofmannsthal, and others, the mystical image of the Orient received a

new impulse” (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 146). The turn of the century witnessed an increase in travels to Asia for Europeans, since many of the difficulties met in the previous centuries were no longer encountered, thanks to modern transport, technological advances and the nascent tourist industry (Clarke 97). Germany was no stranger to this phenomenon, and as the Orient became more and more accessible, the nation’s imperialist appetite grew (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 427). From 1890 to 1910 major shifts in political and intellectual circumstances turned the cultural and spiritual appropriation of the Orient into actual geographical ownership of small parts of its territory (Jiaozhou Bay, German New Guinea, German Samoa). Many German Orientalists of the time saw that period as a revolutionary one. Even newspapers would boast that Eurocentrism was dead (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 214). These were times of transition between the eras of Enlightenment and industrial modernity marked by the shedding of old values and traditions and by the search for new ones. The expansion Eastwards, towards the mystical land of the Orient offered Hesse and his generation a conceptual site of solace and resolution of – or at least escape from – western civilisation’s spiritual crisis. The revived interest in the Orient was spread in popularised form to countless readers across Europe by Hermann Graf Keyserling, whose travels around the world in 1911 and 1912 were recounted in his 1919 *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* [*Das Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen*]. His travel tales also offered an introduction of the East’s mystical thoughts to the general readership. “The Orient became a popular province for all those [...] who sought a philosophy of unity and totality to offset the fragmentation of existence produced by the scientific and technological progress of the West [...]” (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 147). Keyserling was mentioned previously in this chapter in connection to Spengler’s *The Decline of The West*. In fact, Spengler, Keyserling and Hesse

all published influential works within a year of the end of the Great War.²³ All three were responding to the disintegration of past standards of value experienced in all European cultures, but particularly in Germany, due to the war. The incomprehension of what had happened between 1914 and 1918 was widely understood as the collapse of the western civilisation, particularly in Germany, where the severe consequences of the Treaty of Versailles were weighing heavily on the vanquished nations.²⁴ Oswald Spengler's response was of a pessimistic nature: the West is doomed and there is nothing that can be done. Spengler published a second volume to his *The Decline of The West* in 1922, which he subtitled *Perspectives of World History* [*Welthistorische Perspektiven*]. Keyserling turned to esoterism and created his own spiritual 'school' *Die Schule der Weisheit* [The School of Wisdom], in Darmstadt. His school borrowed notions of Hindu and Buddhist spirituality and combined them to western philosophy to offer spiritual and philosophical advice for the distressed bourgeoisie of the Weimar Republic. This organisation whose impressive series of speakers such as Carl Jung and Walter Benjamin "very frequently took the Orient as the starting point for critiques of European utilitarianism and spiritual shallowness" (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 482). Hermann Hesse's response took a different turn, rather than stagnating in nihilism or turning to esoterism, he turned inwards with *Demian* and used

²³ Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of The West* was published in 1918, Hermann Graf Keyserling's *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, and Hermann Hesse's *Demian: The Story of a Youth* were published in 1919.

²⁴ After the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Articles 231 and 232 became the most common topics of debate. "Article 231 assigned responsibility for the damages suffered by the Allies to Germany and the Central Powers, while Article 232 reached the conclusion that a guilty Germany owed reparations for the damages that it had caused" (Cabanes 173). For the Germans, and for most of the Allies, Articles 231 and 232 were understood as a form of moral condemnation, which was seen as all the more unacceptable to Germany who itself had lost more than 2 million of its own soldiers. "The sting of this moral condemnation was compounded by a sense of humiliation, shared by the Austrians, over their territorial losses and the end of imperial grandeur" (Cabanes 174). The Treaty of Versailles came into force on 10 January 1920, a year and a half after the armistice (Peukert 52).

notions he acquired from Vedanta philosophy, German self-cultivation (*Bildung*) and his own experience with Jungian psychoanalysis.

The responses to the end of the war and the environment of crisis of the Weimar Republic of these three writers were representative of three typical stances of the general public of the era. According to Detlev Peukert, the notion of crisis is central to understanding this high period of ‘classical modernity’ (276), however it has been overused by historians and generates now a sense of fatigue (Morgan 49). “There is much that it fails to explain, and more importantly from a historical point of view, it has become an explanation itself” (Morgan 49). In the years of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) it was possible to grow wary of talk of crisis, which appeared on every newspaper, political discourse and numeral books of the time (Graf and Föllmer 37). Yet, a simplistic understanding of crisis as uniquely negative and as a prelude to calamity is problematic to grasping the context of Hesse’s post-WWI success. As stated by Rüdiger Graf and Moritz Föllmer, elements of both diagnosis and prognosis are entwined in the concept of crisis (39). Yet, in modern and contemporary usage, the essential openness of this concept is often dismissed when it is used with a solely negative connotation of ‘decline’. This dismissal blurs the optimistic possibility for renewal central to the notion of crisis, to focus uniquely of the pessimistic sense of ‘a threat to the old order’. “This applies particularly to the historiography of the Weimar Republic where the more positive valence of the concept as a productive mode and space of possibility is not often appreciated and is frequently ignored in favour of its purely pessimistic register as prelude to National Socialist ascendancy [...]” (Graf and Föllmer 39). In response to a young German reader, Hesse praises such opportunity of renewal of values and mores, and encourages the youth to turn inwards, a somewhat Vedantin approach to God and

spirituality.²⁵ Hesse's reply was published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* the 21 September 1919 (for the complete letter see Appendix 1). Hesse begins by reiterating what the young man wrote: "*Sie schreiben mir, daß Sie verzweifelt sind, und nicht wissen, was hoffen. Sie wissen nicht, ob es einen Gott gibt oder keinen. Sie wissen nicht, ob das Leben irgendeinen Sinn hat oder nicht, ob das Vaterland einen Sinn hat oder nicht, ob es besser ist, sich um geistige Güter zu mühen oder einfach sich den Bauch zu füllen, da doch alles so übel aussieht in der Welt*" (Hesse, *Die Antwort* 80).²⁶ This state of crisis and anxiety, and the general sense of distrust of the future of society, of politics and of religion was widespread amongst the generation. These young men experienced first-hand the horrors of war and survived it, only to return to a defeated Germany, where the heroes of war were left to roam the streets, disfigured, homeless and penniless. Hesse continues by writing that, five years earlier, before the war, the young man knew confidently that there was a Christian god and could easily define and differentiate between good and bad. In these five years, the most important years of one's youth, the young soldier always aimed to do good, even when burying his own comrades of war. "*Das war es auch. Das Gute, das Sie damals so genau kannten, war offenbar nicht das richtige Gute, nicht das unzerstörbare, zeitlose Gute; und der Gott, um den Sie damals wußten, war offenbar nicht der richtige. Er war vermutlich der Nationalgott*

²⁵ This very Hessian approach of the turn inwards or of 'the path within' as a response to external conflict is very closely resembling that of the Advaita Vedānta philosophy (a strand of Hinduism). The notion that 'the internal God of the heart' and 'all are one' are encountered in most post-mid-life crisis works by Hesse are mostly inspired by Vedānta or Indian mythology (I am thinking particularly of 'the veil of Maja (māyā)' in *Demian*, the final communion with the 'all' in *Siddhartha*, the 'Tat Tvam Asi' reference (a Sanskrit phrase and a Grand Pronouncement of the Vedas) in the magic theatre part of *Steppenwolf*, and of Knecht's *Indian Life* in the appendix to *The Glass Bead Game*, which is inspired by the style of Indian epics such as the Rāmāyaṇam.

²⁶ "You are writing that you are in despair, and that you do not know what to hope for. You do not know if there is a God. You do not know if life has a meaning, if the Fatherland has a meaning, if it is better to busy oneself with spiritual good, or simply fill one's belly, since everything seems so vile in the world."

unserer Konsistorialräte und Kriegsdichter [...]” (Hesse, *Die Antwort* 80).²⁷ Hesse continues to explain his stance and urges the youth to not throw fault on government, god or the other, and to not take the fault of the collapse of the West on himself. As a solution, he offers him this:

Wenn Sie sich jetzt besinnen, wo ein Trost und ein neuer, besserer Gott und Glaube zu finden sein könnte, so wird Ihnen, in Ihrer heutigen Vereinsamung und Verzweiflung, ohne weiteres klar, daß Sie die Erleuchtung nicht wieder von außen kommen darf, nicht wieder aus offiziellen Quellen, aus Bibeln, von Kanzeln, von Thronen. Sie darf auch nicht von mir kommen. Sie kann nur in Ihnen selbst zu finden sein. Dort ist sie, dort wohnt der Gott, der höher und zeitloser ist als der Patriotengott von 1914 (Hesse, *Die Antwort* 82).²⁸

This turn inwards, which was already recognisable in Hesse’s recently published *Demian* and will be characteristic of his work for the next decade, resembles the philosophy of Hinduism, specifically that of the Vedānta strand. The broader Vedānta philosophy is based on the Vedas, which are a body of work considered to be the oldest written scriptures (Carnahan 4). According to James E. Carnahan, the central point of the Vedas is simple and explicit: “Brahman, God, is meant to be realised by each and every individual soul. The large body of work known as the Vedas is a systematic explanation of the process of realization of Brahman, the absolute” (4). Vedānta philosophy claims essentially that ātman (the soul that is in all things) ought to be realised to exit the cycle of rebirths. The ultimate goal is to attain not just the knowledge of Brahman or ātman, but the communion with this universal deity or consciousness (Carnahan 5). Similarly, the belief that ‘the God is within the Self’ and that ‘we are all God,’ that ‘the teacher (or guru) is already within us’, and other simplified notions

²⁷ “And so it was. The good you knew so well at the time was obviously not the right good, not the indestructible, timeless good; and the God you knew then was clearly not the right one. He was presumably the national god of our consistory councils and poets of war.”

²⁸ “Now, if you believe that you may find solace and a newer, better God and faith, so you will. In your present-day isolation and desperation, you will readily understand that enlightenment must not come from the outside, not from official sources, from Bibles, from pulpits, from thrones. It can only be found in you. There it is, there dwells the God who is higher and more timeless than the patriotic God of 1914.”

of Advaita Vedānta were widely spread ideas in the beginning of the twentieth century (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 276). This was due mainly to the prolific translations of the pre-war German Buddhist and Vedantin converts such as K.E. Neumann and Paul Deussen (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 277).²⁹ In his thesis, Carnahan argues that the basic ideas of Vedānta philosophies and the overarching themes of Hesse's writing are essentially identical in their focus on the soul and the self, which are neither the body nor the mind (5). Hesse's books lead one directly into a study of those who have developed the search for the inner self into both a science and an art. This use of a facet of Hindu and Buddhist philosophies as a solution to the sense of crisis experienced by Hesse's post-World War I audience shows the opportunities of the Weimar Republic to source its new values in the Orient, or at least in its interpretation of the Orient. This response resonated with a number of young readers of the 1918-1933 period, as the popularity of *Demian* among the younger generation shows.

Demian

Hesse first published *Demian* anonymously under the pseudonym of Emil Sinclair, who is also the protagonist of this *Bildungsroman*.³⁰ Hesse wished to break with his previous style and did not want his name attributed to the novel's authorship. He was aware that the style and themes of this narrative were ground-breaking and he wished to know if his book

²⁹ "In the 1920s, his translations of the sayings of the Buddha were extremely popular and his work lavishly praised by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann and Edmund Husserl" (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 277).

³⁰ The *Bildungsroman* as a genre flourished mostly during the period of German Romanticism. Characteristically, it traces the development of a youth (and it is always a man) through the formative years from childhood and immaturity to total integration of the protagonist's personality and capabilities. It is not a novel of manners nor a novel of 'tight-knit plot'. Usually, it is structured in episodes that allow a vast exposure of the hero to contemporary cultural influences, while deriving its meaning from a central focus on the inner growth of the central character. A particular characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* genre is the presence of a spiritual mentor who educates the hero on the principles of the group that this mentor represents (often a secret society, such as Freemasons or Jesuits) (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 90). In the case of *Demian*, Demian is Sinclair's mentor, although instead of representing a group, Demian encourages a turn to individuality.

would be a success even without his name attached to it, which it was (Decker, *Hesse* 326). Emil Sinclair was quickly discovered to be Hesse and he confessed to it in an interview for the magazine *Vivos voco* (Decker, *Hesse* 327). *Demian* recounts the coming-of-age tale of a young German youth, Emil Sinclair from the early twentieth century up until the break of the First World War. The narrative starts when Sinclair is 10 years old and still living in his very religious family home in a small German town. The first two chapters focus on an episode where Sinclair is blackmailed by a youth of a lower class by the name of Kromer. Sinclair lies about having stolen apples from the orchard to impress this fellow and is subsequently forced to pay small amounts of money to Kromer under the threat of being exposed. Under the strain of this constant menace, Sinclair becomes grimmer and his personality changes. In the first pages of the novel, Sinclair presents his view of the world divided into two: the ‘light’, which he defines as “[...] the world of my parents’ house [...]. This world was familiar to me in every aspect – it meant mother and father, love and severity, model behaviour and school. [...] In this world you had to conduct yourself so that life should be pure, unsullied, beautiful and well ordered” (*Demian* 5); and the ‘dark’, the world that “was peopled with servant girls and workmen, ghost stories and scandalous rumours, a gay tide of monstrous intriguing things [...]” (*Demian* 6). This episode brings him from the ‘light’ world and into the ‘dark’, he has lied and had resorted to stealing to pay his debt. Through this misadventure, Emil is stripped from his boyish innocence and turns to suspicion and rebellion. This event and change come to the attention of the new boy in town, Max Demian, who is a bit older than the protagonist. Through reasoning and challenging the biblical world-view of Sinclair (and possibly by a direct altercation with Kramer which is not mentioned), Demian manages to free Sinclair from Kromer’s bullying. Then for a few years, Sinclair does not interact with Demian, escaping this ‘dark’ world as much as he can. The two are brought together in a communion class when Demian stirs Sinclair out of his intellectual lethargy and

challenges him to a deeper reflection about the biblical story of Abel and Cain taught in class. Again, Emil's worldview is shaken as Demian tries to push him beyond his dual construction of the world.

The second stage of Sinclair's development takes place when he is sent away to boarding school. His attachment to Demian dies out, and he associates with a troublesome group of classmates who indulge in drinking and problematic behaviour. In this chapter, Sinclair seems to have once again fallen in the 'dark' world. The student's expulsion from the school is almost inevitable, but suddenly it all changes as he falls in love. In the next chapter, after encountering a girl in the park with whom he never interacts, Sinclair becomes enamoured with the idealised projection of this girl, whom he names Beatrice. This new object of worship changes his behaviour drastically and he returns to the world of 'light'. In an attempt to capture the image of his beloved, Sinclair takes up painting, but he finds himself creating a figure that resembles Demian much more than Beatrice. He recalls his old friend, and particularly Demian's interest in a carved picture on the keystone of Sinclair's family home. In an earlier episode, the older boy took interest on the bird-like figure in the old stone, and even tried to sketch it. So, in honour of his old friend, Sinclair attempts to paint this bird from memory and then mails it to Demian (with whom he has not been in contact for many years). Demian's reply comes in a mysterious form, as a note found between Sinclair's books. It links the painting of the predatorial bird breaking out of an egg with the name of the Gnostic god Abraxas.³¹ Sinclair would re-encounter the name of Abraxas through his next

³¹ Abraxas (or Abrasax) is a mystical word which has been traced to the Basilites (an early sub-sect of Christianity which had a strong pagan influence. It is used by the Gnostics to refer to the supreme entity of the cosmic hierarchy. Abraxas has a value of 365, based on numerical equivalents of the Greek alphabet (Blavatsky 4). "Because 365 represents the cycle of one revolution of our planet around the sun, they held that in Abraxas were mystically contained the full number of families of entities composing a hierarchy. These entities received from their supreme illuminator, Abraxas, the streams of life and inspiration governing their existence. Thus, in a sense, Abraxas is the cosmic Oversoul, the creative or Third Logos, Brahma" (Glorian Publishing)

mentor-like figure Pistorius. The beautiful sound of organ music attracts Sinclair to a church, where for many days he observes Pistorius play. This character who is a renegade theologian and an alcoholic, introduces Sinclair to a number of Gnostic beliefs and other ancient mythologies. They worship fire and interpret Emil Sinclair's dreams. The god Abraxas is reintroduced as a deity that simultaneously represents evil and good. Eventually, Sinclair learns all that he can from Pistorius and even outgrows him in his self-development. The two part as Sinclair leaves the boarding school to go to university.

In the following year (assumed to be 1913), Sinclair and Demian meet again at the university town. Sinclair is introduced to Demian's mother, Frau Eva. Through her, he joins a community consisting of people of all walks of life who share the common interest of religious rebirth and the focus on the individual. Sinclair falls in a worship-like love with Frau Eva, a mother figure and the ideal woman who he attempted to portray through his paintings – an aspect of the tale which provides a lot of material for a Jungian/Freudian interpretation. This idyllic episode lasts until the war breaks, in uncanny fulfillment of Demian's premonitory dreams. Demian, who is stationed as a reserve officer in the cavalry is the first to be sent to the front, Sinclair soon follows. One year later, Sinclair is gravely wounded by shrapnel and brought to a hospital. In the bed next to him is Demian, dying. He gives Sinclair a farewell embrace and the two part forever.

This brief outline enables us to recognise a few important patterns that explain the book's successful reception. *Demian* is filled with spiritual and religious symbols, the most obvious of which are Christian. This is quite relatable to Hesse's own very pious upbringing. However, like Hesse, Emil breaks away from this tradition which does not provide the necessary solace for the tumults of the individual development. The focus on Gnosticism in the middle sections of the narrative and particularly on Abraxas shows Hesse's awareness of the historical significance of this gnostic deity. Indeed, Hesse was writing at a time of

reawakening of interests in Gnosticism and other religious cults that became popular in Europe around the turn of the century (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 110). Gnosticism is sometimes characterised as a ‘a mystical eclectic practice’ or a sub-cult that originated from Christianity and separated itself from its main schools of thought around the second century AD (Moore and Turner 175). It is believed that the Gnostic writings were originally composed as correction or revision to the cosmogony of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis) and eventually evolved into a distinct religion (Moore and Turner 175). Gnosticism foregrounded personal spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) over orthodox ecclesiastical teaching and authority. There is a dualistic aspect to Gnostic theology in which a cosmic opposition exists between good and evil, and between the spiritual and the physical. This notion reflected Hesse’s own concerns about the duality of existence and his desire to transcend them. Abraxas represents this transcending of duality by being a deity who embodies both the good and the evil, he is both the God and the Devil. Abraxas was not a completely new deity to German culture. Already Goethe in his *West-Eastern Divan* [*West-östlicher Divan*] (1819) mentioned his name. Abraxas also played an important role for the psychoanalyst Carl Jung in formulating his theory on the three stages of development in the human perception of God. In *The Seven Sermons to the Dead* [*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*] (1916), Jung presents the final stage as the integration of the benevolent God and malevolent Devil and refers to Abraxas as the expression of this juncture. Jung writes: “Hard to know is the deity of Abraxas. Its power is the greatest, because man perceiveth it not. From the sun he draweth the *summum bonum*; from the devil the *infimum malum*; but from Abraxas life, altogether indefinite, the mother of good and evil” (186). Through his own dealings with psychotherapy and his acquaintance of Jung himself, it is clear that Hesse had access to this book, and that the three stages of perception have made their way into Hesse’s novel. However, what is of interest for this thesis is the Oriental aspects of *Demian* and how they affect Sinclair in times of regression.

The Oriental influence in *Demian* is of a more subtle nature than in *Siddhartha*; however, the impact of Vedānta philosophy and Hindu mythology is already perceptible. According to Vedānta, the ātman or the soul begins in the ‘mineral stage’ and through many centuries or even millennia transforms and evolves into the ‘plant stage’, then the ‘animal stage’ and, eventually the ‘human stage’. It is in this latter stage that consciousness first awakens, and there starts the development through countless rebirths until one becomes aware of their own path (Carnahan 6). Then is the important and uneasy task of growing into the divine being (ātman/Brahman), which is the next stage of the evolution. “Purification of the body, mind, and heart is essential in order to realize the soul, the inner self [...] This realization, which is direct experience of God, takes place in the relatively early stages of the seeker’s journey for, after realization, one must grow into the very essence of divinity” (Carnahan 6). These notions are at the core of *Demian*’s narrative, for it is through awareness and self-betterment that Sinclair rises beyond the realm of māyā (illusion) and its divide of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. The solution to the crisis of the self and the world are within the realisation that the internal world is of more importance than the external. The final sentence of *Demian*, in the voice of Sinclair and after the death of his friend, embodies this turn inwards for the realisation of ātman: “But when on many such occasions I find the key and look deep down into myself where the images of destiny lie slumbering in the dark mirror, I only need to bend my head over the black mirror to see my own image which now wholly resembles him, my friend and leader” (*Demian* 135). As the Advaita Vedānta essential concept: we are all one, ātman, Brahman, Demian is Sinclair and Sinclair is every single individual, every single young reader who has experienced the aftermath of the war.

Through *Demian*’s great success in post-war Germany, Emil Sinclair became the new voice of a generation of youth who had lost their innocence in the trenches of the First World War (Decker, *Hesse* 327). “The book addressed itself to readers born the turn of the century

who now, at the threshold of adulthood, were facing the aftereffects of a long, lost war. At this juncture, the crisis was both historical and psychological. The themes in *Demian* dealt with the war's end and with the resulting shift in personal and public values [...]” (Freedman 7). A major aspect of this story that resonated with this young German readership is its use of Oriental philosophies, particularly of the Advaita Vendānta School, to navigate the social and individual crises. This novel breaks with Hesse's previous thinly disguised biographies with its turn Eastwards. This East was used as a way of representing the inner-world of the protagonist (and the author) that shifted the outward reality into an more obscure but accurate way of representing the psyche (Freedman 190). Hesse himself, avowed: “Almost every book I have written has been a spiritual autobiography” (qtd. in Carnahan 2).

The Orient of *Demian* and of the post-World War I readership was a safe literary and imaginary space onto which the internal landscape can be projected. In this Oriental inner geography, the conflicts of the psyche can be resolved, and self-realisation can be attained. The crisis environment of the Weimar era offered an opportunity for openness and renewal which allowed Hesse to create such works as *Demian*, *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*, three novels that turn away from the outside world and focus on the internal struggles to reach self-realisation. In a time of economic and political tumult, the turn inward was felt to be the most wholesome reaction. The openness provided by the sense of crisis of the era permitted Hesse and his readers to use their projections of the Orient and borrow its spirituality to navigate their own individual, spiritual and psychological hardships. It provided a replacement to the collapsing social values and traditions of the West. “The Weimar era abounded in nervous tensions, tensions which would result both in innovative departures and in disastrous quests for security” (Marchand, *German Orientalism* 476). Nonetheless, the crisis of the Weimar Republic did also set ground for the ‘break with the civilisation’ of 1933 which allowed the National Socialists to come to power (Graf and Föllmer 37). The setting of the Third Reich

and its eventual destruction resulted in Hesse's second surge in reception. This time, the audience was not so youthful and used Hesse's guidance differently.

Chapter 2: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

Hesse's success in Germany remained fairly steady throughout most of the twelve years of the NSDAP rule [National Socialist German Workers' Party] (which lasted from 1933 to 1945). His German sales were numerous, between 1933 and 1943, Hesse sold nearly 500,000 books in Germany alone (Decker, Hesse 625). Hesse continued to be highly regarded by his German readers who were living through another period of crisis, this time of an ideological and political nature. However, Hesse who again embraced an ambivalent stance towards the National Socialists and the Second World War was criticised and suspected by both the Nazis and the *émigré* society, leading to the eventual censorship of his works across Nazi Germany in 1943. Like the reactions to the previous war, once this one ended and the monstrosities of the gas chambers and concentration camps were revealed, German readers – some of whom embraced Nazism and rejected Hesse just a few years earlier – turned in large numbers to seek the guidance and spiritual advice of the writer. This time, the wave of popularity consisted of an older generation of Hesse readers, those who had been enthralled by *Demian* and *Siddhartha* after the First World War. This time again, they needed the spiritual insight and introverted approach to self-realisation typical of Hesse's novels to help them cope with the external and internal tumults caused by this holocaust. The Second World War period coincided with the composition and eventual publication of Hesse's final work, his voluminous *The Glass Bead Game* [*Das Glasperlenspiel*] (1943). This novel was written over a decade starting in 1932, one year prior to NSDAP's rise to power. With *The Glass Bead Game*, Hesse attempted to form a bridge between the aestheticism of his own generation, in the embodiment of the country of Castalia, and the existential engagement of the next generation (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 283). That younger generation of writers became particularly vocal in the aftermath of the war and was

suspicious of what they perceived to be Hesse's outdated mysticism and romanticism (Günter Grass, Paul Celan, Heinrich Böll, etc.) (Freedman 8). The turn-of-century aesthetic ideal embodied in *Castalia* would shift for Hesse in the ten years of the narrative's genesis, up until it was rejected by Joseph Knecht (the protagonist) in his defection from the order (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 283–84). For the sake of this study, in this chapter I will focus mainly on the appendix of the novel, consisting of the supposed writings of Joseph Knecht. *The Indian Life*, the third of the 'Three Lives' series offers valuable insight into Hesse's final use of Indian tropes, an homage to the role India played in his self-realisation. The oriental appropriation in this tale is blatant and Hesse's manipulation of the Hindu mythological tradition is an ideal case-study to understanding the nature of the Orient as a solution to the WWII crisis. This chapter is organised into two main sections: (1) Hesse's life and reception during Hitler's rule up until 1945; and (2) the author's dealings and popularity in the aftermath of the war.

Hermann Hesse and German Reception During the Nazi Era

The Second World War, which took place mostly in Europe between 1939 and 1945, stemmed from the rise to power in 1933 Germany of Hitler and his National Socialist German Worker's Party. That year, Hesse who had been living in Switzerland for over twenty years, found himself in the role of "standard-bearer for [...] a movement embracing various different groups opposed to the cabal of criminals in government in Berlin" (Decker, *Hesse* 616). Yet, just as he did during the Great War, Hesse would not publicly take a side during this war. His personal views, which stood against the totalitarian craze that beheld Germany, were profusely documented in his diary and personal correspondence. As a Swiss citizen, Hesse believed that he could maintain his neutral stance and his German readers while holding on to his values, so long he did not make any public declarations (Freedman

347). A belief that stemmed from his experience of the previous world war and the consequences of the political essays he wrote between 1914 and 1918, particularly of his *O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!*³² The hate campaign against Hesse that started as a result of this call of the European intelligentsia to unite beyond politics was still going strong by 1933. Hesse was attacked from all side “by the warmongers and the opponents of war alike” (Decker, *Hesse* 613). In mid-1933, Hesse wrote to Thomas Mann:

The letters I receive from the Reich, from supporters of the regime are very odd: they are all written in what appears to be a blazing passions and they praise in grandiloquent terms the unity, indeed even the ‘freedom’ that prevails in Germany today, yet in the next line they go on to furiously condemn the pack of vermin that are the Catholics or the Socialists, who are going to get what’s coming to them now. There’s an atmosphere of war fever and pogroms about them, delirious and heavily intoxicated, there are echoes of 1914 but without any naivety that was still possible then. This will bring a lot of bloodshed and more besides; it reeks of evil (qtd. in Decker, *Hesse* 614).

The uncontrolled nationalism would flare even more hatred towards Hesse from the Nazi supporters in the years leading to the war.

Although Hesse tried not to take a side in the political conflict that led to the Second World War, he not only managed to attract harsh criticism from the Allied camps for his inaction, but also ended up in the Nazis’ firing line. Early on under the NSDAP regime, a conflict between Hesse and Will Vesper, the editor of the National Socialist Magazine *Die Neue Literatur* ensued. In 1935, Vesper painted Hesse as an enemy of the fatherland “on the side of the Jews, Bolsheviks, and sundry other enemies of Germany” (qtd. in Decker, *Hesse* 626).³³ Hesse deflected this attack, which could have been fatal, by issuing position

³² This essays which was mentioned in the previous chapter, condones war, however it does not denounce German action in WWI, which left Hesse in an ambiguous position towards both camps. It was originally published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 3 November 1914.

³³ Vesper wrote: “Hesse ist als Schriftsteller in tiefe Abhängigkeit von der Psychoanalyse des Wiener Juden Freud geraten [...]. Das sollte einmal öffentlich gesagt werden, daß Hesse ein Schulbeispiel dafür ist, wie der Jude die deutsche Volkseele zu vergiften vermag [...] Nur diesem jüdischen Einfluß ist die Verbiegung seiner Seele zuzuschreiben” (232).

statements in *Die Neue Literatur*, emphasising his position as a foreigner and distancing himself from his German identity. In the initial statement, Hesse refused to tolerate the ‘shameful slanders’ of Vesper and stressed his membership of the Swiss Writer’s Association (Decker, *Hesse* 626). Yet, Hesse seemed to struggle in situating himself in these upcoming tensions between Germany and the rest of Europe. In January 1935 *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, a Swedish journal printed an article by Hesse titled “Letter from Germany”, without Hesse’s approval of the title. In a letter to the editor of the journal, Hesse disputes the title of that article in trying to clarify his position as a German-Swiss writing for Germans:

[...] Zur “deutschen Literatur” rechne ich natürlich nicht bloß die reichsdeutsche, sondern die Literatur aller Deutsch schreibenden Völker, dazu gehört außer der deutschen Schweiz auch Österreich [...]. Meine Stellung zur aktuellen deutschen Lage und Politik ist die jedes Schweizers und Europäers, ich bin aber deutscher Autor, und mein Wirkungsfeld ist Deutschland, darum suche ich dort, soweit das ohne jede Konzession an die Macht möglich ist, meine Arbeit fortzusetzen (Gesammelte Briefe 2: 450).³⁴

This somewhat contradictory position reflected the dilemma in which Hesse found himself caught. A dilemma reinforced by the fact that his neutrality was questioned by all camps. He was a Swiss citizen whose publisher was in the capital of the Third Reich. He was still one of the most widely read authors in Nazi Germany, and this could not have been achievable without, as Decker puts it: “a certain amount of careful manoeuvring” (*Hesse* 629).

Hesse was still highly praised by many young people in Germany: in the first years of NSDAP rule, every spring and summer, hundreds of his fervent readers would visit his home in Ticino by foot and on bicycles in the hopes of guidance and advice from the author. Hesse

[“As a writer, Hesse became deeply dependent on the psychoanalysis of the Viennese Jew Freud. It should be said openly, once and for all, that Hesse is a perfect example of how the Jews can poison the German people’s soul. The distortion of his soul can only be attributed to the Jewish influence.”]

³⁴ “[...] Of course I do not simply count as ‘German literature’ the work that is being produced within the Reich, but also the writings of all Germanophone peoples, including German-speaking Switzerland and Austria [...]. My attitude toward the current social and political situation in Germany is that of every Swiss person and European, but I am a German author and my sphere of operation is Germany, and for that reason I am trying to keep working there, insofar as that is possible without making any concessions to the current regime” (Hesse qtd. in Decker, *Hesse* 625)

wished to help the young people who did not conform to the autocratic system while still having to live within its boundaries. He would not have been able to play this role had he publicly denounced the new government. The way Hesse viewed it, “he could function best not by joining the regime or by ‘senseless opposition’ but by sabotaging the entire business of power and politics ‘to form islands of humanity and love’ in the midst of the killing and the satanism. To reach into that world, to continue to speak the language of those who were caught in it, and to call on them to sabotage power through love” (Freedman 347).³⁵ This view and this aim connected him to Germany and gave him the necessary inner justification to maintain his ties, even when his publishing house, Fischer Verlag, a German-Jewish business, was taken over by Goebbels’ Propaganda Ministry in 1936. The original owners, Samuel Fischer and Gottfried Bermann were forced to sell their publishing house to the German Peter Suhrkamp, as they sought exile in Sweden (Freedman 361). Hesse’s decision, in 1938 to remain with the ‘aryanised’ Fischer Verlag – now under the directions of Suhrkamp, who was backed by the Propaganda Ministry and Commerce Department – puzzled his old publishers and his friends. A choice that placed him in opposition to the *émigré* camp, composed of those who had to flee from Germany and who were denouncing Hitler and his government through their activism from abroad. These socio-political tensions, coupled with the suicide of Hesse’s younger brother Hans in 1935, prompted another period of crisis in Hermann Hesse’s life. This period of personal and public hardship gave birth to Hesse’s biggest *chef d’oeuvre*, *The Glass Bead Game*. Freedman observes that Hesse was “as

³⁵ Hesse’s political ‘quietism’ is most likely rooted in his Pietist, bourgeois childhood, when the values of *Innerlichkeit* were engrained from his religious upbringing and from his fascination with German Romanticism. This notion of inwardness in German culture is not exclusive to Hesse but is rather a cultural phenomenon present in all aspects of life (arts, religion, politics, etc), and particularly recognisable in the attitudes of Hesse’s literary idol Novalis. Some might argue that it is especially on this Pietistic tendency to turn inwards and away from the world, that the German middle class built its exculpatory plea during the fascist regime. In this sense, Hesse’s reaction to the Third Reich can be understood as representative of a large part of the *deutsches Bürgertum*.

unable in 1938 as he had been in 1914 to break his ties with his German friends and admirers and with the politicians and arbiters of taste in Germany, no matter how he had despised them” (362–63). Unlike in the years of WWI, Hesse’s sales in Germany remained fairly steady throughout most of the National Socialists’ rule. He sold nearly half a million books in Germany between 1939 and 1943, whereas in Switzerland his sales were only of 35,000 (Decker, *Hesse* 625).

In the time of the fascist regime in Germany, aside of dealing with issues in relation to a political and identity crisis, Hesse was also composing his colossal novel *The Glass Bead Game*. He worked on the composition of this book for a whole decade, from 1932 to 1942. Hermann Hesse survived the worst period of dictatorship in ‘inner emigration’ in his *Glass Bead Game*. In a letter to Rudolph Pannwitz in 1955 Hesse wrote: “*Es galt für mich zweierlei: einen geistigen Raum aufzubauen, in dem ich atmen und leben könnte aller Vergiftung der Welt zum Trotz, eine Zuflucht und Burg, und zweitens den Widerstand des Geistes gegen barbarischen Mächte zum Ausdruck zu bringen und womöglich meine Freunde drüben in Deutschland im Widerstand und Ausharren zu stärken*” (Hesse, *Ausgewählte Briefe* 438).³⁶ Hesse created a spiritual alternative world full of symbols, in which we could write himself into (Decker, *Hesse* 638). In the ‘*Geist*’-oriented world of Castalia, Hesse attempted to view the whole of history – his own and that of all humankind. It is narrated from a faraway future, but also takes itself to be published after Josef Knecht’s, the Magister Ludi’s death. It is a retrospective into a future time. Many mistake *The Glass Bead Game* for an utopian novel, because the introduction, written in the earlier stages of the novel’s composition, leads the readers to believe so. However, as one dives further into the narrative

³⁶ “There were two things I needed to do: first, build a spiritual space in which I could breathe and live, despite all the poisoning in the world, a refuge and a castle, and second, express the mind’s opposition to barbaric forces and where possible, boost the resistance and endurance in my friends over in Germany.”

of Joseph Knecht (Knecht, meaning “servant” has negative connotations in German) and the sterile intellectual and aesthetic world Castalia, one perceives the changes in Hesse’s perspective throughout the decade. The ideal of a solely aesthetic world slowly changes and culminates with the Magister Ludi’s defection from the spiritual path. The ultimate realisation, which is also Hesse’s, is that one extreme is just as destructive as the other. The process of composition of this magnum opus was not a steady one. Hesse faced many blocks and tragedies throughout its making, “the story grew with him while he lived out some of its problems” (Freedman 362). Sorell argues that *The Glass Bead Game* represents the poeticised translation of Hesse’s image of the East into his personal world, “an amalgam of Protestant defiance and Taoistic [sic] passivity and simplicity” (48–50). The imaginary world of Castalia joins together the wisdom of the East and West to create an ideal community of savants, with the spirits of Mozart and Lao Tze in the highest reign (Sorell 51). The East was no longer a place of projection of one’s psyche, as in *Demian* and *Siddhartha*, but has by this point combined with the West to create a complete whole. The music of Mozart comfortably cohabitates with the philosophy of Taoism in the imaginary Castalian world.

What is more, to the main narrative of the Magister Ludi Joseph Knecht, are appended a collection of poems and a series of ‘Three Lives’ supposedly written by the Castalian protagonist. In the main narrative, Knecht was required to write “fictitious autobiographies set in a period of the past the writer [Knecht] chose” (Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* 103). This was an exercise required of all elite students in their postgraduate ‘free’ years. These lives were meant to be creations of wishful thinking in which they portray their dreams and ideals (Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* 104). There is reason to believe that these “Three Lives” are an account of Hesse’s own confessional procedure, and that the postgraduate exercise is more a ploy allowing the inclusion of these tales as Magister Ludi’s writings (Stelzig 270). Ziolkowski argues that these “Lives” were originally intended to fulfil

a different function, since they were written and published prior to the main Castalian tale. The first ‘life’, *The Rainmaker* [*Der Regenmacher*] appeared in 1934; the second, *The Father Confessor* [*Der Beichtvater*] in 1936; and the third *An Indian Life* [*Indischer Lebenslauf*] in 1937 (Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 205). The first life tells the story of Knecht as the apprentice to the rainmaker Turu in a primitive matriarchal society. The second, is set in the fifth-century Gaza and focuses on two patristic fathers, Joseph Famulus (Knecht) and Dion Pugil who have devoted their lives to an ascetic lifestyle to compensate to the sinful brutality and sensuality “of many past and future ages” (Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* 465). The narrative relates how at an advanced age both are overtaken by doubts as to the truthfulness of their function as confessors and, eventually, find their paths to an intensified devotion of the spiritual ideal.

The third life, *The Indian Life* is of most interest, as it is Hesse’s patchwork of Indian mythological tropes mixed with his personal ideal for spirituality and inner exile. This tale recounts the life of Dasa (which is also the Sanskrit term of servant), the rajah’s son who, to escape his stepmother’s wrath, is brought to live with cowherds as a young child. He abandons his free wandering cowherd’s life as he falls in love with Pravati, a beautiful miller’s daughter. He marries Pravati and lives in servitude to his family, working in the mill and farm, until one day, the current rajah – his half-brother Nala – comes through the small town. After Pravati’s disappearance, Dasa finds out that she has left him to become his half-brother’s concubine and in anger and heartbreak, Dasa kills Nala and escapes to the forest. There, he encounters a holy yogi in deep meditation – he had already stumbled upon this holy man when he lived with the cowherds. Dasa, in his despair asks the yogi for help, who laughs at his misadventures and tells him it is all ‘māyā’, illusion. When tasked with filling the holy man’s gourd by the water stream, he is met by Pravati looking for him and informing him that he is the new king and must return to the capital. A long period of blissful life with his wife and son in the luxury and comfort of the palace follows, but eventually a war brings

despair, estrangement of his wife and culminates in his young son's death. At this point, Dasa awakens by the water stream, gourd in hand and realises that this kaleidoscope of life's vicissitudes turns out to be just a dream, a vision. In this way, Dasa learns of the rapidly changing wheel of fortune (*samsāra*), which he now will attempt to escape through service and tutelage from the holy yogi. The focus on the service of the mind/spirit (*Geist*) is central in this tale as in the other two "Lives": "It was a service that had been asked of him. It was an assignment. He might just as well obey and carry out. That was better than sitting here and pondering methods of self-destruction" (Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* 529). The central aspect of this story, and in fact, of all three "Lives", is the withdrawal from society and the joys and sorrows it brings, and the exile in the spiritual within the self. This reflects Hesse's way of coping with the crisis of the years leading to the war and, eventually, with the horrors of WWII.

Again, the influence of Vedānta philosophy is easily recognisable in this "Third Life". Dasa's ultimate awareness of *māyā* and the stress that this final realisation is but the beginning of the long path of evolution towards the escape from the wheel of rebirths is taken from the basic tenets of Advaita Vedānta (Carnahan 6). Eugene Stelzig reads this *Indian Life* as Hesse's final fictional tribute to the world of Indian spirituality "[...] that had meant so much to him at an earlier stage of his life [...]" (277). This final use of the Oriental trope for Hesse, reflects his urge to exile within the self to escape the tensions and issues that needed to be dealt with in the 'outside world'. In the comfort of peaceful Ticino, Hesse withdrew in his mind to compose this *magnum opus*, while most of Europe, including Hesse's readers suffered the atrocities of the NSDAP government and of the Second World War. Although Hesse vehemently rejected the term 'inner emigration' after 1945 (it was polemically used by Frank Thiess after the war) (Decker, *Hesse* 638), it is in this state that he survived the war. The Orient, and the joined ideals of the East and West in Castalia were his refuge, just as

Dasa's decision to not participate in the illusion of *māyā* and instead withdraw in inner meditation in the forest was his. *The Glass Bead Game* along with its "Three Lives" has also been understood to be the embodiment of the communion between the East and West, attempted unsuccessfully in *Siddhartha*. Ganeshan writes on this matter: "*Hier ist nicht mehr von Osten und Westen die Rede. Denn es besteht nur eine universelle Welt, in der alle Menschen auf der Suche nach Selbstverwirkung sind. Die drei Lebensläufe, eine ‚primitive‘, eine christliche und eine indische stellen dieses Motiv dar*" (Ganeshan 90–91).³⁷

The other two Lives, include some facets of Vedānta and Buddhist philosophies as well as Christian and Gnostic tropes; and all three share the common theme of Knecht (in whichever incarnation) receiving the spirit-call from a mentor and embodying the ideal of service isolated from the realm of life and committed to the 'eternal spirit' (Field 165; Ziolkowski, *The Novels* 299).

By early 1939, a large part of this novel was done, however the war in Germany became imminent, and eventually broke out in September of that year. Hesse promised his German followers a response to the intense nationalism and militarism they were expected to serve in the final defection from the aesthetic world of Castalia. Although Hesse and his wife Ninon lived away from the war in their 'citadel' in Ticino, the reverberations of this conflict reached them, as friends and family members were drawn into battle or disappeared in exile through Europe. Hesse was still much admired by many German soldiers, who brought his books to battle and continued sending him letters. However, Hesse has become less acceptable to German officials, as there was too much in his past that made him a suspect to the Nazi cause. He was declared an 'undesirable author' in the early phases of the war, an

³⁷ "There is no longer talk of East and West here, because there is only one universal world in which all people are looking for self-realisation. The three paths of life - a 'primitive', a Christian and an Indian - represent this pattern."

appellation that did not forbid the printing and sales of his books, but rather meant that they were not seen favourably. Eventually, and to Hesse's great shock, in 1942, the manuscript of *The Glass Bead Game* was turned down by Suhrkamp, upon the Propaganda Ministry's orders. Regardless of Hesse's caution to not publicly criticise the German regime, he did not escape its disapproval. During the most gruelling years of the dictatorship, from 1943 to 1945, Hesse's books were finally prohibited: reading him in Germany had become a crime (Freedman 368–69; Decker, *Hesse* 649, 653).

Throughout the years of the Third Reich, even if disliked by the German government, Hesse continued to receive letters from his German readers, who conflicted with the state of the world, tried to find responses to the current crisis in their homeland. The cruelty and detachment of the Nazi rule led many young people to question God and religion at large. Most of Hesse's published replies deal with notions of Christianity and Indian spirituality, not unlike his missives from the Weimar period. In response to a young German reader, Hesse wrote in February 1935: "*Ich habe zeitlebens die Religion gesucht, die mir zukäme, denn obwohl ich in einem Hause von echter Frömmigkeit aufgewachsen bin, konnte ich doch den Gott und den Glauben, der mir dort angeboten wurde, nicht annehmen*" (*Die Antwort* 229).³⁸ Later in the letter, Hesse provides advice by telling of his search for the 'right' religion:

Mein Weg war es, zuerst ganz individuell suchen zu müssen, das heißt vor allem mich selber suchen und mich, soweit mir das gegeben war zur Persönlichkeit bilden zu müssen. Dazu gehört das im „Demian“ Erzählte. Später habe ich manche Jahre die indischen Gottesvorstellungen besonders geliebt, dann allmählich die Klassiker der Chinesen kennen gelernt, und ich war schon lange nicht mehr jung, als ich allmählich begann, mich wieder mit dem Glauben vertrauter zu machen, in dem man mich erzogen hatte. Dabei hat das klassische katholische Christentum eine Rolle gespielt, aber ich fand mich getrieben, auch die protestantischen Formen des

³⁸"I have always sought the religion that I should follow, because, although I grew up in a house of true piety, I could not accept the God and faith that was provided to me there."

*Christentums neu kennen zu lernen, und manches Gute und Fördernde ist mir dann auch aus der jüdischen Literatur zugenommen (Die Antwort 229).*³⁹

It is known that after the First World War, Hesse began a conscious “turning back to Christianity” (Stephenson 17). However, he never identified in terms of any one religious group or another, but rather was interested in the essence of religions. What is notable here is that the reader wrote to him inquiring about religious beliefs and the right path to take in a time where her homeland was undergoing a drastic shift in culture, politics and ideologies. Followers of Hesse at that period seemed to be particularly concerned with religious matter when turning to him and his literature, and the recurrent theme is around the question of the ‘right’ belief. This is also apparent in another one of Hesse’s replies to a young reader during the war years, in 1943. In this letter, Hesse wrote to explain his understanding of the self or the ‘Ich’ : “[...] *Dann ist aber das andre Ich da, im ersten Ich verborgen, mit ihm vermischt, keineswegs aber mit ihm zu verwechseln. Dies zweite, hohe, heilige Ich (der Atman der Inder, den Sie dem Brahma gleichstellen) ist nicht persönlich, sondern ist unser Anteil an Gott, am Leben, am Ganzen, am Un- und Überpersönlichen. Diesem Ich nachzugehen und zu folgen, lohnt sich schon eher [...]*” (Die Antwort 278).⁴⁰ We can see here that Advaita Vedānta philosophy still plays an important role for the author and his readers for navigating the confusing and tumultuous reality of life during the Second World War.

³⁹ “My way was to do so, was first to look for myself and, as far as I was given the opportunity, to build a personality. This is what the story of *Demian* is about. Later, for a few years, I felt a special love for the Indian notions of God, then gradually, I got to know the Classics of the Chinese. I was no longer young, when I slowly began to familiarise myself with the faith in which I was brought up. Classic Catholic Christianity played a role in this, but I found myself also driven to get to know the Protestant forms of Christianity anew, and some of the good and nurturing things I learned from Jewish literature [...].”

⁴⁰ “But then there’s the other ‘I’, bent in the first ‘I’, mixed within it, but not to interchangeable with it. This second, higher, holier ‘I’ (Atman of the Indians, that they hold equal to Brahma) is not personal, rather it is our portion of God, of Life, of the Whole, of the impersonal and the ‘all-personal’. It is worthwhile to pursue and follow this ‘I’.”

At this time, Oriental spirituality seems to be used to fill the gaps of the German Protestant beliefs, since those were insufficient in offering a reasoning of and solution to the crisis experienced by the World War II readership. Young people living through a second World War within their lifetimes could not comprehend a Christian God that would allow such cruelties, and this audience was deeply concerned with metaphysical questions as a means to make sense of the chaos experienced in their societies. However, Hesse always stressed his stance on religion, in the same letter, he reiterated: “*Ich glaube, eine Religion ist ungefähr so gut wie die andre. Es gibt keine, in der man nicht ein Weiser werden könnte, und keine, die man nicht auch als dümmsten Götzendienst betreiben können*” (*Die Antwort* 278).⁴¹

Once more, the interest here is not about the real Orient, but rather a use of parts of its spirituality and culture to complement the insufficiencies of the occidental religious systems. It is a ‘patchwork’ of bits and pieces of dogmas and mythologies sourced from the Oriental (mostly Vedantin, but some Taoist and Confucianist) canon, that are applied to the Protestant faith and values where it fails to make sense of the horrors of the German totalitarian regime and the Second World War. However, the case study of *The Glass Bead Game* does not apply to Hesse’s reader of the 1933-1945 period, as the book was first published in Switzerland in 1943 and would not be available to German reader until the end of the war. German readers were still using earlier novels such as *The Journey to the East*, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, *The Steppenwolf* and *Siddhartha*. Yet, their response to the growing ideological crisis in Germany was similar to Hesse’s withdrawing within one’s self and using the bits and pieces of Oriental mystique, such as the Vedantic Sanskrit phrase *Tat Tvam Asi* found without explanation in *Steppenwolf*, and using them to fill the gaps left open

⁴¹ “I believe one religion is as good as another. There is not a religion in which one cannot become a sage, and none that cannot be used as the stupidest idolatry.”

by Protestantism (or Catholicism). This Sanskrit saying which can be translated to “thou art that” (Sanskrit has a multitude of significations of one single word) is taken from the Chāndogyopaniṣad, and is an “Grand Pronouncement” of Vedānta. The fact that soldiers took copies of Hesse’s novels with them to battle shows that the “Path Within”, which is embedded in Oriental philosophy and embodied in Hesse’s later novels, offered a solace to his readers in the most gruesome of times.

Hermann Hesse’s Recognition in the Aftermath of the War

Hesse’s particular appeal to his various audiences throughout the decades led him to receive countless letters from his readers, most of them in need of guidance and turning towards what they perceived as a guru-like figure, who wrote such introspective novels. Yet, some responses were truly spiteful and angry, from readers and critics who did not agree with his neutrality in national affairs, or his lack of interest in the politics of the ‘outside world’. This phenomenon was not new to the Second World War, it had already happened in 1914. Hesse even reacted to the never-ending hate campaign towards him by publishing an article in 1921 titled “Hate Mail”. In it, he cites excerpts from heinous letters he received on daily basis from Germany. What was most appalling to Hermann Hesse, is that most of the hateful letters were written mostly by students, young and not unintelligent; they were the intended audience for 1919’s *Demian* and “Zarathustra’s Return” [*“Zarathustras Wiederkehr”*] (Decker, *Hesse* 370–71). As much as Hesse was despised by some, he was praised and worshiped by many throughout the twentieth century. Ziolkowski observes that the nature of his response, that is documented through thousands of letters from his readers, is symptomatic of his appeal (“Saint Hesse” 21). This type of reaction placed a terrible responsibility on Hesse. His readers “have always turned to him as to a guru, a saint who could supply them with maxims for life in a time of confusion, an age of anxiety. [...] Hesse

wants to jolt readers out of their conventional assumptions and force them to look at the world with new eyes" (Ziolkowski, "Saint Hesse" 21).

When the war ended in 1945, Germany was faced with yet another post-war crisis. The destruction of its cities and towns, its system and its culture brought a desire to break with anything that had to do with the German past. This coincided with another heightened surge of popularity for Hermann Hesse. This one was less typical than the previous ones as it was composed of mostly older German readers whose imaginations were impacted in their youth by *Demian* and *Siddhartha* (Freedman 8). Hesse's final novel *The Glass Bead Game* was first published in 1943 Switzerland due to German censorship. When it finally came to the attention of a large German public after the war's end in 1945, it left a deep impression. Its network of well researched historical, musicological, spiritual and philosophical references allowed to open the door to an 'academic vogue', particularly because the book made a point of distancing itself from direct political involvement (Freedman 8). In the midst of the post-war reconstruction, Hesse was awarded a multitude of prizes such as the Goethe-Preis of the city of Frankfurt (1946), the Wilhelm-Raabe-Preis of Bremen (1950), the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (1955), and most notoriously the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946 (Mileck 346; Field 174). This came as a sign that "at least cultural wounds were being bound, since this important prize was given to a German writer who had been neither an emigrant nor a Nazi" (Freedman 9). Hesse was also bestowed an honorary doctorate by the University of Berne and was awarded the Ordre Pour le mérite in 1955 (Field 174). Yet, Hesse never left his retreat in Ticino to accept any of these awards, due to his dread of public speeches, disbelief in such literary prizes, and to his lifelong modesty and humility which was one of his endearing traits (and was recognisable in Joseph Knecht). Besides receiving number of awards, Hesse was celebrated nationally for his birthdays and his novels could not be published fast enough to meet the public's demand. This worshipful acclaim reached its

peak in the early fifties and declined rapidly afterwards (Mileck 346–47). After the war, Hesse's commitment as a writer shifted from imaginative to political writing. His new political focus resulted in multiple essays that did not succeed in reaching young post-war readers; for many of them Hesse was the author of their parent's generation. "He was, many of them felt, too deeply implicated in the romantic values of the past, which they now sought to repudiate" (Freedman 8).

From the published correspondence, it seems that the number of letters dealing with the Orient in relationship to the WWII crisis have diminished in the after-war years. Yet, the influence of the Oriental thought would remain present both in Hesse's approach and in his audience's reception, even when the audience's concern shifted from metaphysical to this-worldly matters. Many young Hesse-readers would reach out to him to seek guidance in dealing with the consequences of war in their direct environment: how should one feel about one's parent being an active member of the Nazi Party? Or how does one make sense of external powers that took control of Germany? How does one cope with the imposition of guilt, when one was too young to understand, let alone consciously partake to actions that supported the totalitarian government (Hesse, *Die Antwort* 295–330)? Hesse would always praise the turn inwards, *der Weg nach Innen*, and this advice would be recurrent in his correspondence with his readers until his death. In November 1947, in response to a young woman concerned with *The Glass Bead Game* he wrote:

[...] *Denn dieser Tod [Knechts] hat ja seine Wirkung auf Sie schon getan. 42 Er hat in Ihnen, so wie er hat in Tito getan hat, einen Stachel hinterlassen, eine nicht mehr ganz zu vergessende Mahnung, er hat eine geistige Sehnsucht und ein geistiges Gewissen in Ihnen geweckt oder bestärkt, welche weiter wirken werden, auch wenn die Zeit kommt, wo Sie mein Buch und Ihren Brief vergessen haben werden. Hören*

⁴² At the risk of a spoiler, here Hesse and the reader deal with the fact that the protagonist of Hesse's last novel, Joseph Knecht, dies at the end of the tale.

Sie nur auf diese Stimme, die jetzt nicht mehr aus einem Buch, sondern aus Ihrem eigenen Innern spricht, sie wird Sie weiter führen (Hesse, *Die Antwort* 315).⁴³

In such a way, Hesse's appropriation of the Vedānta philosophy and his 'narrative Orient' continued to guide readers through the turbulent times of post-war reconstruction.

The Oriental spirituality has played a more obvious role for the author and his readership during the war, than after. The need of filling the gaps of the Christian religions in the time of yet another World War led to source notions and values from Taoism, Vedānta and other Indian mythologies. The drop of concern with the theme of the Orient in Hesse's reception after the war, however, does not equate to its disappearance. Ten years after the end of World War II, in a preface to the Japanese edition of *Siddhartha*, Hesse wrote:

Nowadays, it is no longer a question of trying to convert the Japanese to Christianity, or Europeans to Buddhism or Taoism. We have no desire, nor should we, to convert or be converted; instead it is incumbent upon us to open ourselves up and expand our minds. We no longer regard Eastern and Western wisdom as mutually hostile forces engaged in a power struggle, but as poles between which a bountiful life oscillates (qtd. in Decker, *Hesse* 429)

This final union of the East and West, that was first attempted through *Siddhartha* in the inter-war period, and somewhat achieved with *The Glass Bead Game* twenty years later, finally seems to have come to fruition in this 1955 preface. As during the Weimar Republic, Hesse's novels offered a pathway to navigating individual and social crises for the German readers. The Second World War reception needed the Oriental notions found in *Steppenwolf* and *Siddhartha* to fill in the gaps of Christianity, the same way Hesse needed Lao Tzu, Confucius and Vedānta to fulfil the aesthetic world of Castalia in his *Glass Bead Game*. Hesse's final turn towards Indian mythology in *The Indian Life* of Joseph Knecht, in a reflection of the inner emigration which he himself resolved to in order to survive

⁴³ "By understanding Knecht's death, one comprehends and condones it. Because, this has already affected you. He [Knecht] has left in you, as he has done in Tito, a thorn, a reminder not to be forgotten, he has awakened a spiritual desire and a spiritual conscience in you, which will continue to work, even when you will have forgotten my book and your letter. Just listen to this voice, which now speaks not from a book, but from within you, it will carry you on."

(psychologically) the confused and anxious period of the National Socialist regime. An inner exile that served as an example to his WWII readers, who did not yet have access to his *Glass Bead Game*. But they found this theme already embodied through the stylistic mark of ‘The Path Within’ and the resolutions taken by the protagonists in *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*. “Hesse’s writing is self-portrayal and self-analysis, a continuous and watchful debate with himself; it is a poetical and humane self-confession [...]” (Zeller qtd. in Carnahan 2). This aspect resonated most with readerships of tumultuous eras, as was the case after the Great War and during Hitler’s rule, but as stability slowly returned, Hesse’s fame quickly waned in Germany after 1955. However, Hesse would become a god-like figure, worshipped and imitated, in a land he never expected: The United States of America. The Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s revived Hesse’s popularity and used his notion of the Orient to navigate their own conflicted society.

Chapter 3: The Hesse Phenomenon in The American Counterculture

Hesse died on 9 August 1962 in Ticino, and hence did not witness the ‘Hessomania’ of the American Counterculture. By the early 1960s in German-speaking Europe, Hermann Hesse’s popularity had dropped to a point where Hesse failed to feature in a 1962 survey on literature published in an unnamed German daily cited by Bernhard Zeller (156). According to Zeller, by 1965, sales of Hesse’s books published by Suhrkamp fell to an all-time low (156). Across the Atlantic, in the United States, Hesse’s fame was still to come. *Time Magazine* noted in a 1949 review of the *Glass Bead Game* (then known as *Magister Ludi*) that even after being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1946, Hesse was mostly unknown to American readers (“Master of the Game” 113). The article continued that the situation was unlikely to change with the recent appearance of the English translation of *The Glass Bead Game*: “[...] his last and his greatest book is not likely to make Hesse popular with them [the U.S. readers], but it will at least serve to give them an idea of what his dry, remote, ironic and highly individual writing amounts to” (“Master of the Game” 113). Even by 1962, Hesse was not yet the famous literary guru that he would become in the new continent. In an obituary notice carried by the *New York Times* in August of that year, Hesse is characterised as “largely unapproachable” to American readers, “despite a flurry of interest in his novels after the award of the Nobel Prize” (“Hermann Hesse, Novelist, Dead” 14). While ‘unapproachable’ seemed a small step forward from ‘unknown’, the response of the American readership would shift dramatically by the end of the Sixties. In another *Time Magazine* article on Hesse, published on 18 October 1968, the reviewer remarks that: “Today Hesse is no longer so ardently esteemed in his native country, but in the past decade in the U.S. he has steadily risen to the status of a literary cult figure” (“The Outsider” 111). The

article goes on to declare that in the hippie communities, the novels that have already been translated to English such as *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf*, *The Journey to the East*, *Narcissus and Goldmund* and *Magister Ludi* (*The Glass Bead Game*) are ‘family bibles’ (“The Outsider” 111). Within the span of a few months in the mid-Sixties Hesse grew in great demand, reaching top-selling authors’ lists. Despite the muted reception by literary critics, his novels were suddenly ‘boom products’. He was the most widely read and most translated European author since the beginning of the twentieth century. The overnight success Hesse enjoyed in the United States had worldwide repercussions. Hesse’s novels saw a surge of publication in Japan, Australia and even Europe; but nowhere was the reception of this German writer in the decade between 1965 and 1975, as laudatory as in the United States (Zeller 159).

Many wondered at this curious literary reception development: why was a whole generation of young American readers, all of a sudden, obsessed with this stubbornly individualistic German author? Hesse’s success in the United States coincided with the formation of the Counterculture movement, a generational ‘New Social Movement’ (Touraine 1971) largely composed of young members rebelling against their elders. The actors of the earliest post-war new social movements rebelled against the consumerist ‘American Dream’, against the passive contentment of their parents’ generation, against governments that were built on the back of the horrors of the Vietnam war, of the fights with dictatorships in Latin America, of world hunger, and the arms race with the ‘Communist evil’ which resulted in the Cold War. Michel Wieviorka observes that the members of the new social movements of the Sixties and Seventies were characterised by a high degree of cultural awareness (Wieviorka, “After New Social Movements” 6). They had no qualms in challenging the societies in which they lived, and they took a clear position against the widespread consumer society, against the manipulation of needs through the booming

industry of advertising, and they denounced the cultural industries. Most importantly, their opposition to nuclear power would impact the ongoing role of ecologists and environmental militants. “These actors wanted to invent a new way of living together, they thought about what sort of planet their generation would leave to those following them” (Wieviorka, “After New Social Movements” 6).

The new social movement that was the Counterculture was championed by such public figures as the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, the psychedelics enthusiast and Harvard don Timothy Leary, and English novelist and mystical philosopher Colin Wilson. All three men held Hesse in high regard and participated in linking the writer as a dominant voice in the creation of the Counterculture. In this chapter, I will inquire into the reception of Hesse’s novels in the Counterculture movement by linking it to the overarching sense of crisis central to this movement, and its obsession with Oriental spirituality. In order to understand the multiple dynamics at play in the 1960s and 1970s American reception of Hesse’s work, I shall firstly introduce the Counterculture movement, its context and its peculiar approach to religion and spirituality, and then, I will proceed to analyse and argue for the nature of Hesse’s appeal to this youth movement.

The Growing Social Crisis in the United States

As the Second World War ended and the soldiers returned from the fronts, the American nation, just as any nations involved in the conflict, saw major shifts in its society and in its standards of value. However, after the war, the United States were in better economic condition than any other country in the world. There, the post-war economy was booming, and the rise of consumerism and the multiplication of commodities that are so engrained in the western contemporary realities, took their roots in the 1950s technological and industrial capitalism. Gross national product in the United States rose from \$91 billion in

1930 to nearly \$213 billion at the end of 1945 (Viser 114). This economical security for most Americans, resulted in a rise of population, also known as the Baby Boom. The Baby Boomers consist of those born between 1946 and 1964 and account for more than 80 million people (“Demographic Impact of the Baby Boom” 12). Eventually, they would be the ones fuelling the Counterculture, which, as a movement, originated mostly in universities. The rapid growth of the college population was not only an American phenomenon but was apparent world-wide. UNESCO statistics used in Roszak’s *Making of the Counter Culture* show that in the United States, the college population in 1950 was of 2.3 million, where in 1964 it grew to 5 million (28).

The technological progress and the economic growth of the Fifties offered a new level of comfort to most Americans. The abundance of products to which we are accustomed today in supermarkets, department stores and appliance shops resulted from the economical, technological and lifestyle shifts of the post-war era, and those were most drastic in the United States. However, this economic comfort and work security came with a certain return to traditional values. Women who participated actively in the work force during the war, were now expected to return to their roles of housewives and mothers. As for those not yet married, the career opportunities were largely restricted to typist, secretary, or phone operator. Yet, not all returned to their domestic roles: in the 1960s, more women were part of the labour force in the United States than ever before (PBS). Herbert Marcuse, in one of the most important books of the 1960s, *One Dimensional Man* explains that the new tendencies of the post-war society “have engendered a mode of thought and behavior [sic] which undermines the very foundations of the traditional culture. The chief characteristic of this new mode of thought and behavior [sic] is the repression of all values, aspirations, and ideas which cannot be defined in terms of the operations and attitudes validated by the prevailing forms of rationality” (xii). The consequence of this shift is a weakening (and possibly the

disappearance) of all radical critique and the integration of all opposition into the established system. Marcuse terms this post-war society the “advanced industrial civilisation, a token of technical progress” (Marcuse 3).

Marcuse, who was writing in the 1950s, offered a significant diagnosis of the stifling conformity of the epoch, and his *One Dimensional Man*, along with Roszak’s *The Making of The Counter Culture* were important treaties for the intellectual strata of the 1960s Counterculture movement. Roszak, while reflecting on what led to a generation of fervent protesters in the Sixties, remarks that the standards of childrearing became drastically more permissive after World War II (Roszak 30). “A high-consumption, leisure-wealthy society simply does not need contingents of rigidly trained, ‘responsible’ young workers” (Roszak 30). Since most youngsters no longer enter the job market after high school, they can afford to extend the ease and drift of childhood. Unlike their parents’ generation, who also enjoy the multiple leisure of a consumer society, the American Baby Boomers do not have to work for their comforts, nor accept them on a part-time basis. Not having to worry about material comfort, the younger post-war generation now has the time for, and luxury of self-discovery and reflection on society. This is one of the factors that led them to turn to Oriental culture, but also to Hesse’s individualistic novels. “Economic security is something they can take for granted – and on it they build a new, uncompromised personality, flawed perhaps by irresponsible ease, but also touched with some outspoken spirit” (Roszak 31).

With the economic security and comfort of the Fifties, came a contingent lack of spiritual meaning. Colin Campbell notes that in the post-World War II societies, there was no longer any effective meaning system in place. This, led to two main responses: ‘the angry young men’ and ‘moral crusades’ (Campbell 742). The first gave birth, among others, to the Beatniks and the second to the Civil Rights Movements. Campbell argues that there was also a third response, which was essentially a ‘non-intellectual’ one, and which resulted in the

emergence of an adolescent youth subculture in the 1950s. The three groups making up these responses were at first largely suspicious of each other. Only later, in the mid to late-1960s, did they find sufficient common ground to join forces and bring into being what became known as the Counterculture. The Counterculture rebelled against what Marcuse saw as the technological order of the 'One-Dimensional society'. "Independence of thought, autonomy, and the right to political opposition are being deprived of their basic critical function in a society which seems increasingly capable of satisfying the needs of the individuals through the way in which it is organized" (Marcuse 4). This desire for a new meaning among the many groups that formed the Counterculture would eventually motivate their turn towards eastern religions, mysticism and occult practices. This turn would also bring a particular fascination with the Oriental aspects of Hesse's novels, such as the setting and the path of *Siddhartha*, the universal Om and the Vedas Pistorius taught Sinclair in *Demian* and the *tat tvam asi* phrase in *Steppenwolf* (as discussed in the previous two chapters).

Political Unrest and The Cold War

On the political front, the years leading to the Counterculture were turbulent, even if the Second World War had come to an end. In the early Sixties, there were serious concerns about the potential spread of communism, and the relations between the West and the Soviet Union were tense. In 1961 there was a failed attempt by the American administration to destabilise Castro's regime with the 'Bay of Pigs' invasion (Oliver 4). As a response, a year later, the Soviet Union tried to establish a nuclear base in Cuba, although the confrontation was quickly resolved, the world came uncomfortably close to a nuclear war. The increasing levels of tension in Vietnam and the fear of the Communists taking over the country led to an extended American support of South Vietnam in 1961, which eventually became a full-scale war for the United States (Oliver 4). In January 1961, the young democrat John F.

Kennedy, was inaugurated. Throughout his short administration, he endeavoured to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation, and also, improve the rights for women. John F. Kennedy and the First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy embodied the youthful style and aesthetic that would be representative of the decade (Braunstein 244). JFK's dynamic administration and Jackie Kennedy's ascension to style and fashion stood in stark contrast with their predecessors, the 'geriatric' Eisenhower presidency. JFK provided a behavioural template for his youthful followers and was even accorded (posthumously) the title of youth's leader (Braunstein 244). However, the untimely end of his administration due to his assassination in 1963, showed the symptoms of the rising sense of crisis in the United States and the ever-growing divide between its generations. Yet, given the political climate of the Cold War era, the leftist politics of the 1930s did not attract a widespread support with the post-war youngsters. The burgeoning countercultural movements of the 1950s, such as the Beatniks seemed largely uninterested in major political campaigns (Gair 26). Instead, these groups tended to appeal to what they recognised as genuine 'American values', such as individual freedom of choice, and alternatives to a corporate capitalism that they saw as a corruption to American ideals (Gair 26).

The Formation of the American Counterculture

In this research, I use the term Counterculture (capitalised) as an umbrella term to refer to the student revolts and cultural contestations of the Sixties and early Seventies (Reich 1971; Fraser et al. 1988), the 'New Social Movements' (Touraine 1971), the development of 'alternative economies' involving new forms of labour division (Huber 1980), the rise of ecological and sustainability ideologies and their political parties (Richardson and Rootes 2006), and the new forms of social co-existence (Berger 1981). These categories are usually kept isolated from one another and used in different disciplines as objects of study, however,

perceiving them as separate problem-areas may be misleading (Cox 17). The term ‘counterculture’ in sociological context is generally used to refer to a subculture that has evolved to be significantly distinct from the conventional society from which it stems. These differences are apparent in the values, patterns of behaviour and ideological beliefs. Such counterculture tends to exhibit strong antipathy towards the established institutions of its society (Oliver 5). The American – and eventually, West-wide – Counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s befits this definition. In fact, Paul Oliver argues that “countercultures have existed since society has existed, since only through periodic challenges to the prevalent power structures, can society change” (Oliver 5). Yet, just like the societies they rebel against, countercultures are complex, multi-faceted systems – one counterculture movement may not possess a single dominating ideology, but even in its plurality, this kind of mobilization is united in its rejection of mainstream society (Oliver 6; Roszak 46–47). Such was the case of the sub-cultures that stemmed from the post-WWII social shifts among the younger generations. This phenomenon, which was most striking in the United States, was grounded in a West-wide crisis rooted in the sociological, political and ideological contexts presented in the previous section.

‘Counterculture’ entered the public discourse to signify 1960s social and cultural radicalism alone after Roszak revived the term in his best-selling book *The Making of a Counter Culture*, published in 1968.⁴⁴ The popular narrative of the American 1960s Counterculture presented in academic works and in popular culture is often reductive, since it tends to exclude the multiplicity of sub-movements within the overarching movement

⁴⁴ In the mid-1990s, a disagreement on the signification of the term ‘Counterculture’ (in reference to the phenomenon that took place in the United States in the 1960s) ensued, which resulted in what Braunstein and Doyle termed ‘culture wars’ (6). Braunstein and Doyle’s criticise the restrictive use of the term ‘Counterculture’ to exclusively refer to the 1960s movement, disregarding all previous countercultures in history.

(Braunstein and Doyle 8). From the 1980s onwards, the tale of the American Counterculture found in the public discourse tends to separate the cultural revolt from its broader context of the 1960s history. It is often abridged to a few key events that draw a linear narrative, disregarding the profusion of other narratives concurrently happening within the movement. The classic story of the Counterculture usually includes these milestone events: the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann going on a bicycle ride in 1943 after having fabricated, and inadvertently ingested, LSD in Sandoz laboratory; the Beats – represented as a kind of bohemian gang, “tearing it up during Ginsberg’s ‘epochal,’ overhyped recitation of *Howl* at San Francisco’s Six Gallery” (Braunstein and Doyle 9); Jim Morrison naming his California-based rock band (The Doors) after Aldous Huxley’s mention of William Blake’s epigram ‘If the doors of perception were cleansed’; Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters rediscovering America in their ‘magic bus’, while being on acid; Timothy Leary chanting ‘Turn on, tune in, drop out,’ cited in the rock musical *Hair* and sampled onto The Beatles’ ‘A Day in the Life’; the flowers, the music, the vision that was projected of the ‘Summer of Love’ in San Francisco in 1967 (Braunstein and Doyle 9). These decontextualised events will then lead to the ‘dark side’ of the Counterculture, *i.e.* “someone shooting up speed or having a bad trip, the Manson Family murders, and finally the Altamont concert-debacle” (Braunstein and Doyle 9). However, this depiction of the Counterculture does not accurately represent the reality of the rebellious movement, which was multifaceted, complex and full of paradoxes.

Indeed, one such paradox that is both central to the Counterculture movement and to Hesse’s novels after 1916, particularly *Siddhartha*, is that of the rejection of teachers and learning while simultaneously wishing knowledge (Manthripragada 84). In *Siddhartha*, the young protagonist presents this paradox to his companion Govinda: “In actuality, so I believe, there is no such *thing* we call by the name of ‘learning’. There is, o my friend, only one knowledge, this is everywhere, this is Atman, in me and in you and in every single

creature. And so I am starting to believe: this knowledge has no worse enemy than the desire to know, than learning” (Hesse, *Siddhartha* 17). The notion that knowledge, at least of a spiritual nature, cannot be taught is directly sourced from Zen Buddhism, it is, in fact, one of its core precepts (Buttny and Isbell 287). Siddhartha tells the story of a boy whose path reaches the limits of learning, be it scholarly, religious, romantic or mercenary knowledge. Hesse’s the intrinsic critique of everything that requires education and the glorification of self-reliance was mirrored in the Counterculture’s praised values. The Counterculture refused the teachings of a society they deemed corrupt and inhumane, and praised individual knowledge, yet they raised to the status of ‘guru’ (Oriental term for spiritual teacher) figures such as Hermann Hesse, Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary (Ziolkowski, “Saint Hesse” 21; Oliver 28–33).

What we now know as the American Counterculture began as multiple small sub-groups and sub-cultures in the United States in the decade after the war. Timothy Leary, a leading intellectual figure of the Counterculture, and a strong advocate of the mind-expanding uses of LSD, wrote: “In counterculture, social structures are spontaneous and transient. Participants in countercultures are constantly clustering into new molecules, fissioning and regrouping into configurations appropriate to the interest of the moment, like particles jostling in a high-energy accelerator, exchanging dynamic charge” (qtd. in Joy and Goffman x). These heterogenous and fluctuating characteristics of the Counterculture make it even more difficult to pinpoint the starting event of what would become a massive anti-establishment movement, and which would change the society permanently. The Counterculture can be understood through the lens of Alain Touraine’s New Social Movements theory. New social movements, which began arising in the mid-Sixties, shifted in focus from economic and political concerns of the previous social movements (such as the labour movement), to social ones. Instead of pushing for particular changes in public policy,

new social movements emphasise social changes in identity, lifestyle and culture (Pichardo 414). Touraine characterises these post-industrial societies as technocratic by nature of their power structure (3). He uses the case study of the French student revolt of the May 1968 to show that these new social movements “are formed in a period of rapid social change, and do not, as events, have only one specific meaning” (87). They are actions and revolts expressed by particular social groups aiming to bring a certain social change. They are also responses to a crisis within a society or an institution (such as the French universities) (Touraine 91).

Touraine’s concept of New Social Movements is centred on the notion that “by aiming at the control of historicity, the social movement, through its conflictual action, produces the whole of society, transforms it and structures it” (Wieviorka, “Alain Touraine”). The main quality of the new social movements of the Sixties is their shift in focus from materialistic qualities to issues relating to pacifism, human rights, environmentalism (Pichardo 414).

The Baby Boom and The Vietnam War

Several factors played into the widespread of the Counterculture throughout the United States. For one thing, developments in technology meant that more Americans were buying televisions and watching popular shows which featured ‘exotic Beatniks’ and other anti-establishment figures. This new type of common entertainment also brought on shows which disseminated political debate, such as ‘See it Now’. These programmes showed a multiplicity of different perspectives and encouraged the audiences to think critically about their societies (Oliver 8). Advances in print and radio technologies meant that subculture artists and activists had opportunities to reach wider publics. Teenagers could pick up rock ‘n roll in their bedrooms or at the beach, without having to participate in the communal (family) experience of listening to a radio-show in the living room. However, the most important change which led to the rise of the Counterculture is of a demographic nature. By the mid-

Sixties, over 50% of the population of the United States had been born after the Second World War (Timpe 77). The Baby Boomers reached their teens and twenties during the height of the Counterculture years (late 1960s), and by virtue of their character and the authority resulting from their numbers, their vehement rejection of the values, ideologies and 'apathies' of their parents' generation struck more powerfully than any earlier youth rebellion (Timpe 77; Gair 4). Roszak wrote of their parents' generation: "The adults of the WWII period trapped as they have been in the frozen posture of befuddled docility [...] have in effect divested themselves of their adulthood [...]. Which is to say: they have surrendered their responsibility for making morally demanding decisions, for generating ideals, for controlling public authority, for safeguarding the society against its despoilers" (22). The younger generation was drawn together by their common disillusionment with the materialistic values of their parents, by a general discontent with the educational system (and the ensuing lack of job after the completion of studies), by their common fights for civil rights, and most importantly, by their rebellion against the politicians who led the United States into yet another war (Marrer-Tising 57).

The vocal opposition to the Vietnam war was the common factor to all the sub-groups of the Counterculture. Between the years 1965 and 1971, peace protests against the Vietnam war and the governing classes took place regularly across the whole country. In April 1967 there were simultaneous demonstrations in San Francisco, California and New York involving some 250,000 antiwar activists. In October 1967 about 50,000 more militants protested on the Pentagon. As the Vietnam war went on, more and more people of various subcultures began to question the involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Up until 1967, certain groups such as the Civil Rights Movement have been cautious in criticising this conflict, for fear of losing President Johnson's support of their cause. However, as the war dragged on, more and more spoke out against it, including Martin Luther King, Jr., who gave

a speech against U.S. government policy in Vietnam in 1967. On 15 October 1969, a nationwide 'teach-in' on Vietnam involved millions of Americans. In April 1970 President Richard Nixon, who had been elected two years prior, expanded the Vietnam War into Cambodia. Millions of Americans staged protests against this expansion of the war ("Protests in the 1960s"). "Young people wanted autonomy and self-determination. They did not want to live in a world involved in major armed conflict" (Oliver 4). The Counterculture movement is often seen to correspond to the years of the Vietnam war which are approximately dated to 1961 to 1975.

The Phases of the American Counterculture

Any counterculture exists as a part of a continuum, it is one facet of the continuing evolution of society. The anti-establishment youth movement of the 1960s and 1970s did not appear from a void, it was shaped into being by its predecessors, the Beat generation (also known as the Beatniks), which too were a type of American counterculture of the 1950s. Championed by rebellious artists such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, the Beatniks' major characteristics were a commitment to spontaneity, which led them to an interest to Zen Buddhism, their drug use and abuse, and their rejection of heteronormative sexuality. However, the Beat generation did not do much in terms of institutional changes; rather "they lived their lives in an uninhibited style and acted as model for future social change in the 1960s" (Oliver 9). In the evolution from Beatniks to hippie movement in the Sixties, there arose a stronger interest in building socio-political movements and a political consciousness. Allen Ginsberg was an important figure to both these sub-cultures and his activism in human rights, liberalisation of laws against homosexuality, his adamant protests against the Vietnam war, and his strong interest in India, Hinduism and

psychedelics allowed him to transition from the role of Beatnik's leader to that of a Hippie advocate.⁴⁵

Braunstein and Doyle divide the American Counterculture into two major phases. The first was that of the 'Flower Children', the largely white, youth-dominated, utopian movement which started roughly around the time The Beatles launched their first tour in 1964 (11). This first phase reached its apogee during the 'Summer of Love' in 1967, when over 100,000 young hippies converged in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood. The Summer of Love epitomised the hippie music, drug culture (particularly LSD), anti-war protests, and free-love scene throughout the American west coast, but also reached as far away as the city of New York (Selvin 5). This first wave is the one to have brought Hesse back from the dead and lifted him to fame among the American readership. This naïve and hopeful stage of the Counterculture found wisdom and hope for a better life in the tales of *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*. This first wave gradually, but inevitably came back to earth following Nixon's election to presidency in 1968. The earlier Counterculture contained a multitude of paradoxes, as mentioned earlier, the most striking of which is the status of a youth-based movement whose central spokespeople, Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, were considerably older than the rest of them (Braunstein and Doyle 11).

⁴⁵ Ginsberg's poem 'Howl' which was published in 1956, was a personal account of the beat generation, of its principal participants and their beliefs. Ginsberg's poem criticises the avarice of the consumerist society, its political and cultural conservatism, and it also praises homosexual desire, and psychedelic drugs. Upon the release of the published poem by U.S. Customs (the first edition was printed in London), the publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Shigeyosi Muraowas were arrested by San Francisco's police on obscenity charges in 1957. The publishers were exonerated and the poem was deemed not obscene by the court. This decision led to the publication of the previously censored works in the United States, such as *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller and *Lady Chatterly's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence; two symbolic books of the Counterculture (Oliver 9–10; Sederberg).

The second phase of the American Counterculture started in 1969, with the descent of the utopian attitude and assumptions of material plenitude. The early 1970s witnessed an economic downturn, which combined to Nixon's 'law and order' anti-Counterculture platform served the 1960s utopians a harsh dose of reality. "The political system was real and hostile, and it would not be eclipsed or rendered irrelevant by a beneficent, liberating economy" (Braunstein and Doyle 12). Consequently, the Counterculture divided itself into multiple smaller movements of cultural liberation that were different in tone and constituency from those of the earlier phase. The expectations that American society would change radically fizzled out, as the lifestyle of 'practical liberation' of the earlier phase became the countercultural mode (Braunstein and Doyle 12). This slow decay of the Countercultural ideals was furthered by the death of many of its musical idols, which formed the '27 Club'. Brian Jones (Rolling Stones), Jim Morrison (The Doors), Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix – all major figures of the Counterculture – died at the age of 27, between 1969 and 1971. The Counterculture was a response to a crisis that befell not only on the American nations, but on the whole industrial west, an emanation of our common culture, upon which the state was built (Braunstein and Doyle 10). In terms of Touraine's theory of New Social Movement, the Counterculture can be understood as a response to a social crisis and proceeded, in the span of a decade, to reshape not only the American society, but the globalised West.

The Counterculture movement was a response to a society in distress, one in which the generational gap in values and ideologies was too wide to allow compromise from either side. In a society where the human mores of freedom, spirituality, and community were no longer cherished, the youth culture of the Sixties revolted in creating its own new sub-societies that focused particularly on these values. As Roszak puts it: "Ironically, it is the American young, with their underdeveloped radical background, who seem to have grasped most clearly the fact, while such immediate emergencies as the Vietnam war, racial injustice,

and hardcore poverty demand a deal of old-style politicking, the paramount struggle of our day is against a far more formidable, because far less obvious, opponent, to which I will give the name 'the technocracy'" (4). Roszak defined technocracy as a social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organisational integration; this social form created a circularity where the society depended on experts for each facet of life and experts depended on the society to validate them (Roszak 5).⁴⁶ This technocracy, he argued was what the Counterculture of the Sixties rebelled against. The Counterculture recognised that the technological breakthroughs brought forth since the Enlightenment have come about at the expense of the human's spiritual nature, and in an attempt to recover a lost element of their humanity, many of the young members of that generation turned away from reason and toward the irrational (Marrer-Tising 282). Marrer-Tising observes that: "One of the most blatant rejections of reason (and reality) has been the youth culture's preoccupation with mind-expanding drugs, such as LSD" (283).

Timothy Leary and Popularising LSD

As mentioned previously, Timothy Leary, the expelled Harvard don, was the individual most responsible for the popularity of psychedelic drugs among American youth. However, the history of D-Lysergic acid diethylamide goes back to Basel, Switzerland (ironically, one of the hometowns of Hesse) where the chemist Albert Hofmann fabricated and tested the product at Sandoz Pharmaceuticals in 1943 (Farber 20). After the end of the World War, mental health and mental health practitioners became fully legitimated in the United States through President Truman's Mental Health Act of 1946. Part of this

⁴⁶ A more elaborate discussion on technocracy can be found in the Literature Review.

'scientising' of people's internal mental processes included medicating the ever-growing populations of the mentally ill. As prescribed 'uppers' and 'downers' became more and more common in the 1950s, they expanded from the realm of pure medication into the leisurely drug consumption. By the Sixties, the Americans had seemingly accepted the intoxicated state as part of the 'American way of life' (Farber 20). When Hofmann created LSD, he was attempting to find a cure to migraine headaches, but rather, the hallucinogenic properties of the drug offered opportunities to be used for a wider range of psychological conditions. So, Sandoz Pharmaceuticals began shipping LSD to America's exploding population of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who were testing a multitude of such drugs with the aim of promoting a healthier citizenry (Farber 21). One of the people involved in the government research on psychotropic drugs was the writer Ken Kesey. He would boast about his experience tripping on LSD in these series of government-run experiments in his writing and, consequently, promote the effects of this drug among his fellow counterculturists. Along with Kesey, a horde of 'credentialed types' would praise the healing effects of this new drug on an array of psychological problems.

However, the leap from 'cure to mental illness' to 'agent of spiritual growth' for the American public is largely credited to Leary. He was initially introduced to LSD in the context of his research on the effects of mind-altering drugs at Harvard University. Once he took the drug himself, he quickly came to believe that it was not just another pharmaceutical product or a recreational intoxicant, but rather a "psychedelic sacrament that would lead individuals to a higher consciousness" (Farber 22). Since he was an 'expert' in 'the technocracy' (to use Roszak's terminology), he was in a social position to make his stance on LSD matter both to the elites and the mass audiences. Leary's increasingly dramatic ways of promoting the psychedelic drug, along with his turn to esoterica as a way to structure the LSD experience for spiritual growth would distance him from the behaviorist academic

research, and eventually, lead to his dismissal from Harvard University. In Leary's quest to best achieve the spiritual 'awakening', him and his associates would turn 'Eastward' for guidance, using a panoply of Hindu and Buddhist material to guide their 'trips'. One favourite, was the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which was believed offered a remarkable guide to the LSD experience (Farber 23). Leary himself would claim of his affinities to Oriental traditions: "Our religious philosophy, or our philosophy about the spiritual meaning of LSD, comes closer to Hinduism than to any other" (qtd. in Marrer-Tising 285). Leary would also praise Hesse's novels as perfect guidebooks to read prior to consuming LSD. Leary, along with many other counterculturists, saw *Steppenwolf's* jazz club and magic theatre as epitomising mind-expanding experience of an acid trip. This turn Eastward was not unique to Leary and his LSD promoters, but was noticeable in all the subgroup of the Counterculture. Aside of the overuse and glorification of drugs, the Counterculture's rejection of reality was also expressed through the dismissal of the traditional Christian beliefs in favour for oriental and exotic spiritual practices.

Religion and Orient in the American Counterculture

At the height of the Counterculture movement, in 1968, Roszak observed that: "An eclectic taste for mystic, occult and magical phenomena has been a marked characteristic of our postwar youth culture since the days of the Beatniks. Allen Ginsberg, who has played a major part in fostering the style, professes the quest for God in many of his earliest poems, well before he and his colleagues discovered Zen and the mystic traditions of the Orient" (125). Ginsberg, who as mentioned earlier, was the main connecting figure between the beatniks and the hippies, nourished a strong interest in India (Oliver 11). For him, India embodied the rejection of materialistic culture and a richness of the spiritual dimension to life that he found missing in the United States. Unlike many of his Beat contemporaries,

Ginsberg did not drop Buddhism after a few years, but instead committed deeply to Asian religion with each year passing (Jackson 60). He would write many poems recounting his spiritual experiences during his time in India, most of which were fuelled by psychedelic drugs taken in ashrams and in traditional Buddhist rituals. By the 1960s, Ginsberg followed the teachings of Swami Sivananda and began chanting exercises (Jackson 62). The Beat artist was more than just a poet for the rebellious young of the Counterculture, he was “the vagabond proselytizer whose poems are but a subsidiary way of publicizing the new consciousness he embodies and the techniques for its cultivation” (Roszak 128–29). Ginsberg’s turn to and involvement with India and its religions is emblematic of the 1960s Counterculture, and it was an act of rejection of the mainstream Judeo-Christian society, which was no longer offering a functional belief system to a generation in crisis. Before the Hippies and Flower Children, in the 1950s, many Beatniks travelled to India in a spiritual quest. Oliver argues they “primarily took ideas from the culture of the sub-continent, rather than there being a flow of ideas from the West towards the East” (13) However, unlike the previous occidental spiritual pilgrims (such as the members of the first wave of Hesse’s reception), whose exposure of India to western culture had principally been mediated via the colonial experience, the Beatniks provided an alternative to this colonial set of values.

As mentioned previously in the Literature Review, Zen Buddhism was the most widespread Oriental tradition in America during the Counterculture period. However, other eastern spiritual philosophies such as Advaita Vedānta, Tantra, Hinduism and Sufism also witnessed a rise of popularity among the 1960s Americans. Exotic religions were more appealing to the rebellious ‘Outsider’ mentality of the counterculturists (Wilson 1967), because they were not accepted by the mainstream of the society (particularly, the parents’ generation) (Marrer-Tising 281). Common to all the exotic religious groups and philosophies that flourished in the United States in the post-war era, is their search for an ‘absolute truth’

and a meaning in life. The inability of being institutionalised – a quality found in many eastern traditions – appealed greatly to the youngsters of the Counterculture. This applies the most to Zen Buddhism, which, according to Alan Watts, transcends the relativities of cultural conditioning (xiv). Watts wrote that: “many of [Zen’s] ancient exponents were ‘universal individualists’ who were never members of any Zen organization, and never sought the acknowledgement of any formal authority” (xiv). As for those eastern religions that do pertain to institutions, since they are not from the United States, they were still acceptable to the young who rejected American society (Marrer-Tising 424). It has been often argued that the interest and enthusiasm for mythical religious disciplines of the American Counterculture went against the attitudes of reason which have prevailed in the West. Charles Reich, in *The Greening of America* supports this stance by insisting that accepted patterns of thoughts must be broken. The rational must be opposed by the non-rational, which Reich sums to ‘drug-thought, mysticism, impulses’ (Reich 197). Yet, this ‘rediscovery of the spirit’ was criticised by many as being a nothing more than an escape from reality: “Whether the spirit be revealed through psychedelic drugs, or via religious discipline, it is, to a certain degree, liable to deteriorate into the mere desire to escape from a society deemed to be unbearable” (Marrer-Tising 291).

Although spiritual ideas of the East were widespread among the members of the Counterculture, the knowledge of the actual practices and philosophies of these religious traditions were, for most members of the movement, very superficial. During the 1960s, tens of thousands of hippies and members of other Countercultural groups flocked the actual geographical locale that is the Orient. They followed what was known as the ‘Hippie Trail’ (initiated by such figures as Ginsberg and The Beatles), in search of spiritual awakening and mind expansion. More often than not, those western travelers who have come to India filled with romantic illusions about the country and its people, reacted with dismay when faced by

its swarming streets, alien customs and Third World economic expectation (Jackson 61). Unlike the 'Christianised orientalism' of Hesse's generation, which conveyed an ethos of 'ethereal asexuality' (Roszak 135), the orientalism of the Counterculture had a highly sexed approach. The stress on the sensual and human experience was central to the Counterculture's appropriation of the eastern religions. Roszak writes of this appropriation: "it was the wealth of hyperbolic eroticism the religion brought with it rather indiscriminately from the *Kamasutra* and the tantric tradition. Again, this looks very much like postwar permissiveness reaching out for a religious sanction, finding it, and making most of it" (136). In turning to Zen Buddhism and other eastern traditions, these young Americans sought a this-worldly mysticism, an extasy of the body that somehow transforms mortality (Roszak 129). From the time of the Beatniks and up until the end of the Vietnam war, many young people in the United States turned to Oriental religions and traditions in an effort to find a solution to their disillusionment with their own dehumanised culture. Drugs, as well as these exotic beliefs were, for them, steps on the path of self-realisation, these were acts of rebellion, but also of self-searching. Hesse's novels, in particular *Siddhartha* supplied many of the sought-after symbols which this Counterculture was seeking. Although the novel itself was no treatise on Buddhism, as many believed, it presented all the necessary criteria to serve as a signpost to realisation for this self-searching Counterculture.

Hesse's Appeal to the Counterculture

The 1960s witnessed a Hesse craze, particularly in the United States. When Hesse was awarded the Nobel Prize (1946), he was mostly unknown to the audience of the United States. The first English translations of his works were of poor quality and had little impact on the readers. Henry Miller, who was fond of the German author, tried to get American publishers interested in Hesse's writing, but to little avail (Zeller 160). However, by the mid-

and late Sixties the situation was drastically different. In 1969, monthly American sales of the paperback edition of *Steppenwolf* were around 360,000. By 1973, 8 million copies of Hesse's works were sold in the United States (Zeller 160). As Joseph Mileck observes, by the mid-Sixties, everyone seemed to be reading and discussing Hesse (348). The publishers were unprepared for such a wave of popularity and had no backlog of unpublished translations. By 1961, there were only nine novels available in English, and the remaining of Hesse's novels and his short stories, essays and poems did not appear in English until the 1970s (Mileck 348). Between 1970 and 1976, fourteen volumes of Hesse's material were published in the United States, but by 1976, after the end of the Vietnam War, Hesse's popularity waned once again (Mileck 348).

Hesse's books were like passports to the Counterculture and lent their names to many cultural products of the time. Timothy Leary established a Castalia Foundation in the Hudson River Valley, inspired by *The Glass Bead Game*'s utopian society. There, he conducted his guided LSD sessions. A bar named *Steppenwolf* opened on the edge of the Berkley campus. A famous rock band of the 1960s also called itself 'Steppenwolf', making the name known across the United States as it went on tour. A publishing house named Abraxas was established in California (Ziolkowski, "Saint Hesse" 19; Zeller 161). Timothy Leary canonised Hesse as a 'master-guide' of psychedelia and advised: "Before your LSD session, read *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*" (qtd. in Gray).⁴⁷ Hesse's dropping out of society during the two World Wars and the general 'drop out' philosophy reflected by the protagonists of his novels – who almost without exception turned away from society and escaped within themselves (Sinclair in *Demian*, Siddhartha, Dasa in *The Indian Life*, Harry Haller in

⁴⁷ Although there is no proof of Hesse ever trying any psychedelics, his vices were restricted to wine and tobacco.

Steppenwolf) – served as an inspiration to the members of the Counterculture. The movement's motto "turn on, tune in, drop out" seemed to be supported by the values found in Hesse's works (Gray). The response of the American Counterculture to Hesse's novels came from a generation that was rising against the carnage and senselessness of the Vietnam war, of the consumerist society that fuelled Third-World famines, from the loss of a sense of community and soul in the modern world, and from the constant rationalisation and mechanisation of the world (Zeller 161). The young people that made up the Counterculture saw themselves as outcasts. They took flight from their society in many forms of protest that eventually assumed eccentric and extreme forms (Braunstein and Doyle 9). These people saw in Hesse's works the affliction of their own souls, their problems, hopes and yearning, their own existential crisis. The readers of the Counterculture reception, like their predecessors, felt compelled to respond directly to Hesse, however since he passed away in 1962, many turned instead to Hesse experts such as Theodore Ziolkowski. One such letter that is referenced in his article "Saint Hesse among the Hippies" is written by a high school student from Westchester County, New York. This student confessed that "he identified so closely with Sinclair in *Demian* that he was 'living out' the book: he bought recordings of the organ works of Buxtehude and used the music like Sinclair, to catalyze reveries before the fireplace, in which he pondered the meaning of his life" ("Saint Hesse" 21). Another student from the Counterculture era, this time from Los Angeles, wrote to Ziolkowski, calling Hesse's novels "the record that grooved the needle of [his/her] inner being" ("Saint Hesse" 21).

The members of the Counterculture saw in Hesse a personality no longer fettered by the entrenched values and ideals of an established society. He was one who turned his back on the bourgeoisie, and who had been bold enough to live the life of his own self (Zeller

160).⁴⁸ This is recognisable in his own actions: he withdrew to Ticino, into his isolated house and his peaceful garden and refused any affiliation with either camps of society (during WWII); but it is even more true of his novels. Almost all his stories deal with a male protagonist struggling between the earthly and spiritual life, who rejects his society and sets out to find the truth for himself only to find it already within him (Kirsch). This is true, among others, of *Steppenwolf* (1927) – the novel that resonated the most with the Sixties Counterculture (Gray). *Steppenwolf* has been understood (and with reason) to be a slightly disguised autobiography. The protagonist, Harry Haller (who shares his initials with the author) is a disillusioned middle-aged intellectual, who begins the novel by outlining the course of his unsuccessful career. He had often experienced moments of extreme despair, from the falling apart of his family – his wife had become ‘mentally-deranged’ and drove him out of his home – to the collapsing of his ascetic-spiritual life based on strict self-discipline (Hesse, *Steppenwolf* 17–18). The theme of individual crisis and existential loss of the hero at the initial stages of the novel is paradigmatic of the sense of search for liberation and truth that make up the plot of most Hesse’s novels. The readers of *Steppenwolf*, witnessing the inner life of Harry Haller, understood this tale as a window into Hesse’s own inner life, which led them to identify even stronger with the German author. Ziolkowski argues that *Steppenwolf* “is more overtly autobiographical than any of Hesse’s other fiction. Almost every detail in the characterization of Harry Haller – from his sciatica and eye glasses and general physical appearance to his reading habits and political views – is drawn from Hesse’s own life and person” (*The Novels* 179).

⁴⁸ „[sie] sahen in ihm eine Persönlichkeit, die unabhängig von den festgemauerten Wertvorstellungen einer etablierten Gesellschaft der Bürgerlichkeit den Rücken gekehrt, die es gewagt hatte, sich selbst zu leben“ (Zeller 160)

As Harry Haller aimlessly wanders through the city, he stumbles into a man carrying a signboard advertising a magic theatre ‘for madmen only’. This man gives him a booklet titled “Treatise on the Steppenwolf” before disappearing into a doorway. This ‘Treatise’ is cited in full in the novel and breaks with the first-person narrative of Harry’s records. It addresses the protagonist directly and describes him in an uncanny fashion. It presents Harry Haller as consisting of two natures: one human and one ‘wolfish’ (*Steppenwolf* 24). The human half is that of the bourgeois values Harry despises, such as order and responsibility, but it is also that of spirituality. The other nature, that of the ‘wolf of the steppes’, is darker and animalistic. The motive of the dual nature of man already present in Sinclair’s worldview (*Demian*) is thus reiterated in *Steppenwolf*. This thirty-page treatise is meant to be an ‘objective’ psychoanalysis of the protagonist, who is at odds with himself and with the society (Field 92). Approaching old age, he can only foresee a future of decline and death, and he contemplates committing suicide during his fiftieth year. He is saved from this fate as he meets Hermine at a dancehall, where he was in search for the ‘Magic Theatre’.⁴⁹ She introduces Haller to the more sensual side of life that he had shunned up until then. “This one-sided intellectual thus discovers another dimension in life” (Field 92). Haller is now initiated to the world of dancing, jazz, and sex. This seeming approval of eroticism, underground clubs and narcotics resonated with the ‘anti-establishment drug cultist’ faction of the Sixties Counterculture (Mileck 351).

The finale of the novel, which takes place in this mysterious Magic Theatre, communicated particularly strongly to the Counterculture. After attending a lavish and

⁴⁹ Hermine is the feminised version of the author’s name, which not only refers to the feminine side of the author’s mind (in the Jungian sense), but is also a symbol of the redemptive power of Hesse’s literature. The symbolic function of literature as the turn towards the self, inwards, rather than outwards to a world of politics, wars and consumerism.

psychedelic masquerade ball, Pablo (a suave saxophonist) invites Haller to his Magic Theatre. In this place, the worries and notions that troubled Haller's soul were to disintegrate as he confronts the fantasies and 'galleries' of his mind. This theatre is shaped as a horseshoe with a mirror and many doors. Haller enters six of these doors, each labelled by an aspect of psyche: 'jolly hunting: great hunt in automobiles', 'guidance in the building of the personality', 'marvellous taming of the Steppenwolf', 'all girls are yours', 'how one kills for love' and 'Harry's execution'. In the first 'room' Haller finds a card in a wallet that reads "*tat tvam asi*". This is left as such without further explanation, however, as we have seen earlier in this research, this is a Grand Pronouncement of Vedānta philosophy meaning 'thou art that'. Although *Steppenwolf* does not present any explicitly Oriental imagery in the way *Siddhartha* or *The Indian Life* do, there are nonetheless many mentions of eastern tropes. Another such example left unexplained, is an inscription on one door of the Magic Theatre which remained unvisited by Haller: "Kamasutram instruction in the Indian arts of love course for beginners: forty-two different methods and practices" (*Steppenwolf* 89). These allusions to Indian traditions were recognisable to the Counterculture readership who, like Hesse in his mid-life crisis, turned to the eastern traditions for solace.⁵⁰

Through the game of the Magic Theatre, Harry Haller succeeds to overcome the two opposite natures of his self, but most importantly, he learns to laugh. He understands that it is a *modus vivendi* to make life bearable, and every person should strive towards the realisation of the *Geist* (Field 108). The ultimate rejection of duality through the game of the Magic Theatre, is reminiscent of many resolutions of Hesse's novels. The western worldview has

⁵⁰ The Counterculture was exposed to Oriental practices and religious through such figures as Allen Ginsberg and Alan Watts, but also through the eminence of a multitude of 'Orient-infused' communities and religious groups such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishnas) or Stephen Gaskin's The Farm.

been constructed around belief of materialistic dualism “noticeably represented in the contrast between God and the world, [...] mankind and nature, matter and spirit, and mind and body” (Campbell 745). This is contrasted in Hesse’s novels with the essential monism borrowed from the eastern worldview. This spoke strongly to the Counterculture readers, who rejected the two millennia-old western tendency of thinking in dualism (Campbell 745). However, for the anti-establishment, drug endorsing and cult-loving members of the Counterculture, the focus was rather on “Harry Haller’s netherworld of jazz, sex, and drugs [that was understood to be] but a variation of their own subculture, his Magic Theater a drug fantasy, an LSD trip beautifully recalled, and all this lent appreciated approbation to their own far-out life style” (Mileck 351). The escapist trait of the Counterculture generation was a way of coping with the cultural crisis of the era, along with the individual crisis of its youthful members, who were striving for self-realisation in an era of transition. As Ziolkowski wrote in 1965: “*Steppenwolf* depicts a general phenomenon of our times: the tragedy of intellect in despair” (*The Novels* 179).

Another major reason that Hesse was so widely celebrated by the Counterculture, is that his works appeared to open insights from non-western traditions. His novels *Siddhartha* and *Journey to the East* showed an interest in the mystical practices of Buddhism and Hinduism (Gray). Hermann Hesse’s fascination with Oriental thought and his rejection of traditional Christianity can be understood through the author’s valorisation of personal development and self-realisation. “It is out of the conviction that man [sic] cannot reach his true fulfillment while being one of the herd that caused him [Hesse] to reject the preachy, moralistic Christian church [...]” (Marrer-Tising). Just as the Counterculture discovered, Hesse had already found a freedom in the Oriental religions before them, which he could not find in the faith of his parents. Although one might mistake *Siddhartha* for a praise of Buddhism, since it does borrow its terminology and references certain basic tenets of

Buddhist and Vedantin philosophy, it has been often argued that *Siddhartha*, in fact deals with Christianity and European values.⁵¹ Boulby observes that the use of parallelisms, leitmotifs and the frequent triple repetitions of phrases and individual words is reminiscent of the liturgical style of the Bible or the Psalms (132). The language of the novel is characteristically Hessian, and is influenced, like much of Hesse's style and themes by German Romanticism rather than Indian mythology. This is recognisable in such sentences as "Sweetly sounded the legend of Buddha, magic wafted fragrantly from these tales" (*Siddhartha* 19); not only is the language influenced by German Romanticism, but so too is the cadence (Boulby 133). Understanding the novel's social, historical and religious context, along with the context of its many receptions adds to what Robert Jauss (1967) termed the 'aesthetic value' of the work.⁵² The fact that most of the Counterculture reception perceived *Siddhartha* solely as a praise of Oriental tradition and spirituality affected this novel's aesthetic value in limiting the reader's horizons to exclude its essentially Christian (if not Pietist) background.

Yet, most North American readers in the 1960s had been reared on images of Hesse as 'a pilgrim of crisis', a 'rebel-seeker', and the 'western man most in touch with the wisdom of the East' (Stephenson 6). Like many of Hesse's protagonists, Siddhartha is a sensitive gifted young man, who rejects his family, his religion and its expectations, and sets out to discover the truth for himself (Kirsch). This leitmotiv can be found in many of Hesse's novels and is the recipe of his bewildering success in the 1960s, since it touches the chore

⁵¹ Stephenson, for example, writes: "[...] even Siddhartha, the work that served to wed Hesse to Eastern religions, represented for Hesse a 'turning back to Christianity,' and is closely connected to his Pietist-Protestant Swabian heritage" (Stephenson 6).

⁵² Reception Theory, which was briefly summarised in the Introduction, is concerned with how a reader actualises the text. For Jauss, the aesthetic value of a text is a tool to measure how the text structures expectations and then proceed to disrupt or destroy them (Stephenson 245).

values and reflects the frustrations of Counterculture's members. Kirsch observes that *Siddhartha* gives the impression to be a kind of wisdom writing or a teaching, "yet the central message of the book is the impossibility of learning anything that matters from a guru or a teacher" (Kirsch). The mistrust of language and impossibility of acquiring ultimate knowledge through learning are stressed by Siddhartha in his final encounter with his childhood companion Govinda: "Words do the secret sense no good, it always goes somewhat off when one utters it aloud [...]. But I cannot love words. That is why teachings are not for me, they have no hardness, no softness, no colors, no edges, no smell, no taste, they have nothing but words. Maybe this is what prevents you from finding peace, maybe it is the many words" (Hesse, *Siddhartha* 113–14). The fact that his ideology was celebrated by the Counterculture enforced the paradox of the Counterculture, who aimed to be leaderless, yet abounded in all kinds of mystical, occult, sometimes violent 'gurus' and 'teachers'.

Timothy Leary, in one of his last pieces of writing included as a foreword in Goffman and Joy's *Counterculture Through the Ages*, reified the importance of the 'leaderlessness' of the Counterculture: "Counterculture lacks formal structure and formal leadership. In one sense it is leaderless; in another sense, it is leader-full, all of its participants constantly innovating, pushing into new territory where other may eventually follow" (qtd. in Joy and Goffman x).

Yet, many members of the Counterculture saw in Hesse a guru of sorts, guiding his readership through their experience of social and individual crisis, toward self-realisation by the means of the 'path within'. Hesse and his novels were guides rather than leaders for this movement, which reconciled the Counterculture's subliminal desire for leadership and their strong wish for independence and personal autonomy. For example, Bernhard Zeller explains that it is Hesse's romantic mysticism that made him the 'holy man of the hippies', the idol of a whole youth movement, a guru of an entire 'generation of teenagers' (Zeller 161). Here lies the main paradox of the Counterculture: an American leaderless movement, rejecting its

society and seeking self-realisation through Oriental spirituality and mind-expanding drugs, led by a defunct individualistic German author.

One would ask: why Hermann Hesse, a highly self-absorbed German author of their grandparents' generation, was the one to be elevated to the status of guru by the Counterculture? I would argue that Hesse – or more specifically his novels – functioned not as an endpoint to the existential crisis of the Counterculture generation, but rather as a conduit to the Orient (and to everything that the “Orient” represented, including ‘dropping out’ and mind-expanding drugs). Faced with the problems of American imperialism and the Cold War, the youth movement of the Sixties turned to extreme solutions. In the modern and secular post-WWII West, the self-redemption could no longer be found in the otherworldly realms, *i.e.* in the afterlife, but had to be in this world. The post-war era in the West was characterised by a sense of lack of coherent credible and morally satisfying meaning system of theodicy. The Christian traditions failed to meet the requirements of the modernised world, “but so too did the secular, Enlightenment-based, progressive tradition [...]. Hence, it could be said that the post-war period was marked not merely by the end of ideology, but also by the death of God” (Campbell 742). In this desperate context, Hesse plays the role of the radical guide to a radical resolution. In the earlier times, the solutions to such social and personal crises were tragic, as in Goethe’s *The Sorrows of the Young Werther* [*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*] (1774). The path away from Werther’s sense of crisis was found in suicide and in the belief in a better afterlife. In the modern era, the solution is radical, it is the search for the furthest point away from one’s own society, which for the American Counterculture happened to be the Orient (and more often than not, India). The Orient and its spirituality represented for this youth in crisis, the furthest point away from the West, yet still within this world: it is ‘the endpoint’ of the secularised post-war society. This new approach was symptomatic of the death of religion and ideology of the pre-modern eras.

Beyond colonising the East (Figueira 1994), there seems to be a desire in Hesse and his various readership groups to find wisdom and resolution in the narrative Orient; to find a solution to social crises. By rejecting many of the cultural myths and the accepted reality of the western world, the members of the Counterculture became aware of its many paradoxes. In turn, this specific youth movement underwent a more drastic period of identity crisis than was the case for previous youth movements. In their efforts to find a solution, the counterculturists turned away from their western society and towards sources outside their culture. They rejected their parents' social, moral and religious codes, preferring the amorality of Zen and other forms of Oriental spirituality. "Like Hesse, many of them decided to travel the "Outsider's" [Wilson 1956] path leading inward and did so by way of psychedelic drugs, meditation and the study of exotic traditions" (Marrer-Tising 295). In his own way, Hesse was a role model for the Counterculture. He did not count on the afterlife to solve his existential crisis, but rather escaped as far as possible away from society, which is towards the narrative East and within the self.⁵³ His was a this-worldly pathway to salvation, that may allow a resolution to the crisis of the 1960s and 1970s. For the youth of the Counterculture, reading Hermann Hesse was not the final solution, but merely a doorway to the Hippie Trail, LSD and other 'mind-expanding' solutions.

⁵³ Whether Hesse himself achieved the ultimate redemption by escaping to the (narrative) East is questionable, but he became the messiah of the American Sixties Counterculture and pointed the way towards resolution and solace in the 'faux-eastern' philosophy of inner-realisation.

Conclusion

Hermann Hesse's novels have proven particularly popular during periods of social and cultural crisis. At the outset of this discussion, I asked why Hesse's works appeal to large readerships in times of crisis, and, related to this question, what is the role of the Orient in Hesse's works. Crisis was endemic to Hesse's life, to his works and to his readership; and in this particular connection of the personal and the public lies the key to understanding his ongoing attraction and popularity despite the decades that separate him from his many receptions. Hesse was able to represent personal conflict and private distress in ways that have superseded their immediate context and spoken to readers in different times and different places. Orientalism, Pietism and German Romanticism inspired Hesse's search for resolution of his struggles with himself and the world. Yet, it is the Orient-inspired themes and references that have reverberated with the largest readerships throughout the last century. As we have seen in this study, the Orient has served him and his readers in a multitude of ways: as a projected space of resolution within the self (Hesse), as an imaginary escape locale away from the destruction of the West (first reception), as a philosophy that compensated for the shortcomings of Protestantism (second reception), and as a geographical and narrative gateway to the furthest point away from the western civilisation in a secular modern world (third reception).

Hesse's own use of the Oriental tropes and Vedānta philosophy, along with his readers' interpretation of them contribute to the history of ideas that impacted the western conception of the Orient. Indeed, Ziauddin Sardar, expanding on (and at times disagreeing with) Edward Said, understands the European – and eventually American – Orientalism as a form of inward reflection, focusing rather on concerns, desires and fears of the West that are projected onto an imaginary East (Sardar 13), than as an actual interaction and study of the

Oriental culture and tradition. The first major surge of popularity of Hesse's novels occurred after the end of the First World War with the publication of *Demian* in 1919. The conflict, which brought about destruction on an unprecedented scale, created a general sense of panic and doom. Many believed the end of the western civilisation had come, and a multitude of articles and books on the impending collapse were published in the interwar period (Graf and Föllmer 37).⁵⁴ This phenomenon was most striking in the Weimar Republic where, among many others, two bestsellers dealing with the waning of the civilisation were published. Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of The West* presented the history of civilisations as a cyclical one of rise, flourishing, decay and hibernation situating the current phase (the work was published in 1918) as 'winter'. Hermann Graf von Keyserling, on the other hand, saw in fragmentation of western society a sign of impending crisis and praised the turn towards eastern philosophies through his esoteric 'School of Wisdom' and his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (1919). In his travel tales, Keyserling speculates that the West is on its way to disintegration and advocates for the eastern way, as "the East, after all had some prospect of revitalization" (qtd. in Marchand, "The Decline" 472). Where the Orient used to be seen as weak and corrupt prior to 1914, in the Weimar Germany the belief was that it is the West that is degenerate and idolatrous. Hermann Hesse fits this mould very comfortably and, in his way, participated to shaping the German Orientalism of his time. This escapist tendency of leaving the grim reality of the Occident behind and finding rescue in the narrative Orient was a shared characteristic amongst his contemporaries.

In this atmosphere of fear and crisis, Hesse published his novel *Demian*, in which the turn towards the inner world through the "path within" (*Weg nach Innen*) made its first

⁵⁴ "Between 1918 and 1933, 370 book titles appeared with the word 'crisis' referring to German politics, society or economy" (Graf and Föllmer 37)

appearance. The immediate success of his novel is an example of the positive aspect of ‘openness’ of crisis (Graf and Föllmer 2012), that is often neglected in the use of this term. The crisis of the Weimar Republic offered an opportunity to the young Hesse readers of the time to source new values and meaning systems in the narrative Orient found in Hesse’s novels. Although not explicitly Oriental, *Demian* refers to Vedantic philosophies through its character of Pistorius (who tells Sinclair about the universal Om and the Vedas), and the tale generally shows many of Vedānta’s values in its core: a turn towards the self, the realisation of the non-duality of the universe, and the rejection of society and its issues. The readers, who like Hesse, Spengler and Keyserling were looking to project their distress and feelings of helplessness caused by the destruction and economic tumult following the loss of the war, were in search of an object onto which to project their worries and desires. The Orient which Hesse subtly introduced in *Demian* in 1919 and more explicitly developed with *Siddhartha* in 1922 was greeted cheerfully by the post-WWI German audience as the ideal imaginative construction of the East in the West. This had nothing to do with the political and social encounter between the two civilisations, as Said’s Orientalism would suggest, but rather on the West’s desire of escaping its own self-destruction. Expanding on the notion of Sardar’s Orientalism, the Orient of this reception, and, in fact, of all those that followed, is a shifting, ambiguous and fluid compendium of the eras’ crises and wishes for resolution; it is what Hesse and his readers desired it to be at that exact moment.

This, then means that Hesse’s narrative Orient served a different purpose for the second wave of reception, which took place during and shortly after the Second World War. With the rise to power of the fascist NSDAP, many Germans felt a new crisis coming. Once Hitler’s government started showing its true nature, Hesse, who chose not to publicly take a side was criticised harshly by all camps. However, this did not affect Hesse’s popularity in Germany where his sales remained high until his censorship by the Propaganda Ministry in

1943. Many young people reached out to Hesse for help in navigating a world of injustice and war. Yet too, many older readers who were impacted by Hesse's novels after the First World War returned to his wisdom after the Second. Multiple letters addressed to the German writers were pleas for guidance regarding religious matters. The notion that the Christian God would permit such horrors as the Holocaust, the murder of countless innocent people and the complete destruction of major parts of Europe did not seem credible to the audience of the second reception. The time-period of this second reception coincided with the composition Hesse's final novel *The Glass Bead Game* (1943) of which the appendices (*The Rainmaker*, *The Father Confessor* and *The Indian Life*) express the same crisis of ideology as witnessed among his readers. Through the *Indian Life* of Joseph Knecht, Hesse paid his final homage to Indian tradition and philosophy that has impacted so much of his work and self-development. For Hesse, as well as for the members of the second surge of popularity, Oriental spirituality was used to compensate for the gaps of the German Protestant beliefs, since those came short in offering a reasoning for, and solution to the crisis experienced between 1933 and 1955. To reference Jauss' theory of reception aesthetics (1967), the extreme responses to Hesse's novels are 'history making energy' (8). The audience's experience of the novels lays the base for future receptions, such as that of the 1960s and 1970s American Counterculture, who saw in Hesse a spiritual guide enabling them to escape the West's corruption.

The American Counterculture, as we saw in Chapter 3, was new social movement (Touraine 1971) that rose against the consumerist, conservative, meaningless (*i.e.* lacking a system of ethical and moral 'meaning'), technocratic characteristics of the post-war American society. It was composed of a multitude of subcultures that were united in their vehement opposition to the Vietnam War (1961-1975) and to the values of their parents' generation. One aspect in which this rebellion manifested itself was in the turn towards a new, non-traditional religiosity. But instead of Judeo-Christian religions, this youth

movement favoured more exotic traditions and practices. Championed by the Beatnik-turned-hippie Allen Ginsberg and the LSD ‘preacher’ Timothy Leary, the Counterculture discovered affinities with Hesse’s novels, particularly *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*. The central paradox of the Counterculture lies its general rejection of teachings in favour of self-knowledge (which they recognised in *Siddhartha*) on the one hand, while raising the German author and his novels to the level of teachers of the movement and spiritual guides on the other. Hesse’s recurrent valorisation of reclusion from society and self-development resonated with the Counterculture ‘drop out’ mentality. Furthermore, many his novels were seen as guidebooks to mind-expanding LSD trips and were encouraged as preparatory readings by Timothy Leary. Unlike the previous two receptions, the American counterculturists flocked to the geographical Orient, following the Hippie Trail in a psychedelic pilgrimage to self-realisation. For the members of this third Hessian resurgence, reading the novels of this individualistic German writer was not the final solution to the crisis of their generation, which was faced with absolute annihilation (nuclear power, Cold War, Vietnam War); rather it was a signpost leading to pseudo-oriental teachings and cults, or to psychedelic exploration of their minds – which avoided, rather than confronted the problems of the world they belonged to. The Orient served the crisis of the Sixties and Seventies Counterculture in providing the furthest possible escape point from the perceived corruption of the western societies, while still belonging to the worldly realm – that is not submitting this world to a better world after death, as in traditional Christianity. Indeed, for the post-war generation, crisis is not resolved in tragic otherworldliness, but rather in radical ‘this-worldliness’.

So to return to Sardar’s notions of Orientalism: Hesse’s receptions prove his argument that for the West, Orient is a concept completely separable from any geographical territory, and instead stands for ‘Elsewhere’ (Sardar 24), an escape from the fears and worries of the western civilisation. All waves of Hesse’s popularity happened at times in history, when

people – either whole societies, or specific sub-groups or generations within a society – experienced a collapse of past standards of value. Hesse's narrative Orient was a representation of the extreme opposite of the grim European and American realities, not only for Hesse, but also for millions of his readers across the three surges of reception. These periods of major social and political reformation led the individuals of these three generations to experience more drastic inner conflicts. Hesse's novels, particularly *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf* and *The Glass Bead Game* offered solace to their readers by evoking a narrative Orient for a primarily western readership in times of social and individual crisis.

Furthermore, I have come to believe that the Orient for Hesse and his readership has less to do with relations of power, than with escapist tendencies of societies in crisis. The societies in which Hesse was most popular were often dealing with a degree of destruction or reconstruction. The people who responded to Hesse and to the Orient within it were either using the Orient as either an imaginary space onto which they could project their introspection, as a means to fill the gaps of the failing structures of the West (religions, culture, values), or as a conduit to self-searching.

This research aimed to show how Hesse's Orientalism was instrumentalised to navigating social and individual crises by the three receptions of the twentieth century. It also intends to lay the foundation and offer an opportunity for further study and analysis of the contemporary surge of popularity of Hesse's works. The Orient in Hesse's novels seems to have answered certain questions for his readers, providing ways forward during periods of personal and cultural tumult. What is more, we are starting to see that this is happening again. In the last fifteen years or so, a multitude of academic articles, dissertations and books have been published with Hesse as their subject. Much of this new literature was consulted in the sections dealing with Hesse's personal crisis, religious crisis and psychoanalytical therapy. My point here, in conclusion, is that we are seeing a new reception of Hesse's works,

heralded in academic works as well as in a renewed readership.⁵⁵ A search of academic works including ‘Hermann Hesse’ in their titles published since 2015 on the ProQuest Research database, resulted in 698 entries. The interest in Hesse and the themes in works and life seems to be reignited once more in the academic world. Publications and references to Hesse outside the scholarly discussion have also experienced a surge, at least since 2012.

In 2012 *Der Spiegel* published a lengthy article titled “*Ich mach mein Ding*” for the fiftieth anniversary of Hesse’s death (Matussek). That same year, the German news network Deutsche Welle published an article on their website, of a more positive nature titled “Hermann Hesse – Misunderstood but Loved” (Bowen). More recently, John Gray has authored an article on Hesse’s life and success among the Counterculture on New Statesman

⁵⁵ Barry Stephenson’s dissertation *Veneration and Revolt: Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism* completed in 2005 has offered great insight into the impact of Pietism in Hesse’s novels and introduced an aspect often overlooked in the analyses of the Hesse compendium. Mathew Spano’s dissertation of 2002 dealt with German Romanticism’s and Indian Spirituality’s role in resolving Hesse’s mid-life crisis. Thomas Maples completed a dissertation in 2011 titled *Siddhartha, a Hermeneutic Analysis of The Individuation Process* studying closely Hesse’s crisis through Jungian theory and understanding the psychoanalytical role of the Orient for Hesse. Ashwin Manthripragada 2014 dissertation titled *Constituting a Self through an Indian Other* deals with the paradox of language and teachings in *Siddhartha* and has been very useful to understanding the Counterculture’s reflection of the self in Hesse’s Orient. Gunnar Decker’s voluminous biography *Hesse: The Wanderer and His Shadow*, first published in German in 2015 and translated into English in 2018 offered important insights to understanding Hesse’s periods of crisis, and Cornils Ingo’s anthology *A Companion to Hermann Hesse’s Works* (2009), presented a selection of new analyses and interpretations of Hesse’s works by such Hesse scholars as Ralph Freedman, Osman Durrani and others.

Aside of the recent works dealing with Hesse cited in this research, there is also a multitude of other published articles, conference papers and dissertations that have not been included in the secondary material for this thesis such as: Rose Tekel’s *The pilgrim without a map: The religious vision of Hermann Hesse* (2006), Lori Ann Sunberg’s *August Strindberg and Hermann Hesse pan-Nordic ties to the East and the search for a common mythology* (2008), Christoph von Blümroder’s “*S’orienter selon Hermann Hesse*” (2009), Santhosh Priyaa’s “Life History of Buddha as Reflected in Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*” (2010), Édith Weber’s “*Rudolf Steiner, Carl Gustav Jung, Hermann Hesse: passeurs entre Orient et Occident*” (2011), John Collin’s ““Where Are We Really Going? Always Home’: Thomas Merton and Hermann Hesse” (2012), Cornil Ingo’s “Between Myth and Utopia: Hermann Hesse's Search for the Culmination Point of Existence” (2013), Anne Staquet’s “*L’Orient dans l’utopie de Hermann Hesse*” (2014), Gunnar Decker’s “*Hermann Hesse und Indien: Von äußeren und inneren Ost-West-Passagen*” (“-” 2015), William Irwin’s “All Characters Are One in *Siddhartha*” (Irwin 2016), Victoria Lee’s *Journey to the Unconscious: an Examination of Paths to Enlightenment in Hermann Hesse's Works* (2016), Matthew’s Barto’s *The Poetics of Affirmative Fatalism: Life, Death, and Meaning-Making in Goethe, Nietzsche, and Hesse* (2017), and C. Zhan’s “Hermann Hesse's Concept of World Literature and his Critique on Chinese Literature” (2018).

America, “How Hermann Hesse became a Hero of the Sixties Counterculture” (2018). After the publication of Decker’s English version of Hesse’s biography, *The New Yorker* published a lengthy review in the 19 November 2018 issue under the title “The art of Failure”, the online version of the article is titled “Hermann Hesse’s Arrested Development” (Kirsch). Aside of articles and reviews, the current globally successful Korean boys band BTS released their album *Wings* (2016), inspired completely by Hesse’s novel *Demian* and even containing excerpts of the book in their lyrics (BTS). Since the album’s release in October 2016, sales of Hesse’s *Demian* have increased globally. When asked why they chose *Demian* as an inspiration for their album, one of the members (who goes by the name of ‘Rap Monsters’) replied: “We felt that there were a lot of similarities between parts of ‘Demian’ and the things we wanted to say. So we used a lot of objects and elements from ‘Demian’ in our jacket photos and music video” (qtd. in Soompi.com)

In more recent news, the Austrian film director and Academy Award winner Stefan Ruzowitzky completed his adaptation of Hesse’s *Narcissus and Goldmund* for the big screen. The release date of this movie, of which the original German title is *Narziss und Goldmund*, is set to 12 March 2020 (this happens to be two weeks after this research is due) (Österreichisches Filminstitut). Given the history of Hesse reception such major contemporary reappropriation of the novels in both popular and academic culture may suggest that we are currently going through another period of crisis. However, we do not yet have the necessary hindsight to be able to understand the nature of this crisis. Is it the impending environmental collapse that leads us back to seeking solace in Hesse’s work? Or is it rather the growing rise of populism across the world? Perhaps it is the heightened levels of anxiety, depression and other mental health issues resulting from our hyper-technological and productivity-focused societies? Whichever is the case, much research still needs to be done to fully understand Hesse’s appeal to individuals and societies in crisis. Gunnar Decker

rightly observed: “Hesse renaissances come and go. But setting aside all fads and fashions, one would hope that any reader cheerfully and aimlessly working on his or her way through the twenty volumes of Hesse’s *Collected Works* might frequently stray into hitherto unfamiliar territory” (*Hesse* 13).

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Appendix 1

Hermann Hesse's reply to a young German man

Published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (21 September 1919)

Source: Hesse, Hermann. *Die Antwort Bist Du Selbst: Briefe an Junge Menschen*.

Edited by Volker Michels, vol. 2583, Insel Verlag, 2000; pp.80-84

Sie schreiben mir, daß Sie verzweifelt sind und nicht wissen, was tun, nicht wissen, was tun, nicht wissen, was glauben, nicht wissen, was hoffen. Sie wissen nicht, ob das Leben irgendeinen Sinn hat oder nicht, ob das Vaterland einen Sinn hat oder nicht, ob es besser ist, sich um geistige Güter zu mühen oder einfach sich den Bauch zu füllen, da doch alles so übel aussieht in der Welt.

Ich finde die Verfassung, in der Ihre Seele sich zeigt, durchaus die richtige. Daß Sie nicht wissen, ob es einen Gott gibt, und daß Sie nicht wissen, ob es Gut und Böse gibt, ist viel besser, als wenn Sie das genau wüßten. Vor fünf Jahren, wenn Sie sich erinnern können, wußten Sie vermutlich ziemlich genau, daß es einen Gott gebe, und wußten namentlich ganz genau, was gut und was böse sei, und Sie taten natürlich das, was das Gute schien, und zogen in den Krieg. Und seither haben Sie, fünf Jahre lang, in den besten Jahren Ihrer Jugend, immerzu jenes Gute getan, haben Kameraden beerdigt, haben Kameraden verbunden, und so ganz allmählich ist das Gute zweifelhaft geworden, und es war zu Zeiten gar nicht mehr klar, ob dies herrliche Gute, was Sie taten, nicht im Grunde böser oder doch dumm und ein großer Unsinn sei.

Das war es auch. Das Gute, das Sie damals so genau kannten, war offenbar nicht das richtige Gute, nicht das unzerstörbare, zeitlose Gute; und der Gott, um den Sie damals wußten, was offenbar nicht der richtige. Er war vermutlich der Nationalgott unserer Konsistorialräte und Kriegsdichter, jener Gott, der sich ehrwürdig auf Kanonen stütz und dessen Lieblingsfarben Schwarz-Weiß-Rot sind. Es war ein Gott, größer als je ein Jehova war, und es wurden ihm Hunderttausende von blutigen Schlachtopfern gebracht, ihm zu Ehren wurden hunderttausend Bäuche aufgerissen und hunderttausend Lungen zerfetzt, er war blutrünstiger und brutaler als je ein Popanz und Götze, und während der blutigen Opfer sangen die Priester daheim, unsere Theologen, ihm ihre honorierten Loblieder. Der Rest von Religion, den wir in unsern verarmten Seelen und unsern so sehr verarmten und entseelten Kirchen besaßen, ging vollends dahin. Hat schon jemand es bedacht und sich darüber gewundert, wie unsere Theologen in diesen vier Kriegsjahren ihre eigene Religion, ihr eigenes Christentum zu Grab getragen haben? Sie deinten der Liebe und predigten den Haß,

sie dienten der Menschheit und verwechselten die Menschheit mit der Behörde, von der sie ihr Gehalt beziehen. Sie haben (nicht alle natürlich, aber Ihre Wortführer) mit Schlaueit und mit vielen Worten nachgewiesen, daß Krieg und Christentum sich herrlich vertragen, daß man ein edler Christ sein und doch vortrefflich schießen und stechen kann. Das kann man aber nicht, und wenn unsere Landeskirchen nichts Landeskirchen im Dienst von Thron und Heer gewesen wären, sondern Kirchen Gottes, so hätten wir an ihnen im Kriege gehabt, was und so bitter fehlte: eine Zuflucht für die Menschlichkeit, ein Heiligtum für die verwaiste Seele, eine ständige Mahnung zu Mäßigung, Weisheit, Menschenliebe, Gottesdienst.

Verstehen Sie mich, bitte, nicht falsch! Glauben Sie nicht, daß ich irgendeinem Menschen Vorwürfe machen wolle! Ich möchte nur aufzeigen, nicht anklagen. Man ist das bei und nicht gewohnt, man ist nur an Schreien, Anklagen, Hassen gewöhnt. Die Menschen unserer Zeit, wir Deutsche so wie alle haben die fatale Kunst gelernt, immer die Schuld bei anderen zu suchen, wenn es uns schlecht geht. Dagegen allein trete ich auf, dagegen allein mache ich Vorwürfe. Daß unser Glaube so schwach war, daß unser landesherrlich geschützter Gott so brutal war, daß wir Krieg und Frieden, Gut und Böse so schlecht unterscheiden konnten, darin sind wir alle gleich schuldig, gleich unschuldig. Sie und ich, der Kaiser und der Pfarrer, wir alle haben mitgetan und haben einander nichts vorzuwerfen.

Wenn Sie sich jetzt besinnen, wo ein Trost und ein neuer, besserer Gott und Glauben zu finden sein könnte, so wird Ihnen, in Ihrer heutigen Vereinsamung und Verzweiflung, ohne weiteres klar, daß die Erleuchtung nicht wieder von außen kommen darf, nicht wieder aus offiziellen Quellen, aus Bibeln, von Kanzeln, von Thronen. Sie darf auch nicht von mir kommen. Sie kann nur in Ihnen selbst zu finden sein. Dort ist sie, dort wohnt der Gott, der höher und zeitloser ist als der Patriotengott von 1914. Die Weisen aller Zeiten haben ihn stets verkündigt, aber er kommt zu uns nicht aus Büchern, er wohnt in uns selbst und muß das Auge in unserem eigenen Innern auftun, sonst ist alles Wissen um ihn wertlos. Er ist auch in Ihnen, dieser Gott. Er ist gerade in Ihnen, gerade in Euch Zerschlagenen, Verzweifelten. Es sind nicht die Geringen, die an der Not der Zeit krank werden. Es sind nicht die Schlechten, die mit den Göttern und Götzen von vorgestern nicht mehr zufrieden sind.

Aber wohin Sie auch noch zu entrinnen suchen werden, es wird Ihnen der Prophet und Lehrer nicht begegnen, der Ihnen die Mühe des Suchens und der Einkehr in sich selber abnimmt. Das ganze deutsche Volk ist heut in Ihrer Lage, wir alle mit. Unsere Welt ist zusammengebrochen, unser Stolz geknickt, unser Geld dahin, unsere Freunde tot. Nun suchen wir, fast alle den schlechten Kerl, der an dem allem schuld war. Wir nennen ihn Amerika, wir nennen ihn Clemenceau, wir nennen ihn Kaiser Wilhelm oder wie immer sonst, und laufen mit

all diesen Anklagen im Kreis herum und kommen an kein Ziel. Es genügt aber, nur eine Stunde lang diese kindliche und wenig intelligente Schuldfrage auszuschalten und statt ihrer die Frage zu setzen: „Wie steht es mit mir selber? Wieweit bin ich mitschuldig? Wo war auch ich zu laut, auch ich zu frech, auch ich zu leichtgläubig, auch ich zu ruhmredig? Wo ist der Punkt in mir, auf den die schlechte Presse, auf den der entartete Glaube an den nationalen Jehova, auf den alle diese so rasch zusammengebrochenen Irrtümer sich stützen konnten?“

Die Stunde, in der man sich so fragt, ist nicht angenehm, Man sieht sich schwach und schlecht, man wird klein, man wird demütig. Aber man wird nicht zerschmettert. Man sieht nämlich: Schuld gibt es nicht. Es gibt weder den bösen Kaiser noch den bösen Clemenceau, es haben weder die siegenden demokratischen Völker noch die besiegten Barbaren recht. Schuld und Unschuld, Recht und Unrecht sind Vereinfachungen, sind Kinderbegriffe, und unser erster Schritt ins Heiligtum eines neuen Gottes ist der, daß wir dies erkennen. Wir werden dadurch nicht lernen, künftig Kriege zu verhindern, noch wieder reich zu werden. Wir lernen nur eines: die wichtigen Fragen unseres Lebens, alle unsere „Schuldfragen“, alle unsere Gewissensfragen nicht mehr zu einem alten Jehova, nicht mehr zu einem Feldwebel, nicht mehr zu einer Zeitungsredaktion zu bringen, die sie entscheiden sollen, sondern dies in der eigenen Brust zu tun. Wir müssen uns entschließen, aus Kindern Männer zu werden. Spätere Menschen werden vielleicht den Verlust unserer Flotte, unserer Maschinen, unseres Geldes so deuten, daß einem Kinde all sein hübsches Spielzeug weggenommen wurde und daß das Kind dann, nachdem es genug geweint und genug geschimpft hatte, still und ein Mann wurde. Diesen Weg müssen wir gehen, es gibt keinen andern. Und den ersten Schritt dieses Weges tut jeder von uns einzig bei sich allein, im eigenen Herzen.

Lesen Sie, da Sie Nietzsche lieben, nochmals die letzten Seiten jener unzeitgemäßen Betrachtung nach, die vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie handelt! Lesen Sie, Wort für Wort, noch einmal jene Worte über die Jugend, welche das Los trifft, einer zusammenbrechenden Scheinkultur den Hals abzdrehen und neu anzufangen! Wie hart, wie bitter ist das Los einer solchen Jugend, und wie groß ist es, wie heilig! Diese Jugend sind Sie, seid Ihr, Ihr Jungen von heute, im heutigen geschlagenen Deutschland. Auf Euren Schultern liege diese Last, auf Euren Herzen diese Aufgabe.

Aber bleiben Sie nicht bei Nietzsche stehen und nicht bei irgendeinem Propheten und Ratgeber. Unser Amt ist nicht, Sie zu belehren, Ihnen Mühe zu sparen, Ihnen Wege zu zeigen. Unser Amt ist nur, Sie daran zu erinnern, daß es einen Gott gibt, einen einzigen, und daß dieser Gott in Ihrem Herzen wohnt und Sie dort suchen und dort mit Ihrem Herzen wohnt und Sie ihn dort mit ihm reden müssen.