


## Hermann Hesse and the perennial adolescence maze in his literary work

Núria Obiols-Suari   
Universitat de Barcelona, Spain  
[nobiols@ub.edu](mailto:nobiols@ub.edu)

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the adolescent experiences in a selection of literary works by Hermann Hesse (1877-1962). In these books set up a variety of personal and social issues. These works are close to the concept of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of development. The main objective of this work is to analyse twelve novels whose contents are relevant for the way in which the life experience of adolescence is narrated, and it is woven into human relationships of different intensity and nature. A content analysis was then carried out using the Atlas.ti (version 23) software. Conclusions reveal that Hesse's works recreate certain themes: the conception of human contradiction or duality; death and suicide; culture as a vital companion; emotional ties; education and a necessary renewal that allows complex paths to be taken again. All this sets up the portrait of the adolescent in search of meaning of life. Hesse's work enjoys a clear relevance that allows it to provide the readings of the young people which are nowadays often imbued with a worrying degree of uncertainty.

**Keywords:** Twentieth Century Literature; Hermann Hesse (1877-1962); content analysis; adolescents; personal development.

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## Hermann Hesse y el perenne laberinto adolescente en sus obras

Núria Obiols-Suari   
Universitat de Barcelona, Spain  
[nobiols@ub.edu](mailto:nobiols@ub.edu)

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### Resumen

En esta investigación se indaga sobre las vivencias adolescentes en una selección de obras de Hermann Hesse (1877-1962). En ellas se halla una miscelánea de cuestiones personales y sociales. Se trata de obras cercanas al concepto de *Bildungsroman* o novela de formación. El objetivo de este trabajo es el de analizar una recopilación de doce novelas cuyos contenidos resultan relevantes por cómo se relata la experiencia vital adolescente y se hilvana a relaciones humanas de distinta intensidad y naturaleza. Posteriormente se ha procedido a un análisis de contenidos mediante el programa Atas.ti (versión 23). Su interpretación indica que las obras recrean las siguientes temáticas: la concepción de la contradicción o dualidad humana, la muerte y el suicidio, la cultura como compañía vital, el vínculo afectivo, la formación y una renovación que permite retomar el camino perdido. El conjunto conforma el retrato del adolescente en busca de un sentido de la vida. La obra de Hesse goza de una evidente vigencia que permite enriquecer las lecturas de los jóvenes a los que las coyunturas actuales los impregnan a menudo de un grado preocupante de incertidumbre.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura del siglo XX; Hermann Hesse (1877-1962); análisis de contenido; adolescentes; desarrollo personal.

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## INTRODUCTION

Hermann Hesse's work is full of mazes where the human being shows his perpetual condition of being in formation, in a tireless search for the meaning of life. It raises issues such as human duality and its contradictions. From his particular prism, moments of optimism and serenity are woven with moments of pessimism and helplessness, conveyed by means of his exquisite literary singularity. Thus, human nature, educational relationships and the search for personal fulfilment come to the fore in plots featuring characters who are or were adolescents and who mature as they face the vicissitudes of life. The aim of this paper is to investigate the content of twelve works by Hermann Hesse in which adolescent experiences are detailed.

## TOPIC OUTLINE

### *Hermann Hesse: between mystical crisis and romantic irony*

Hesse's adolescence was full of crises that even made him consider the option of suicide, a thought that he managed to reverse and which led him to express in his credo despite its apparent absurdity, life has meaning (Hesse, 1984). However, his existence was accompanied by shadows cast by the two world wars, the death of his father, the mental state of his first wife and the illness of one of his three children.

Although religion had a great influence on his life, he was always sceptical about it and did not subscribe to any belief (Ziolkowski, 1976). Nevertheless, he remained open to the East (Staquet, 2014), as evidenced by his trip to India in 1911 with the painter Hans Sturzenegger, which he undertook out of a deep sense of anguish (Hesse, 2020) and, although he found no answers to his concerns (Maier, 1953), it shaped his work *Siddharta* (1922). His father's influence and that of his maternal grandfather - both missionaries in that country - had aroused his interest. Nevertheless, he viewed both Protestantism and Eastern influence with suspicion (Zhan, 2018), and he soon found the confessional and partly sectarian ways in which we children met him suspicious and almost unbearable (Hesse, 1984). However, he found salvation in art. Hesse painted, a modality he cultivated after the First World War, which he confessed increased his joy and tolerance (Hesse, 2020). The contemplation of nature was also fundamental, and was the main theme in *Wandering—notes and sketches*, published in 1918 (Hesse, 1981b). As for literature, his contact with the world of books was key, such as when he worked as a bookshop clerk in Tübingen or as an assistant bookseller in Basel (Hesse, 2020). This passion was the origin of her career, which culminated in her being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1946.

One might think that a critical adolescence, coupled with a superb literary vein in a Europe in conflict, would be the perfect storm for Hesse as a neo-romantic author. Nevertheless, there was no consensus on this (Ziolkowski, 1976) and it even aroused some perplexity in him (Hesse, 2020).

Hesse is an author whose wake is astounding, studied from different perspectives, with a museum dedicated to his figure, 150 million copies sold and his translation into more than sixty languages. He was at the epicentre of numerous cultural initiatives and was conferred the degree of Honorary Doctor by two universities, including the University of Berne (1947), a period that coincided with an obscure affair (Hesse, 2020) related to the seduction of a minor and about which Gonzalo Torrente Ballester (1962) argues interesting approaches to the relationship between author and work. This is a current and controversial issue.

### *Hesse's legacy: the human at a crossroads*

Hesse's prolific oeuvre contains crossroads at which one must decide freely. All Hessian novels are variations on the same theme, the same obsession: the need for individual training for conscious freedom (Rossi, 2004). His novels have been considered to belong to the *Bildungsroman*, or formative novel (Swales,

2015), the concept of which appeared in 1803 by Karl Von Morgensten, although it became popular when Wilhelm Dilthey used it (1870) to name a corpus that began with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (López-Gallego, 2013). Indeed, Hesse is considered key to the evolution of the genre (Roberts, 2008a).

He began his literary journey when he was twenty with *Romantische lieder y stunde hinter mitternacht* (1899). The latter, translated as *One Hour Past Midnight*, raised doubts in the mind of its publisher, although it served to highlight its literary value (Hesse, 2023d), which was reaffirmed in its second edition (1948). He then published *Hermann Lauscher* (1900), in which he narrates the transition from childhood to adolescence of the main character.

In 1904, one of his most analysed novels was published, as well as providing him with a certain financial solvency: *Peter Camenzind* (1904). In this work, poetry is the compass that directs the destiny of its main character, reaching fulfilment in a life without any kind of opulence, in the Franciscan style. In fact, he travelled to Assisi, although in this novel he narrates his adventures without having yet been there, and he evidences his predilection for the figure of Francis of Assisi (Ball, 2008). Two years later, *Beneath the Wheel* (1906) was published, whose main character is Hans Giebenrath, in which adolescent pain reaches its peak, enduring adult pressure without leaving him any freedom. Absolute dedication to their duties to the point of exhaustion is the general tonic, resulting in an enormous feeling of nullification, something identical to their life (Ball, 2008).

In *Gertrud* (1910), Kuhn is the main character, a musician who lives his profession passionately. During his adolescence he suffers an accident that will leave him with a lifelong injury to his leg, as well as happening after his first heartbreak in love. *Rosshalde* (1914) and *Knulp* (1915) are novels that converge on adolescent aspects. Thus, existential sadness, critical relationships with parents and desirable and undesirable friendships take centre stage. In the first (*Rosshalde*, 1914), Johann Veraguth is the main character. He is a painter who lives badly with his wife Adele, with whom he has two sons: the adolescent Albert, who hates him, and little Pierre, who adores him. *Knulp* (1915) recounts Karl Eberhard's encounters with friends with whom he has interesting conversations.

*Demian* (1919) is one of the author's most famous novels, in which he tells the story of Emil Sinclair, who lives in contradiction to the antagonistic role between his distant father and his close mother, something that is present in Hesse's life. Demian will be the most influential character in Sinclair, with whom he talks about human duality or tailor-made morality, what will be his foundations (Ferraz, 2019) and something very circumstantial. His Demian, far from being an archetype valid for any time, has a clear and limited affiliation: the man from the defeated Germany of 1920 (de las Heras in Hesse, 1987).

*Siddhartha* (1922) had a huge impact (Byrd, 2017) and has often been taken as a philosophical and mystical reference, when it should be seen as poetic (Ball, 2008). Siddhartha and Demian go hand in hand in their search for the self, passing through stages of alienation and despair (Ziolkowski, 1976).

*The Nuremberg Trip* was published in 1927, followed in the same year by another great novel: *Steppenwolf*, about which practically everything has been said and read for generations. Harry Haller goes through his life - better or worse - accompanied by people who will challenge his principles. This shakes his stormy existence full of cynicism and disillusionment. *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) was then published, which, like *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*, had its film adaptation (Ruzowitsky, 2020) and is considered the most imperfect of his works (Ziolkowski, 1976). It begins with Goldmund's admission to a convent where he meets Narcissus, exerting great influence on his friend, a time when narcissism was a leading theme (Johansson, 2020).

Hesse subsequently published other works such as *Journey to the East* (1932) or the essay *Gedenblätter* (1937), but undoubtedly *The Glass Bead Game* (1943) was a compendium of old and new themes (Roberts, 2008b):

"...the meaning and purpose of education, the question of what constitutes a well lived life, the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing, the need for a harmony between reason and emotion, the potential educative value of striving and suffering, the teacher-student relation, the role

of dialogue in teaching and learning, the tension between certainty and uncertainty, the strengths and limitations of different forms of hierarchy and authority, and the relationship between the individual and society, among others (p. 691)”.

As the title indicates, play is the pedagogical axis, considered by Wittgenstein (Edwards, 2019, p. 671). The novel is set in the year 2400 and the events take place in Castalia, a peculiar pedagogical space which, like a temple of knowledge, admits select disciples. It deals with the biography of Joseph Valet and his training as *Magister Ludi*. Development consists of a representation of unity that has been linked to the stream of cultural psychology (Von-Fircks, 2020). It has been compared to Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* (Hay, 2018), an author with whom she was a firm friend, as their correspondence attests (Carlsson & Michels, 2016).

As is often the case in literature, Hesse’s novels reflect aspects of his life ranging from his adolescent crises to his relationship with his parents. In *Beneath the Wheel* (1906) he shows his school, a monastery that corresponds to the same as *Narcissus and Golmund* (1930), the Württemberg seminary where he spent two years and from which he fled, like Golmund. On the other hand, there are numerous religious references, ranging from Protestantism (*Beneath the Wheel*) to Hinduism (*Siddhartha*) and expressing his disillusionment with the mystics (*Narcissus and Golmund*) (Hesse, 2023c).

Another of his singularities is the presence of psychoanalysis, evident in *Demian* and *Narcissus and Golmund* (Jan et al., 2022), which he came to know through Jung (Hesse, 2020, p. 24), leaving an important influence on his works (Maier, 1953). Hesse suffered crises that brought him closer, both as a patient - he was treated by a disciple of Jung - and as a reader, to perspectives current at the time. On the other hand, it is common to find criticisms of class inequality, highlighting them in terms of health care (Hesse, 2023c) or education (Hesse, 2023g), something that expresses their political coherence (Sánchez-Torrado, 1979).

## SELECTION OF WORKS

Twelve works whose content is linked to adolescence have been selected for this work. In some, because of the relationships established, in others, because of the age of the characters, and in all, because of the main character’s search for personal fulfilment. The work by Ziolkowski (1976), Ball (2008) and Roberts (2009) has served to define this selection in terms of, on the one hand, three stages according to defined periods in the author’s life and, on the other hand, the presence of sufficiently significant adolescent experiences.

**Table 1**

*Selection of works by Hermann Hesse*

Title	Original title	Year
<i>One Hour Past Midnight</i>	<i>Ein Stunde nach Mitternacht</i>	1899
<i>Hermann Lauscher</i>	<i>Hermann Lauscher</i>	1900
<i>Peter Camenzind</i>	<i>Peter Camenzind</i>	1904
<i>Beneath the Wheel</i>	<i>Unterm Rad</i>	1906
<i>Gertrud</i>	<i>Gertrudis</i>	1910
<i>Rosshalde</i>	<i>Rosshalde</i>	1914
<i>Three Stories from Knulp’s Life</i>	<i>Aus dem Leben Knulps</i>	1915
<i>Demian</i>	<i>Demian</i>	1919
<i>Siddhartha</i>	<i>Siddhartha</i>	1922
<i>Steppenwolf</i>	<i>Der Steppenwolf</i>	1927

Title	Original title	Year
<i>Narcissus and Golmund</i>	<i>Narziß und Goldmund</i>	1930
<i>The Glass Bead Game</i>	<i>Das Glasperlenspiel</i>	1943

## INSTRUMENT

The Atlas.ti software (version 23) was used for the qualitative content analysis. This software is based on Glaser and Strauss' Grounded Theory (1967), which allows for the analysis and interpretation of various types of information within the framework of qualitative research (Berg, 1989). The reliability checks of the stages and codes were established on the basis of biographical texts of Hesse and his work (Ziolkowski, 1976; Roberts, 2007; Roberts, 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; Ball, 2008; Cornils, 2015; Johansson, 2020; Hesse, 2020). Each of these texts has provided relevant information about the author's life and literary content. Both the biographical and literary parts were the basis for establishing the structure of the stages and the codes, based on the adolescent experiences present in their contents.

As for the stages, they have made it possible to structure the temporality of the works (Varguillas, 2006). Thus, the first (1899-1906), the second (1910-1919) and the third (1922-1943) were established. The grouping of four novels by stage is based on the criteria of temporal proximity, their narrative core and biographical aspects of the author. The first is characterised by adolescent experiences in the present tense, in Europe at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with situations that foreshadow imminent changes. What is most remarkable is Hesse's proximity to his adolescence, which determines the content of the works: *One Hour Past Midnight* (1899), *Hermann Lauscher* (1900), *Peter Camenzind* (1904) y *Beneath the Wheel* (1906). These changes substantially in the second stage, in which, from youth, adolescence is narrated. Hesse has taken a distance, which allows him to recognise himself, not without a certain apprehension. Just as in the first one the plots refer to adolescent crises and conflicts, here it is seen from another point of view, clearly influenced by the author's fatherhood. Even in *Demian*, which is where adolescence takes centre stage. This second stage consists of *Gertrud* (1910), *Rosshalde* (1914), *Knulp* (1915) and *Demian* (1919). In the third stage, the stage is broadened and Hesse's maturity is used to articulate the usual themes with new ones. The change is notorious, especially due to political and social circumstances in Europe and the author's own, with his ups and downs in his marriage and, in the end, the regret of the inevitable passing of time. The works of this stage are the following: *Siddhartha* (1922), *Steppenwolf* (1927), *Narcissus and Golmund* (1930) and *The Glass Bead Game* (1943).

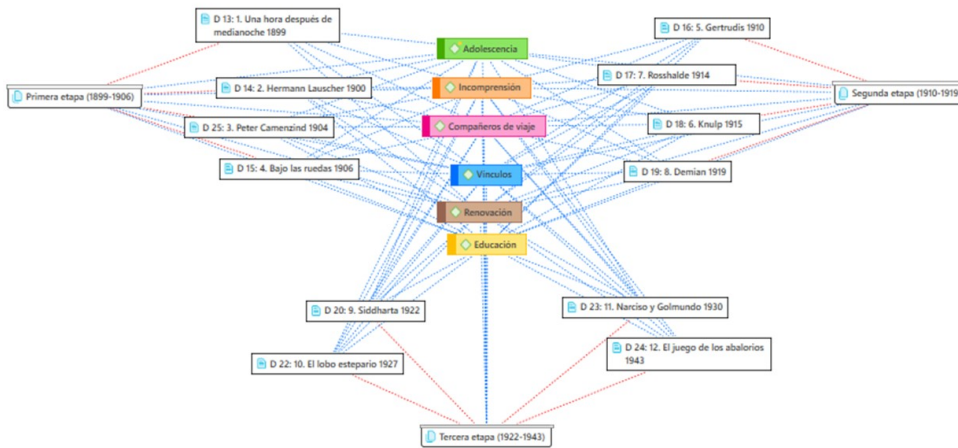
As for the codes, using the terms of the Atlas.ti software (version 23), they are categories which, like the stages, are based on biographical questions and literary content. The codes were specified as follows: Adolescence, Incomprehension, Fellow travellers, Bonds, Renewal and Education, determining sub-codes as in Renewal. As for Adolescence, it took the form of texts defining this period, sometimes through a metaphor of the narrator and sometimes through reflections of the characters. As for the code Incomprehension, it was based on fragments in which the characters express feelings of incomprehension towards themselves and the world in which they live. As for Fellow travellers, the analysis revealed a high presence of literary, musical or philosophical authors who are highlighted for their great value, not only cultural, but also as a welcoming space in which to take refuge when problems beset the main characters. As for Bonds, they are fundamental in the experiences narrated and are translated into relationships within and outside the family environment, conditioning the transcendental decisions of the characters. As for Renewal, it is found when the main character establishes a turning point in his life in which he either creates or chance provides him with a rupture from which he starts again and continues on his way. The Education code has served to analyse dissertations on the education received, at school and in the family, which in the case of Hesse are solidly argued in their contexts.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE SELECTION OF WORKS

Figure 1 shows the link between the stages and the codes. The plots generated using Atlas.ti (version 23) show a strong dominance of code Bonds. The code Adolescence is the most conditioned to the stages of the works, since, as Hesse matures, its description as a life stage becomes blurred. On the other hand, Incomprehension is present throughout the stages, followed by the facts concerning Education, and then by the Fellow Travellers, issues that will be dealt with in the next section.

**Figure 1**

*Works under study grouped by stage and linked to codes*

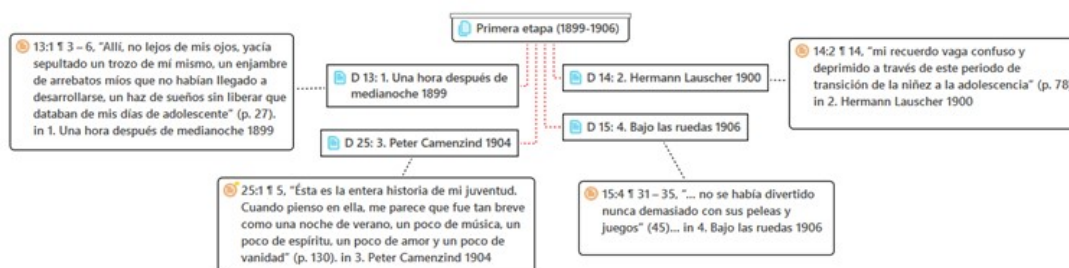


In the analysis of the code Adolescence, we found that the presence of its definition is inversely proportional to the maturity of the author, being more representative in the first stage and less in the second and third. When he refers to it, an extraordinary lexical richness unfolds in his texts, using adjectives such as dismembered, self-destructive or confused and nouns such as enigma or swarm, interesting terms to be considered with adolescents.

As can be seen in figure 2, the author's concern when with defining adolescence is prominent in the first stage. As the author matures, facts and experiences gain strength and the concept becomes blurred.

**Figure 2**

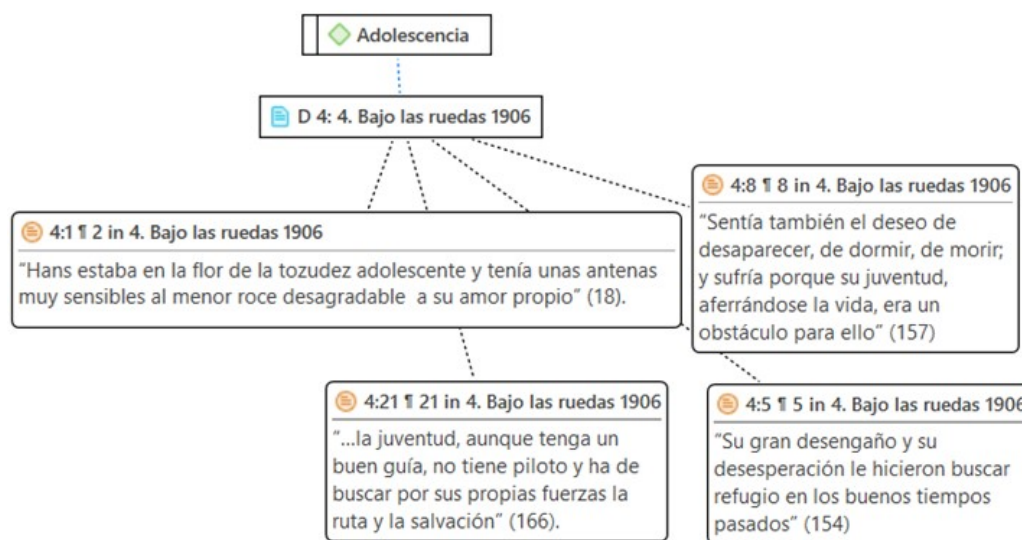
*First stage works linked to the code Adolescence*



However, there is no doubt that *Beneath the Wheel* (1906) is the novel in which Hesse delves most deeply into the adolescent soul, highlighting what determines and characterises it, as can be seen in [figure 3](#).

**Figure 3**

*Example of code Adolescence in Beneath the Wheel*



In reference to the code Incomprehension, there are numerous occasions that reflect the incomprehensible in life, as in *Narcissus and Golmund* (Hesse, 2023c):

“...my heart aches and it seems to me that our mothers have borne us into a hopeless, cruel, devilish world, and that it would be better if they had never conceived, if God had not created this horrible world...” (p. 250).

It is about the incomprehension that awakens the lack of love or death - expected or unexpected - of great interest to the author. It has become important and precious to him (Hesse, 2020).

In general, this code will appear at all stages and, accordingly, there are fragments of great moral relativism. This is expressed in Knulp: “Then there is no good when blue is as good as yellow and bad as good as good” (Hesse, 2013a, p. 48), idea replicated in *Steppenwolf*. He spares no adjectives to describe the incomprehensible, such as desolating or unnerving, or nouns such as hypocrisy, nausea or anguish, very sartorial terms.

This incomprehension reverts to human duality whose destiny must be unity (Tang & Zheng, 2020), the main focus of *Demian* and *The Glass Bead Game*. As if a long reflection had crystallised in his mature work, exposing that overcoming it fights egocentrism (Hesse, 1984).

On the other hand, there is no doubt that allowing oneself to be accompanied in life by culture is fundamental, the presence of the code of Fellow Travellers in *Narcissus and Golmund* being high, allowing one to find the meaning of life (Johansson, 2020, p. 296). Also in *The Glass Bead Game*, he analyses authors, musicians, philosophers, works of art and landscape delights as ideal companions for the journey through life.

The artistic company is reflected in *Narcissus and Golmund*, the music being the most remarkable (Hay, 2018), in which Johann Sebastian Bach, of whom he was a fervent admirer, stands out (Hesse, 2020). Beethoven, Pachelbel, Schubert, Schütz, Chopin, Gluck, Handel, Haydn and Mozart.



Literature is fundamental in the first stage, with Russian novelists and German poets. Notable writers include Dostoevsky, Hölderlin, Schiller, Novalis, Goethe, Ibsen and Lessing. Hesse cultivated his love of reading by discovering Italian novelists and became passionate about French and Russian literature (Hesse, 2020). In his family, 18<sup>th</sup>-century German literature played an important role, and he devoted years of reading to Goethe.

Philosophy is another companion, stable in all three stages, which he considered a ‘sport’ in his life (Hesse, 2020). Figures such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hegel and Kant, of whom he confessed that he has not exercised a purely and exclusively beneficent influence on the German spirit (Hesse, 2020). Nietzsche’s influence in his novels will be the subject of study (Lima, 2022) and he considered it a cult work from 1897 onwards (Hesse, 2020), revealing its influence in *The Steppenwolf* (1927).

Finally, his landscape descriptions deserve attention (Fournier-Kiss, 2020) especially in *Narcissus and Golmund*. His last companion, Ninon Hesse, said that shortly before he died, he asked to be taken to Monte Sighignola, from where he saw a spectacular view. As always, it was beautiful to experience the intensity with which he saw everything (Hesse, 2020). As if he were looking for reconciliation with life in the natural landscape and, moreover, succeeding in achieving it.

In reference to the code Bonds, Hesse acknowledged that he was not very sociable (Ball, 2008), in contrast to its significant presence, especially in the third stage. It may appear as an exalted love - *Narcissus and Golmund* - or as the meaning of life - *Siddhartha* - whether of friendship, leadership, love affair or family, the latter being the most numerous. Bonds increase with the stages and, in the first stage, friendship is the most representative, which is coherent with the notorious presence of the code Adolescence.

This is how the bond of friendship is expressed in *Gertrud*: “I believe so. An hour of wine with a friend, if you have one, and a good-natured chat about this strange life is actually the best thing you can have” (Hesse, 2023b, p. 143). No character is understandable without their links and fruitful conversations. As for love, it takes directions ranging from desire to idealised love (Hesse, 1987). Learning to love is a preoccupation, as Erich Fromm captured in *The Art of Loving* (1956), and it is stated in *Steppenwolf* when he praises loving unconditionally (Hesse, 1975): “Love ought not make requests but shouldn’t make demands, either” (p. 98), declaring that unselfish love is the purest (Hesse, 1984) and the guarantor of happiness (Hesse, 2020).

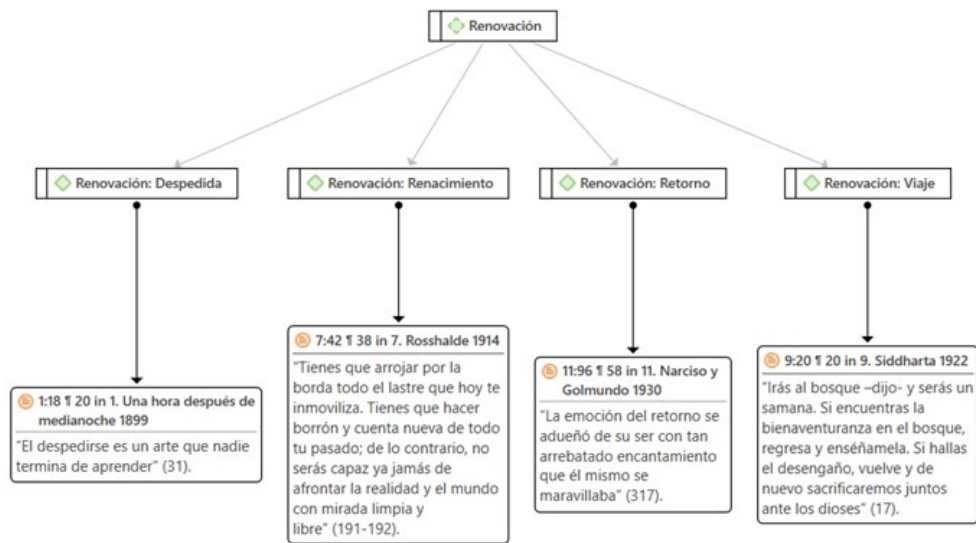
Another bond is with the leader. Hesse had one who determined it, David Friedrich Strauss (Ball, 2008), and there are many novels in which it is reflected. For example, with the shoemaker Flaig in *Beneath the Wheel* (Hesse, 2023g) and in *The Glass Bead Game*, in which he gives the following description: “...with piercingly gazing light blue eyes, whose gaze one might have feared, but he was not only piercing, but also serene, he was of a not laughing or smiling, but quietly shining, calm serenity” (Hesse, 2023f, p. 42).

While the bond contains light, such as the adored mothers in *Demian* and *Peter Camenzind*, there are also shadows, such as the unwanted but longed-for progenitor in *Narcissus and Golmund*. Father figures are occasionally stains that obscure existence, as in *Demian*, or beings who carry great guilt, as in *Rosshalde*.

As can be seen in figure 4, the code Renewal is a turning point in the novels, although not the most present one, being in *Siddhartha* and *Narcissus and Golmund* where it takes centre stage, being represented symbolically through the river, as transit in *Siddhartha*, or source of renewal, as in *Steppenwolf* (Hesse, 1981a). The journey will be another channel of Renewal, present in *Peter Camenzind* on a trip to Assisi where “...These sights had filled me with such powerful longings as a boy” (Hesse, 2013b, p. 1289).

**Figure 4**

Works under study linked to the renovation sub-codes



Renewal cannot be better expressed than in *One Hour After Midnight* (Hesse, 2023d):

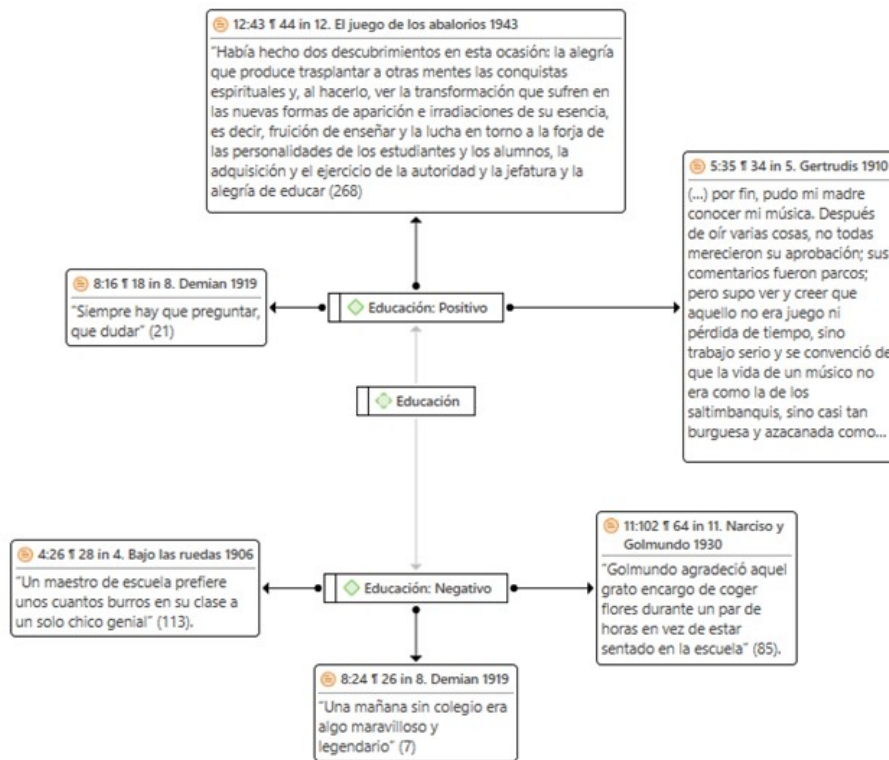
“*Incipit vita nova*. I have become a new one, still a miracle to myself, resting and active at the same time, receiving and giving, a possessor of goods, the most valuable of which I perhaps do not yet know” (p. 26).

A constant renewal and a necessary, albeit painful, rupture, such as the darkest point of this adolescent crisis, when shame, apathy and even suicidal thoughts assail the narrator, is when the inflection occurs (Vilella, 2007). This is where a renewal threaded with death (Hesse, 2019) takes place, sometimes physical, as in *Beneath the Wheel* or *Steppenwolf* (Hesse, 1975), and sometimes as the beginning of a new stage.

As for the code Education, it should be noted that it is a constant in Hesse’s work, being relevant in *The Glass Bead Game*, showing its complexity (Roberts, 2008a) and its lights and shadows. Hesse does plenty of dissertations about what it means to educate and how it should be done. Often there are moments linked to education and family and school are incardinated, although it is the latter where the most negativity falls, as can be seen in figure 5.

Figure 5

Positivity and negativity sub-codes on Education



Hermann Lauscher (Hesse, 2023a) expresses himself with this forcefulness:

"With the attendance of the school now my human social life began (...). here striving and despairing, conflict and consciousness of the person, inadequacy and discord, struggle and consideration, and the whole endless cycle of days begins" (p. 19).

Hesse had harrowing memories of his school days in which he had often been very nearly shipwrecked (Ball, 2008). It objects to the imposition of limits on the imagination (Ávila-Colla, 2022), with *The Glass Bead Game* being the most critical novel (Zawadzki & Lennerfors, 2022) and in which the pedagogy of Paulo Freire (Roberts, 2007), as well as Roussonian principles (Hesse, 2023f), can be glimpsed, taking shape in the actions of the characters (Hesse, 2023f).

Hesse recounts his educational journey before entering school. He could sing songs and whistle with his teeth and other things valuable for life (Hesse, 2020), not as later on where the experiential became minimised. And, as can be seen in *Beneath the Wheel* (2023g), it is clear who is to blame:

"All these leaders of the youth, from ephorus to Papa Giebenrath, professors and repentants, who were zealous in their duty, saw in Hans an evil element, an obstacle to their desires, something obdurate and inert, which had to be forced and brought back to good ways by force" (p. 113).

These criticisms are linked to her educational ideals (Roberts, 2009) as she thought that traditional methods generate what is defined in *Hermann Lauscher* as "the sultriness of a compulsory institution" (Hesse, 2023a, p. 23) and, in *Gertrud*, in terms of the helplessness generated: "In the last year I've made little effort at all" (Hesse, 2023, p. 7). The great deal of criticism of the school is not only based on the

debatability of the method. Also about hypocrisy with the disciple. This is illustrated by Hesse when he talks about his second year at school. He owes the art of lying and diplomacy to his second year at school, when a preceptor and an assistant taught him these skills, after Hesse, with his childish sincerity and naivety, had attracted one misfortune after another. These two pedagogues successfully made it clear to him that honesty and love of truth were virtues they did not look for in pupils (Hesse, 2020).

Poor school education is also recorded in *Peter Camenzind*'s account of punishment inflicted on pupils by the teacher (Hesse, 2013b). In fact, when his maturity allowed him to reflect with more distance, in *Steppenwolf* he accuses teachers of being thrifty, who pass for normal and even socially valuable (Hesse, 1975), something inherent to his experience (Hesse, 2020). This is how Pierre (Rosshalde) describes his teacher (Hesse, 2013c):

“Oh yes, only he's so boring. When he tells a story it's not for the pleasure, it's just another lesson, and the end is always that good children must do like this or like that” (p. 16).

Of course, not all criticism falls on the school, but also on the family, with a certain maternal idealisation, which is typical of her life. His mother was full of music, his father wasn't, he couldn't sing (Hesse, 2020). The family is a place of melancholy and doubt about how to raise children well. Something that stands out as an unfinished road: A father can give his child the nose and the eyes and even the mind as an inheritance, but not the soul. It is new in every human being (p. 54) and reverts to an inevitable education, as this dialogue in *Siddhartha* (Hesse, 2023e) shows:

“You are not strict with him, you do not punish him, you do not command him - because you know that gentleness is stronger than severity, that water is stronger than rock, that love is stronger than force. Very good, I praise you. But is it not perhaps a mistake on your part not to be strict with him, not to punish him? Do you not chain him with your love? Do you not shame him daily with your goodness and patience and make it still more difficult for him?” (p. 100).

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this article is to reveal the adolescent soul in the literary creation of someone who lived it intensely. In his works it is as if Hesse proposes to the adolescent to investigate the answer to these two questions: 1) Who am I? 2) What am I doing in the world?

As for the first question, Who am I, Hesse traces the path of one's own identity without establishing idealities. There are no heroes or icons. There are people, with good and bad things, who deal with their ethical matter in the best, or worst, way they can. In almost all of them there is a special glow: that of rebelliousness, a *sine qua non* condition that allows him to move forward, which he christens a Little Man (Hesse, 2020) and which, when it emerges, gives rise to resentment at the abrupt awakening of childhood. A turning point that catalogues by making the reader an accomplice wafting feeling of happiness that usually accompanies our walks on childhood paths that appears in *Beneath the Wheel*, in which the repression of this rebellion is the cause of death. Criticism of the school system, the source of almost all ills, is maintained throughout the stages. Death will also be a constant theme, dealing with suicide, which is of great concern today (Kim, 2021) and which cast a shadow over Hesse's adolescence.

The second question, what am I doing in the world, is linked to knowledge. One comes to this world, and it is worth knowing, with an insatiable curiosity (Hesse, 2020), which he admits to having been awakened by children's literature. In his mother's tales there was an abundance of worlds and bridges for his reverie. We have seen passion for music, philosophy, nature and literature being the basis of moral formation. Hesse's cultural background was obviously more advanced than that of most people. However, emulating the enjoyment of culture - something so bourgeois, as he himself labels it (Hesse, 2020, p. 264) - is what makes the characters not only survive, but make culture the meaning of their lives, increasing as the years go by. The more *Siddhartha*'s father matures, the more he values culture, with travelling companions being notorious in the third stage, along with bonds. It is not only knowledge that allows us

to stay afloat, but also to bond, through friendship, love, family or respect for a mentor. Intermingled in a variety of circumstances, the most obvious being friendship and love relationships. From the subliminal homosexual love between *Narcissus and Golmund*, to the flood of passions in *Steppenwolf*. With defined mentorships, as in *The Bead Game*, to diluted mentorships, as in *Gertrud*. Everything is educated with a fluidity that, without premeditated objectives, proposes an open field of exchange. Sometimes in a positive way, with the recognition of the humility to let oneself be accompanied. Others, in the negative, with conflicts and confrontations.

Bonds are linked to Renewal. In fact, many of his experiences as a teenager mark a before and an after, for example, when bad company - conniving disreputable older students (Hesse, 2020) - determine his outlook on life. Not only that, but they will leave Hesse with an admirable ability to portray those rebellious souls who seek a way out of their labyrinthine existence in sinister ways. In fact, one of his best assets is when he unveils that fatal attraction to what he deviates from the path. This is something we cannot ignore as all adolescents go through it. Hesse will live with crises throughout his life and, despite the hardships, will combat them by reversing them. Served him as a defence, as a shield against the outside world (Hesse, 2020). Torrente Ballester (1962) defined it when he referred to the benefits of not having overcome that combat. Perhaps, if he had done it, even if only approximately, he would not have been fractious, non-conformist or rebellious. A rebelliousness that fits into an answer to the second question, the most essential one being: to live. In *Beneath the Wheel*, it wasn't done, in *Demian*, it was. The individual must have the moral courage to live in accordance with what his inner self dictates (Ziolkowski, 1976). In addition to highlighting his last -and involuntary- great lesson: of the marvellous and inexhaustible complexity of human life (De-las-Heras in Hesse, 1987, p. 42). A vital drive that once again reminds us of Erich Fromm and his biophilia (Fromm, 1976) expressed in *Narcissus and Golmund* (2023c) as "...the vital force of nature in him..." (pp. 28-29).

While it is true that Hesse has sometimes been misunderstood as a mystic and hippie author (Rossi, 2004, p. 96), it is also true that his literary value far exceeds the trivialisation of his books as self-help. It wields situations of pain that put human beings at a crossroads and its literary value is extraordinary. To read his works as spiritual prescriptions means impoverishing his legacy. Although it was a bestseller for decades, it managed to awaken its own uncertainty (Hesse, 2020).

Far from being a remedy, what it can generate for the adolescent is a fruitful encounter. Years ago, in a conversation, an adolescent therapist commented that one of the things that bothered him most was that his patients could not find the words to express what they were feeling. And if there is one thing the act of reading has, it is to provide them generously, in addition to other benefits that should matter little to us when we enjoy it. When Hesse describes adolescence as that "a moving sea of riddles and beginnings" (Hesse, 2023g, p. 10) it is already a good pretext for this encounter from a humanist perspective (Sanjuán-Álvarez, 2011). A confluence that can allow understanding of oneself because "which even the best-guided youth has no guide, but must find its way and rescue by its own efforts" (Hesse, 2023g, p. 139), even if it is not at all easy. It is the process towards oneself, the *Weg nach Innen*, that self-searching characteristic of so many of Hermann Hesse's characters (Vilella, 2007) that must inevitably lead us to the risk of living. A risk that can entail the most disturbing aspects of existence, just as it happens to Hesse's characters. But the risk is worth the reward, as Siegfried Unseld comments in his epilogue: if he had a message it was this: take courageous risks with your obstinacy, be as free and submissive as Peter Camenzind and Josef Knecht. Hesse was. His way of thinking, his way of acting and his life were identical (Hesse, 2020).

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