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HESSE, WOOLF, AND THE "ART OF (RE)CONSTRUCTION"

A Comparative Study of Der Steppenwolf *(1927) and* The Waves *(1931)*

ABSTRACT: Written at the end of the 1920s, Hermann Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf* (1927) and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) are marked by the developments of their time, psychoanalysis in particular. However, this article will show that far from being a literary transposition of psychoanalytical theories – with which Hesse and Woolf partially disagreed – these two novels propose a different conception of the subject. This article will demonstrate that the novelistic divisions as well as the multiplication of voices generate the presence of different points of view that enter into dialogue with each other and interweave until they form the novels themselves. I will eventually argue that these novels, conceived as the result of a dynamic between deconstruction and reconstruction of the self, constitute a modernization of the *Bildungsroman* that I would like to call *Gebildete Romane* ("constructed novels").

KEYWORDS: Modernism; Comparatism; Hermann Hesse; Virginia Woolf; (20th century) Novel; Polyphony; Fragmentation; Construction; Totality; Subject; Identity; Psychoanalysis; Self-writing.

> To the falconer, M. T.,
> who guides me with his constant help and support.

"Things fall apart," wrote the Irish poet William Butler Yeats in his famous 1919 poem, "The Second Coming," "the centre cannot hold"[1]. Written at the end of the 1920s, Hermann Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf* (1927) and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) are deeply rooted in the many upheavals that shook Europe at the turning of the century: the Great War, the revision of Descartes' *cogito*, the death of God, Darwin's theory of evolution, the awareness of the limits of both science and language, and many others. Now, what if this centre mentioned by Yeats referred to the conception that individuals

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[1] Note on the quotation system: English translations of passages from the *Steppenwolf* are taken from Hesse 2012 [1927]. The references are directly given between brackets, with the mention "*SW*". The reference in these brackets is systematically followed by a footnote which provides the equivalent passage in the original German text: Hesse 2019 [1927]. The references for the passages from *The Waves* are directly given between brackets, with the mention "*TW*"). The edition used in the paper is Woolf 2000 [1931].

used to have of themselves? It would mean that, from whatever end one approaches the problem, the beginning of the twentieth century strongly and deeply challenged the notion of identity. Among the myriad of events that probably influenced this mutation, it is certain that psychological and psychoanalytical discoveries played an important role in this process of deconstructing and reconstructing the self: on the one hand, they showed how polymorphic, fragmented and unknown to themselves individuals were; on the other, they proposed models to explain this internal revolution.

However, if many artists, such as Hesse and Woolf, have recognized that Freud has "opened a new space for subjectivity" (Levallois 2005, 14; my translation), that psychoanalysis has clearly contributed to "break down *the box of representation*" (Vanchéri 2011, 46; my translation) and has led to an astonishing number of artistic innovations, many of them also consider that his "naturalist theory has fixed the unstable and moving field of subjective life and its expression in formulations and systematization that do not take into account its complexity, the diversity of its transformations and its renewal in the dynamics of the relationship to the self" (Levallois 2005, 14; my translation). In an article significantly entitled "Freudian Fiction" (1920), Virginia Woolf criticizes J.D. Beresford's novel, *An Imperfect Mother* by arguing that Beresford's reliance on psychoanalytical theory "simplifies rather than complicates, detracts rather than enriches" how a literary work could serve to explore the human psyche. A few years later, in *Die Nürnberger Reise* (1927), Hermann Hesse writes: "[p]sychoanalysis appeared to be a helpful resource, and has brought progress, but no author, however, be they a psychoanalyst or an analytically trained writer, has yet freed this kind of psychological science from its carapace of overly narrow, overly dogmatic, overly vain academia" (Hesse 1927, 303; my translation).

Following these comments, it thus appears that even though artists recognized and consciously benefit from psychoanalytical revolutions[2], they were simultaneously striving to find alternate and perhaps more authentic ways of presenting and exploring "that queer conglomeration of incongruous things – the modern mind," as Woolf puts in in "The Narrow Bridge of Art" (Woolf 1960, 18).

In this article, I will focus on *Der Steppenwolf* and *The Waves* to show that one of these alternatives can be found in what Hermann Hesse has called the "art of reconstruction" (*Aufbaukunst*):

> What we here term the art of reconstruction is a way of filling in the gaps in science's inadequate view of human psychology [...]. Just as writers create a drama from a handful of characters, we are forever

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[2] Hermann Hesse makes it very clear in his essay "Künstler und Psychoanalyse" (1926). Similarly, roughly 200 artists (among whom Woolf and Hesse) signed the homage letter written (most certainly by Thomas Mann) for Freud's 80th birthday (1936) in which they acknowledged their artistic and intellectual debt to the father of psychoanalysis. See Jones 1957, 205.

able to regroup the separate pieces of our dismantled selves and thus offer them new roles to play, new excitements, situations that are constantly fresh. Look what I mean! (*SW* 209-210[3])

By analysing the interplay between the different sections of the narrative and the characters' voices, I will demonstrate that if the authors indeed deconstruct the narrative by using a fragmented and multifaceted structure – portraying, as explained by many critics, the fragmentation of the subject – all these different parts and points of view merge to form a "reconstructed" unity that proposes a personal answer to the question of identity raised by psychoanalysis: the very novel we are reading and that I will eventually call – because of its kinship to the *Bildungsroman* – "Gebildeten Roman": "constructed novel."

"Look what I mean!," writes Hesse. Let's thus have a look.

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Der Steppenwolf and *The Waves* are each composed of multiple distinct pieces: one needs only to open the book to realize it. *Der Steppenwolf* is indeed divided into three embedded parts: the "Editor's Preface" introduces "Harry Haller's Notebooks," in which is inserted the independent "Tract of the Steppenwolf[4]." A fourth part could even be added if we consider that the "mask ball" and the "magic theatre" episodes constitute a different section of the notebooks, since they are hallucinations and therefore change the modalities (and perception) of the narration[5]. On the other hand, *The Waves* is divided into "two different currents," to use Woolf's terminology (Woolf 1977-1984, "28 May 1929") for a total of eighteen sections: nine "interludes" (kind of autonomous prose poems which, when put together, depict a scenery from dawn to dusk, from spring to winter[6], printed in italics) which systematically introduces – and foreshadows – nine "dramatic soliloquies," *i.e.* very complex networks interweaving the individual utterances of the six different characters, Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny, and Louis.

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[3] "Wir ergänzen daher die lückenhafte Seelenlehre der Wissenschaft durch den Begriff, den wir Aufbaukunst nennen […]. Wie der Dichter aus einer Handvoll Figuren ein Drama schafft, so bauen wir aus den Figuren unsres zerlegten Ichs immerzu neue Gruppen, mit neuen Spielen und Spannungen, mit ewig neuen Situationen. Sehen Sie!" (246)

[4] Hermann Hesse even explicitly asked his editor to print the Tract on a different paper, with a different font, to look like a small leaflet inserted inside the book : "the bright yellow tract cover is my idea, and it was my special wish to make the strange, fairground character that the tract has in the story quite strongly visible, and the publisher was very much against it for reasons of taste; I had to seriously fight to get it accepted." (Michels 2016, 119) As pointed by Peter Hutchinson, this constitutes "the first instance of such a technique in German literature". (Hutchinson 2007, 157)

[5] On this subject, one could refer to Seurat 2016.

[6] This technique thus already hints at the dynamic between fragmentation and reconstruction.

As an illustration, the novel opens on a two-page first interlude in which an unknown heterodiegetic narrator depicts a sea where the sun is progressively rising (thus allegorically introducing the childhood of the character):

> *The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.*

This first interlude is then immediately followed by the first networks of dramatic soliloquies:

"I see a ring," said Bernard, "hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light."

"I see a slab of pale yellow," said Susan, "spreading away until it meets a purple stripe."

"I hear a sound," said Rhoda, "cheep, chirp; cheep, chirp; going up and down."

"I see a globe," said Neville, "hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill."

"I see a crimson tassel," said Jinny, "twisted with gold threads."

"I hear something stamping," said Louis. "A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps." (TW 5)

It can thus be seen that there are a lot of different parts and voices fragmenting the narrative (as will be seen, each part and each voice say some things *similarly different*), but also that these different parts are strongly connected.

However, to better understand the meaningful dynamic of these two modernist texts and to go deeper into this relationship between fragmentation and unity, deconstruction and (re)construction, it is necessary to follow, Jane Goldman's advice and ask ourselves: "who is speaking?," "from which perspective?," and "about what?" (Goldman 2006, 37).

Let's thus have a *closer* look.

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In *Der Steppenwolf*'s fictive "Editor's Preface," the reader deals with an unidentified editor (it is only mentioned that he is the nephew of Harry Haller's host) who shares the little he knows about Harry Haller. The editor thus proposes an external – but not impersonal – depiction of the main character of the story. He then provides the fictive (and actual) reader with Harry Haller's personal notebooks. In these notebooks, Harry Haller exposes his internal turmoil and his encounters with the other protagonists of the novel, most particularly Hermine, Pablo, and Maria. Although each of these characters expresses, through dialogues, their own vision of Harry Haller, the Notebooks still propose an allegedly more accurate and authentic description of Haller's innermost

intimacy since they are written from his own perspective in what is presented as his diary, a medium normally used for private inner investigation or description. Finally, in the "Tract of the Steppenwolf," a completely unknown narrator – whose presence is almost perfectly hidden by the impersonal tone of scientific discourse[7] – provides us with a "cool and highly objective" (*SW* 72) description of Haller, made by someone "uninvolved" (*SW* 72[8]), as he himself describes it.

It can thus be noticed that even though both the perspective, the narrator, and their investment in the narrative change (there is successively a homo-, auto-, and heterodiegetic narration), the subject – or *object* – of these discourses constantly remains Harry Haller's personality. The different parts thus describe the very same element from their own point of view, each completing and confronting the others, without any position of authority. It should indeed be highlighted that none of these different sections can be fully trusted.

As mentioned earlier, the unidentified editor of the preface knows very little about Harry Haller, as he himself admits in the very first paragraph of the Preface: "Since I am wholly ignorant of his background and past life my actual knowledge of the man is scanty" (*SW* 3[9]). More than that, he actually presents Haller through his own memories or perhaps, more exactly, through the *impressions* that Haller has left on him: "I have, however, retained a strong and I must say, despite everything, congenial impression of his personality" (*SW* 3[10]). He describes the owner of the manuscript as a mysterious being to whom one would be simultaneously attracted and frightened:

> I well remember the odd and highly contradictory impression he made on me during this first encounter […] In general everything about the man suggested that he was a visitor from an alien world, from some lands overseas […]. And yet the whole man had an air about him that was alien and, so it seemed to me, hostile or ill disposed […]. I liked it [his face] in spite of its alien expression. (SW 4-5[11])

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[7] A stimulating and significative difference can therefore be drawn between the *unknown* and (almost) impersonal narrator of the Tract and the *unidentified* (but incarnated) editor of the Preface.

[8] "Das andre kühl und mit dem Anschein hoher Objektivität …, [geschrieben] von einem Außensthenden" (88)

[9] Es ist nur wenig, was ich über ihn weiß, und namentlich ist seine ganze Vergangenheit und Herkunft mir unbekannt geblieben." (7)

[10] "Doch habe ich von seiner Persönlichkeit einen starken und, wie ich trotz allem sagen muß, sympathischen Eindruck behalten." (7)

[11] "Ich habe den sonderbaren und sehr zwiespältigen Eindruck nicht vergessen, den er mir beim ersten Begegnen machte […].Überhaupt machte der ganze Mann den Eindruck, als komme er aus einer fremden Welt, etwa aus überseeischen Ländern, […] dennoch war um den ganzen Mann herum eine fremde und, wie mir scheinen wollte, ungute oder feindliche Atmosphäre […] trotz jenem Ausdruck von Fremdheit gefiel es [Hallers Gezicht] mir." (8-10)

This feeling is very similar to what the German theologian Rudolph Otto has called *mysterium trememdum et fascinans*. Incidentally, the editor quite significantly talks about Haller's "*rätselhafte Fremdheit*[12]" that could be translated as "mysterious strangeness," an element that the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung – who supervised one of Hesse's therapies – considers to be at the core of every archetype and which place the subject "in a state of seizure, that is, of passive submission" (Jung 1971, 503; my translation). Hence, notwithstanding the fact that personal opinions and vague remembrances about a person of whom we know very little should be considered with great caution, it appears that the editor's description should be seen as simultaneously reliable *and* unreliable, since it is authentic but limited to the editor's perception and subjectivity[13]. I therefore do not agree with Siegfried Unseld, who, in his doctoral thesis, claims that the editor proposes an objective description of Harry Haller (Unseld 1951, 117).

Similarly, while, as indicated above, the tract is said to be cold and highly objective, it, however, clearly begins by what is notoriously considered an indicator of a fairy tale: "Once upon a time, there was a man called Harry" (*SW* 47[14]). This directly calls into question the accuracy and veracity of what we are going to read. As in the Preface, there is an indecision gravitating around the reliability of this section[15]. The same feeling is present with the Notebooks: even though they are meant to be authentic, they contain too many surreal elements not to be taken *cum grano salis*. One could simply think about all the different characters Haller encounters who uncannily know his desires, fears and ambitions (a large majority of critics have aptly associated them with the Jungian different parts of the self), or again about mask-ball and magic theatre episodes which clearly hint at a hallucination. As specified by the editor:

> I had no possible means of checking how far the experiences recounted by Haller in this manuscript corresponded to reality. That they are for the most part imaginative fictions, I don't doubt, but not in the sense of stories arbitrarily invented. I see them rather as attempts to express deeply felt psychological processes by presenting them in the guise of things actually occurring before our eyes. I suspect that the partly fantastical things that happen in Haller's writings originate from the last period of his stay here, and I have no doubt that they are based on his experience of some slice of external reality. (SW 21[16])

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[12] "Nachdem ich nun denn so vorgegriffen habe, erübrigt es sich, noch weiter über die rätselhafte 'Fremdheit' Hallers zu sprechen" (16)

[13] Besides, it can also be noticed that the editor is inconsistant. For example, at some point of his preface, he indeed indicates that he has "no desire […] indulge in psychology" (*SW* 10). Only one paragraph further he however notes that he "can't help including a psychological comment" (*SW* 11).

[14] "Es war einmal einer namens Harry" (54)

[15] Some critics, such as Theodore Ziolkowski, even consider that the tract is a production of a schizophrenic Harry Haller (Ziolkowski 1971, 197).

[16] "Es war mir nicht möglich, die Erlebnisse, von denen Hallers Manuskript erzählt, auf ihren Gehalt an Realität nachzuprüfen. Ich zweifle nicht daran, daß sie zum größten Teil Dichtungen sind, nicht aber im Sinn willkürlicher Erfindung, sondern im Sinne eines Ausdrucksversuches, der tief erlebte seelische

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This analysis of *Der Steppenwolf*'s structure is therefore quite different from those proposed by Theodore Ziolkowski or Dhority Lynn. On the basis of an isolated declaration of Hesse, Ziolkowski compares the novel's structure to a sonata (for him, the preface corresponds to the *exposition*, the notebooks to the *development*, the tract to *recapitulation*; Ziolkowski 1971, 189). Lynn, who explicitly opposes the former[17], rather advocates for a "progressive development of the themes which are presented in expanding perspective" (Lynn 1974, 151). Even though these two perspectives brought stimulating insights and help "illuminate the structural organization of the work" (Lynn 1974, 149), none, however, consider the structure in terms outside of linearity and teleology. In their analyses, there is a constant progress without oppositions, the latter parts being considered more complete than the former. "Such an interpretation causes loss of perspective because the reader is not able to move freely from level to the other" (Tusken 1974, 161), notes Lewis Tusken. Now, more than a sonata, *Der Steppenwolf* works both as an impressionist and a cubist painting: on the one hand, the multiplication of the different voices and parts, each expressing their personal and *reliably unreliable* opinion about a single subject, corresponds to different subjective distortions of how a reality (here: Harry Haller) is perceived, none being more valid than the other[18]. On the other hand, while these fragmentary and insufficient points of view indeed deconstruct both the narrative and Haller's identity, it is also them that bind the different facets of that constitutes the binding of both the book and of Haller's personality. It is their gathering and superposition in the novel that we are currently reading (which also exists, as such, into the diegetic reality) that allows the reader to have a more exhaustive and multifaceted vision of Harry Haller's identity.

Indeed, even though it is true that all major perspectives of the narrative intertwine in the famous "magic theatre," "a modernist fun house" (Stelzig 1988, 219) working as a *mise en abîme* that explains the functioning and ambition of the novel we are reading[19], a less-often-mentioned passage that illustrates this process is Harry Haller's immediate reaction after his reading of the Tract. After noticing that some passages of the Tract reminded him of a poem he wrote some weeks ago[20], Haller indeed explains that the

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Vorgänge im Kleide sichtbarer Ereignisse darstellt. Die zum Teil phantastischen Vorgänge in Hallers Dichtung stammen vermutlich aus der letzten Zeit seines hiesigen Aufenthaltes, und ich zweifle nicht daran, daß ihnen auch ein Stück wirklichen, äußeren Erlebens zugrunde liegt." (29)

[17] Dhority Lynn argues, with some good reason, that Ziolkowski somehow forces the novel structure to fit in the mould a sonata, thus missing – or negating – some important features of the text.

[18] For a recent and stimulating study about the narratological interests and impacts of polyphony and polyperspectivity, see Touya 2015.

[19] The magic theatre is indeed presented as a fantastical artistic place where one can fragment and reconstruct his personality by taking into account different points of view, what the *Steppenwolf* actually does.

[20] "The Steppenwolf" poem, incidentally published by Hermann Hesse, under his own name, with the very same title, in his poetry book *Krisis*.

Tract and his poem propose two different portraits of himself, both true (and false) to some degree. It is only after sleeping on it that he realizes that the two actually work together and that this reunion offers him a clearer vision of himself and the world:

> Now I had two portraits of myself to hand […]. And both these portraits together, my melancholy, halting words in the poem and the clever study by some unknown hand, caused me pain. Both of them were right … Waking towards midday, I was soon able to view my situation clearly again. The booklet was there on my bedside table together with the poem […]. (SW 72; 75[21])

By gathering these two fragments on Harry Haller's bedside table, Hermann Hesse thus figures the book we are currently reading and hints at the necessity of the (re)construction of identity through art, alongside the models proposed by science (since, as aptly observed by Breugelmans the Tract should be considered as a "mock psychoanalytical tract" (Breugelmans 1981, 39)).

Even though the process of polyphonic diffraction might appear as quite similar to the one at work in *Der Steppenwolf*, in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* it is not the subject of the characters' discourse that is identical but the source from which these numerous discourses emanate. Indeed, despite Woolf's acknowledged efforts to write "an abstract mystical eyeless book" (Woolf 1977-1984, "Wednesday 7 November, 1928") without a narrator, there is still some evidence of its presence (to which everything will eventually converge)[22].

First, the very existence of the "interludes" clearly indicates the presence of a heterodiegetic narrator. Second, the systematic mentions of "said X" work as didascalies do in a play script: even though they allow a drastic shrinking of the narrator's role, they actually underline the craftsmanship of a scripter in the text (incidentally, Virginia Woolf refused to call *The Waves* "a novel," preferring the term "playpoem"; see Woolf 1977-1984, "Wednesday 7 November, 1928"). Finally, it is significant to notice that the writing style does not vary at all throughout the book, neither temporally, nor personally. On the one hand, from the beginning (which corresponds to the characters' childhood) to the "end" (which corresponds to their maturity), there is no evolution in their linguistic capacities: the infant Rhoda expresses herself the same way as the teenage Rhoda, or the adult Rhoda. On the other hand, except from the different imagery systems and semantic fields linked to each character[23], their speeches also present a very similar level of lexical,

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[21] "Da hatte ich nun zwei Bildnisse von mir in Händen […] Und diese beiden Bildnisse zusammen, mein schwermütig stammelndes Gedicht und die kluge Studie von unbekannter Hand, taten mir beide weh, hatten beide recht, […] Gegen Mittag erwacht, fand ich in mir alsbald die geklärte Situation wieder, das kleine Büchlein lag auf dem Nachttisch und mein Gedicht …" (88)

[22] Although this paper will not venture into such considerations, it is partly inappropriate to speak of a "narrator" in the case of *The Waves*. For recent considerations on "the optional narrator", see Patron 2022.

[23] On this matter, see Balossi 2014. Through a corpus linguistic approach, the author sought to establish the presence or lack of linguistic differentiation between the six characters' soliloquies.

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syntactic, and grammatical complexity: the discourse of the infant Rhoda is strikingly the same as those of the teenage Neville or the adult Jinny. As Eric Warner puts it: "[a]n undifferentiated high style unites them all" (Warner 1987, 80 ; on these two particular aspects, see Gorsky 1972, 458-459 and Naremore 1973, 151-189).

All these elements thus clearly suggest that there is someone behind the construction of the novel, someone writing both the interludes and the soliloquies of every character. However, is this special narrator really heterodiegetic? Is it really "an abstract mystical eyeless book"? That is what readers are led to think until Bernard's exclusive and long soliloquy at the end of the book.

In this soliloquy, the reader is led to understand that Bernard "the story-teller" is in fact the "phrase-maker" – literally – of the narrative: "We are all phrases in Bernard's story" (*TW* 51), says Neville; "I must make phrases and phrases" (*TW* 21), says Bernard. He is the one who wrote the book we are currently reading. Among other elements, this sudden shift is made visible by the fact that it is not a soliloquy anymore: Bernard now explicitly addresses someone: he is speaking about his own life to a narratee, who could be associated with the actual reader of the book: "To explain to *you* the meaning of *my* life" (*TW* 183; emphasis mine). This overt and new relationship between Bernard and the reader institutes him as the one responsible for the whole story. To strengthen this view, it should indeed be noted that, in this soliloquy, Bernard not only exposes the workings of the narrative (as in *Der Steppenwolf*'s magic theatre) but also that he is using both the imagery of the interludes (Richardson 1973, 701) and those linked to each character (Freedman 1971, 255) thus confirming that he is indeed the one who produced the novel we have been reading so far, since he could not know either of them otherwise: "when Bernard, at the termination of the novel, utilizes the language of the interchapters in his soliloquy, the implication that *The Waves* is his 'story', his work, seems evident," aptly notes Mary Steussy Shanahan (1975, 71). She and J. W. Graham are therefore right when they argue that "Virginia Woolf's decision to break [the] prevailing convention[s] of the book, […] alter[s] the reader's relation […] to the work as a whole" (Graham 1970, 207) and that what were "formerly disparate fragments, arbitrary products of an apparently anonymous voice, are suddenly possessed of an integral significance" (Shanahan 1975, 71): they now are the different fragments of a unique constructed story, the work of a single identified "ingenious constructor," as Hesse significantly call the director of the "magic theatre." "The six characters were supposed to be one," reveals Woolf herself in a letter to G. L. Dickinson (Woolf 1975-1980, "Oct. 27th 1931"), a little more than one year after the publication of *The Waves*.

As in *Der Steppenwolf*, it can therefore be argued that *The Waves* also works as an impressionist and cubist painting: on the one hand, since every character shares their own "moments of being" (to borrow Woolf's expression[24]), it underlines the multiplicity

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[24] Which also was a potential title for the novel, as Cécile Wasjbrot, reminds it in the preface "La Boucle du Temps" she wrote for her French translation of *The Waves*. (Wasjbrot 2020, 22).

of Bernard's experience and perspective; on the other hand, Bernard's identity is made by the sum – "now to sum up" (*TW* 183), says Bernard at the very beginning of his final soliloquy – of the fragmented selves of the other characters. He could therefore be compared to that "true self" described by Woolf three years earlier in *Orlando* (1928): a "Captain Self, [a] Key self, which amalgamates and controls [all the selves]" (Woolf 2021, 237)[25]. As in Hesse's work, it is therefore the juxtaposition of different points of view and perceptions, all gathered in a novel, that proposes an answer to the question "Who and what is 'I'?," as both Minow-Pinkey (1987) and Katz (1995) have also noticed. As Ralph Freedman (who, a decade later, compared Hesse and Woolf's "lyrical novels") puts it: "[c]onstruction was not haphazard, as in psychological association or undirected dream, but composed, as in music and abstract painting" (Freedman 1958, 168).

A difference, however, could be found in the fact that, while, in *Der Steppenwolf*, all the points of view converged, unidirectionally *towards* Harry Haller, in *The Waves* this movement in bidirectional. This process is actually made quite clear in what should be considered as one of the key sentences of the novel: "Let me then create you, you have done as much for me" (*TW* 63), says Bernard. In this paradoxical loop, it appears that Bernard is indeed simultaneously *giving and receiving* many shapes: he takes the voices of the others, imagines their experience and he changes faces to feel his self differently, perhaps more authentically. There is therefore a complex but stimulating dynamic between this macro-voice that is composed of micro-voices, that in turn appears to be the one that created and organized the latter. But once again, the sole means to fix these never-ending back-and-forth movements akin to those of the waves, of life and its relentless game of identification, is to give it a stop, *a full stop*, a finished form, through the work of art. As powerfully asserted by the very last sentence of the novel: "*The waves broke on the shore*" (TW 228; italics original).

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"There is no stability in this world. […] I am Bernard, myself" (*TW* 88), said Bernard, thus echoing Yeats' lines quoted at the very beginning of this article, except from the fact that (at this point) it seems that his centre hold. By analysing the interplay between the different sections of the narrative, the characters' voices and the novels as a whole, this article has shown that, while *Der Steppenwolf* and *The Waves* first appear to depict the splitting of the subject by splitting the narrative (which they indeed do), they also strive to reassemble these fragments into new perceptions of the individual. By deconstructing and reconstructing the narrative, they challenge our way of representing the self by

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[25] In an essay about De Quincey, "Impassioned Prose", Woolf also writes that "it is only by gathering up and putting together these echoes and fragments that we arrive at the true nature of our experience." (Woolf 1960, 40).

simultaneously forcing us to see identity as plural and dynamic (Harry Haller is perceived differently by different persons while Bernard takes up many different faces), but also as polymorphically stable, since their personality and the fragmented novel can be reconstructed by putting the different parts and points of view together. As explained by Eugene Stelzig (in a commentary about Hesse, but which turns out to be valid for Woolf as well[26]):

> Hesse's [and Woolf's] aim is not to refract and fragment the self out of existence, but rather to explode the fiction of an identity simplex, or simply unified, in order to work toward a more representative and inclusive sense of personal identity as a complex unity-in-multeity. The aim of [their] perspectival and perspicacious self-understanding in [their] novel[s] is to destabilize or derange a 'normal' and much-too-limited conception of identity in order to arrive at a truer arrangement, a more substantial mimesis [...]. (Stelzig 1988, 210)

Besides being modernized *Bildungsromane* (in which the classic life-initiation of the hero is replaced by the progressive integration of the different facets of her/his psyche, a process very akin to what Carl Gustav Jung called the "individuation"[27]), these two novels thus constitute what I would like to call *Gebildete Romane* ("constructed novels"), *i.e.* novels that explicitly play on a dialectic between fragmentation and composition, deconstruction and reconstruction to propose a literary way of representing the self[28]. They work as a puzzle (in *Der Steppenwolf*'s case) or a patchwork (in *The Waves*'s) in which it is the reader's role to either reassemble the different pieces of the narrative or to follow its complex knitting in order to understand the main character's polymorphic identity[29]. Even though Pedro Eiras talks here about the Portuguese modernism of the writers published in *Orpheu*, his observation coupled to my analyses show that this peculiar aspect of the novels could – and perhaps should be – considered as a key feature of modernism:

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[26] Linda Anderson indeed writes something very similar when she argues that "[f]or Woolf the self is a construct which is known as much through its fragmentation as its unity. More than most writers she makes us aware of the process of flux and splitting which underlies, and constantly threatens, any notion of attained subjecthood". (Anderson 2001, 101-102).

[27] Schwarz 2011 argues that *Der Steppenwolf* constitutes a reverse *Bildungsroman*, "a Bildungsroman [...] that has been stood on its head" (403). Egon Schwarz thus aptly noticed the de-realization process but not re-realization one.

[28] Even though every novel is necessarily "built", not every novel puts its "constructed aspect" in the foreground and at the core of its aesthetics.

[29] This double and different movement between the reader's role (who is provided with a seemingly fragmented narrative that he or she must reconstruct) and the author's (who provides the reader with a constructed novel) explains our graphic choice for the term "(re)construction": the reconstructive process and participation of the reader is indeed inscribed in and implied by the author's art of construction.

The modernist experience of the subject rather implies the superimposition of two ways of living: the fragmentation of the unified subject and the desire for unity in all experiences, incapability and capability. It is only in the fusion of these gestures, in the very decline of the totalizing projects into splinters of discourse, that we can define [...] modernism [...] (Eiras 2011, 299).

Furthermore, while Hesse spoke about the "art of the construction," *Gebildete Romane* show that construction is art. While other novels, like *Bildungsromane*, simply *tell* a story (the formation of the hero), both *Der Steppenwolf* and *The Waves*, as physical objects, truly are *the result* of the story: the *Steppenwolf* we read is the *Steppenwolf* published by the fictive Editor and the *The Waves* is Bernard's. Consequently, the result of Haller's and Bernard's identity crisis, the artist's answer to the question "Who is I?" actually *is* the novel: "To explain to you the meaning of my life [...] *I must tell you a story*" (*TW* 183; my emphasis), says Bernard. From this perspective, *Gebildete Romane* could be easily related to what Peter Bürger called an "organic work of art": they "are no longer signs pointing to reality, they *are* reality ...; individual parts and the whole form a dialectical unity ...: the parts can be understood only through the whole, the whole through the parts" (Bürger 2017, 102-103; my translation, italics original). *Gebildete Romane* thus constitute both the process and the answer to the question "Who is I?" Art thus seems to be a tangible way to anchor oneself – and one's self – to life.

However, as pointed out by Maurice Blanchot and more thoroughly by Paul Ricœur in his famous work *Soi-même comme un autre* (1990), there is a profound paradox in trying to represent the polymorphic and never-ending multiplicity of the self by encompassing it in a finished work of art, and, despite the "full stop" mentioned above, artists themselves are all too aware of it:

There is still one last fiction, one fundamental delusion [explains the author of the Steppenwolf Tract] that needs to be laid to rest before we bring our study to a close. All "explanations," all psychological analysis, all attempts at understanding [the self] are reliant upon theories, myths, falsehoods for support [...] Thus, to come straight to the point, "Steppenwolf" is a fiction too [...] we were resorting to deceit in the hope of making ourselves more easily understood. (SW 60-61[30])

There is therefore another paradox here, a paradox that often prevents modernist works from having a clear and definite ending, more specifically when they tackle the notion of identity. Even though, I do not fully agree with Nicolas Poirier's reading of an extract drawn from George Gusdorf's *Lignes de vie 1* – in which Poirier argues that the

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[30] "Zum Schluß unsrer Studie bleibt noch eine letzte Fiktion, eine grundsätzliche Täuschung aufzulösen. Alle 'Erklärungen', alle Psychologie, alle Versuche des Verstehens bedürfen ja der Hilfsmittel, der Theorien, der Mythologien, der Lügen [...] So ist denn auch, um es kurz zu sagen, der „Steppenwolf" eine Fiktion [...] Wenn Harry sich selbst als Wolfsmenschen empfindet und aus zwei feindlichen und gegensätzlichen Wesen zu bestehen meint, so ist das lediglich eine vereinfachende Mythologie. Harry ist gar kein Wolfsmensch [...] so machten wir uns in der Hoffnung auf leichteres Verstandenwerden eine Täuschung zunutze" (74-75).

tension between "a totality in act and the unfinished dimension of all life" cannot "resolve itself within a harmonious structure" (Poirier 2022, 310-311; my translation) – I, however, more agree with Gusdorf who writes that "[f]or those who are their own heroes, the story of their lives is never finished; it is always possible to take up the meaning, to return to oneself, to come back to oneself, in a resumption of interpretations, none of which puts an end to the search" (Gusdorf 1991, 134; my translation). Indeed, unlike Poirier, Gusdorf is only insisting on the circularity of these works and not on their "inharmonious" structure. As life, as identity, novels such as *Der Steppenwolf* or *The Waves* in fact imply or demand to be read again to be grasped in all their complete incompleteness. Regarding the identity topic, it is because they fail to end harmoniously that they are unharmoniously harmonious. If the waves indeed "broke on the shore," as written in the very last sentence, it is only to go back-and-forth again, "following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually," as written in the very first paragraph.

In conclusion, this modernist aporia between deconstruction and (re)construction, continuity and discontinuity seems to be illusory dichotomies that could be solved by understanding differently the terms *totality*, or *infinity,* as suggested by Jean-Michel Rabaté in the introduction of the collective work *1922: Literature, Culture, Politics* (2015, 1-15). This "infinity" is probably one of the reasons why so many interesting and stimulating papers were presented at the international conference "1922/2022 – Total Modernism: Continuity, Discontinuity, and the Experimental Turn," held in Torino on May 18-20, 2022.

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