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Twentieth-Century Transformations of Medieval Hagiography: Hermann Hesse's Creation of a Modern Saint in *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine Hermann Hesse's creation of the modern saint, a twentieth-century contribution to the hagiographical tradition. I assert Hesse's Swabian Pietist upbringing inspired a unique lens for his refashioning of the Middle Ages, which Hesse establishes in his first novel, *Peter Camenzind*, with the protagonist Peter. Through Hesse's hagiographical lens, I explore the emergence and evolution of Hesse's modern saint who is shaped by Hesse's quest to resolve his lifelong internal conflict between art and religion. In Hesse's later novel, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, he finalizes his spiritual experiment with the modern saint who unifies sensuality and spirituality a figure whom Hesse represents with Goldmund. Whether this modern saint is merely an ideal, or if he is possibly a figure that can contribute to the spiritual life of the everyday individual will be answered in the conclusion of this thesis.

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LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

Twentieth-Century Transformations of Medieval Hagiography: Hermann
Hesse's Creation of a Modern Saint in *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and
Goldmund*

by

Sarah Westberg

April 26th, 2017

The report of the investigation undertaken as a
Senior Thesis, to carry two courses of credit in
the Department of English

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Chapter 1: The Middle Ages as Inspiration for Hesse's Interest in Hagiography Hesse's Search for a Modern Saint for the German Youth in the "Golden Twenties"

"The spiritual life of our time is characterized by the weakening of inherited systems, the frantic search for new interpretations of human life...prophets, and founders of congregations, the rank growth of the wildest superstitions" (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 137). Hermann Hesse wrote these words in 1926 in an essay called "Our Age's Yearning for a Philosophy of Life." His words are the starting point of this work, for through them he calls for a radical and new formulation of the past. Meant to help modern Germans navigate a turbulent world of war and economic uncertainties, Hesse believed that renewed artistic traditions could help Germans transcend their contemporary problems.

Hesse's assertion will be examined and explored within this work primarily in the context of his literature; however, Hesse's bold words require context to explain his urgency. A German-born, Swiss Modernist, Hesse recognized the dim prospects of the German youth during the 1920's, yet he remained optimistic that "these audacious [spiritual] experiments.... Should all of them be condemned to failure.... They help them not only to endure this difficult uncertain existence but to value it highly and to sanctify it" (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 140). Hesse's interest in an experiment to artistically reinterpret religious values was intended to validate the self-worth of his fellow Germans. His urgency about this revival of religiosity in 1926 is warranted because of the cultural renaissance of Germany in the 1920's. This movement was called the Golden Twenties and it excluded the jobless working-class youths desperate for an identity-shaping doctrine. In Hesse's own fictional narratives, *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*, he experiments with the reinterpretation of medieval Christianity, answering his own request for a new expression of spirituality. Whether Hesse's reimagination of medieval religion has a legacy will be answered in the conclusion of the work.

As Richard Bodek suggests, the larger impersonal force of the government controlled the alleged solution to the identity crisis of the German youth. Bodek gives perspective for Hesse's essay about a new interpretation of human life and the oppressive factors working against the individual's search for an enduring and meaningful self. The Golden Twenties occurred because of Germany's economic recovery after World War I; however, as Bodek argues, the label "golden" was not applicable to all Germans, specifically the unemployed youth. The German youth that Hesse accused of superficiality "wanted to reconstruct their lives along lines in which they, and not impersonal economic or governmental forces, had control" (Bodek 60). This systemic economic problem created a generational identity crisis. As Bodek explains, it caused the youth to spend their time and money "to empower themselves symbolically against the almost total impotence dictated by their objective economic situation" (Bodek 55). Hesse saw this desire of the German youth to define their identities by money as shortsighted.

Hesse claims that the monetarily powerless individual sought his identity in the wrong way by relying on urban communities brought together by the clothes one wears. He asks rhetorically, "what does our typical modern man have? He has fashion.... Better than nothing, but nevertheless ephemeral, perishable, valueless" (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 137). The fashion that young men in gangs were drawn to, Hesse asserts, is superficial. These youths were drawn to materials that could not support their "deeper human needs...performed by religion and philosophy" (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 137). Hesse argues that material aspirations work only as "feeble [substitutes]" for traditional pre-industrialization rural villages and churches that Hesse saw as morality-instilling structures (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 139). These "so-called cliques," as Bodek explains, are young men attempting to "express their unhappiness with and rebellion against their poverty and general powerlessness" in their lives (Bodek 61). The desire to identify with these groups and to be a

part of something larger resulted in the chasing after fashion that Hesse criticizes: “clothes were expensive, especially in light of the members’ unlikely employment,” yet this was how self-worth was gained by these young men (Bodek 61). These economic and societal pressures, which Bodek explains the youth were subjected to, suggest why materialism was an attempt at shaping identity. Hesse argues against this fashion-seeking youth and asserts a need for a self-reliant moral foundation with a cost-efficient solution in mind: the revitalization of faith.

It is not that surprising that Hesse encouraged revisiting the past as an answer to the identity crisis of the German youth. As a modernist writer, Hesse is—as Ezra Pound might say— “making it new,” similar to other modern contemporaries. As a member of the German Romantic literary movement of the twentieth century, Hesse emphasized an appreciation for aesthetics. As an individual, though, he combined his artistic sensibility with an admiration for spirituality. Similar to the modern German youth, Hesse felt controlled by the force of his Swabian Pietist upbringing, a foundational tenet that shaped his literary perspective. While Hesse considered his Swabian Pietism as oppressive, he was self-reliant and sought an alternative spiritual solution by reshaping the hagiographical tradition inherited from medieval Christianity. Hesse reimagined a saint from the Middle Ages to resolve his conflict against his religion. His modernist approach unified the artistic and religious self in the form of a saint. In relation to his fellow Germans, Hesse urged a similar revitalization of religion for an individual’s spiritual needs.

This modernist fusion of art and religion was Hesse’s prophetic answer to the German youth. It involved repurposing the past and reformulating Christianity through a modern lens. Hesse, within the genre of the modern novel, demonstrated the spiritual experiment as a more universal method that reshaped medieval hagiography. As explained in the second chapter, hagiography as a genre is perpetually evolving; even in the Middle Ages

it took many forms. Hesse furthers the evolution of this medieval genre by introducing another type of saint for a modern German audience. The modern saint that Hesse creates does not deny the artistic and sensual aspects of life. Instead, Hesse's saint is spiritually devout while also prone to embracing the full range of human experience.

For Hesse, as both a modernist and an individual, the modern saint emerges from the duality of art and religion that transforms throughout his literary career. Hesse's effort to redefine spirituality with an aesthetic influence is elucidated in the two novels *Peter Camenzind* (1904) and *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1928). In Hesse's earlier and first fictional narrative he does not reconcile the duality of art and spirituality. Rather, his protagonist Peter initially embraces the world of art, but then abandons his ambitions to selflessly care for his father, adopting a more traditional saintly lifestyle. In his later novel, *Goldmund* resolves the duality of art and piety. While an individual cannot experience both aspects of life in the same moment, Hesse's novel suggest that the human experience must pendulate between art and piety to achieve a sense of unity. *Goldmund* succeeds by expressing his devotion through wood carving saints while receiving his inspiration through sensual encounters with women. Through *Goldmund's* story, Hesse's resolves the duality of art and piety, establishing an ideal of modern sainthood. Whether this ideal can appeal only in theory or be emulated will be discussed in the conclusion of this work. Hesse's wrestling with this duality extended over twenty-four years of reading, reflection, and writing, but the origin of Hesse's idiosyncratic approach to reinterpreting medieval hagiographical traditions began because of his religious upbringing.

Hesse's Life: Swabian Pietism, Academic Aestheticism, and Hesse's Literary Career

Hermann Hesse was born July 2nd, 1877, in the city Calw, in Swabia. As a child, he was "hypersensitive, lively, and [an] extremely headstrong child" (Life and Art Mileck 5). Hesse's headstrong will only assumed a larger role in Hesse's life as he grew older and

realized that he wished to become “a poet or nothing at all,” which was an aspiration antithetical to his parents’ wishes (Hesse qtd. in Stephenson xii). When he was young, he attended grammar school in Calw, and at fifteen Hesse went to the Protestant theological seminar in Kolster Maulbronn. The building, an old Cistercian monastery, impressed itself upon and haunted Hesse. He wrote about his experiences there numerous times throughout his literature, as in his novels *Beneath the Wheel*, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and *The Glass Bead Game*. After Hesse threatened suicide twice during his education at Maulbronn, he was sent to Bad Boll, a mental institution. Hesse’s inability to conform to his parents’ expectations arose because Swabian Pietism, a severe form of Lutheranism, would not allow for artistic expression. A few years later, when Hesse worked as an apprentice bookseller in Tübingen from 1895 through 1899, he finally dismissed his severe Protestant upbringing. He became acquainted with aesthetics of German Romanticism and eventually the religious adoration of St. Francis, which he came to through “Burckhardt’s *Zur Cultur der Renaissance inn Italien* (1860) around 1899 (Classen 37). This biographical survey, which highlights Hesse’s turning points in his life, helps explain the influences of Hesse’s literary development and his renewed relationship with Christianity through hagiography, which was also a window on a different kind of Christianity—Catholic and sacramental.

A brief overview of Hesse’s early years does little to illustrate the impact that Hesse’s Swabian Pietism had on his writing. Despite Hesse’s aversion to his own religion, his literary outlook was inevitably shaped by aspects of his Swabian Pietism. In *Veneration and Revolt*, Stephenson claims evidence of Hesse’s Pietistic influence in his writing of the “history, people, and places of [his] native Swabia and [his] Pietist heritage” (xi). Hesse’s inability to wholly reject his religious upbringing is also expressed by his emphasis on individual will emphasized the assertion of a person’s will. Hesse wrote about the individual’s will because Swabian Pietism constricted the human will. Examples of Hesse’s lionization of self will can

be found in both of his fictional narratives. In *Peter Camenzind*, Peter in his youth decides against his father's wishes to leave his rural village to become an artist. Peter's decision to follow his aspiration also occurs to the character Goldmund in Hesse's later work, *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Goldmund must leave the cloister community in his personal search for the Great Mother. Hesse's inclusion of Swabian history and emphasis on characters in his literature with self-will demonstrate Hesse's inability to exclude his religious upbringing from his writing.

Hesse's attempts to break away from his Swabian Pietism in literature also caused his estrangement from his family. As Stephenson explains, "from an early age Hesse was groomed to follow in the footsteps of his father, even more so his grandfather" as a devout Pietist and missionary (xii). This expectation of Hesse was not fulfilled; instead, Hesse attempted to abandon his faith, which only gained him parental persecution. As Stephenson recalls, Hesse considered his Swabian Pietism as "regressive, stern, oppressively dogmatic, and self-limiting" (27). This branch of Lutheranism worked against the young man's "creative talent and open-mindedness" (Stephenson 27). By placing Hesse in a mental institution, his parents strove to help his soul, yet they ultimately drove Hesse to further detest his own faith. By rejecting his repressive religion, Hesse asserted his individuality and estranged himself from his family. This break from tradition provoked Hesse's lifelong struggle to reconcile religion and art.

Hesse's rejection of his religion reflected a collective opinion of Swabian Pietism. Hesse spurned Swabian Pietism because it isolated the individual from the community and the self. While the religion arose, as Stephenson argues, as "a response to an excessive emphasis on religious confessions, the rationalization of religion, and the destruction of the Thirty Years War.... Through an emphasis on personal experience and charitable service in the world," the religion was short-lived (3). It was most influential in Swabia during the

period of 1750-1850, as Stephenson quotes Ziolkowski (xiii). Since Hesse was born a generation after the height of devotion for this reformation, he lived during a period of recoil from Swabian Pietism. One primary religious focus was intimate spiritual experience, which theoretically was innocuous since it involved, as Stephenson emphasizes, “a life of prayer and contemplation” (4). However, Hesse’s father Johannes was a religious recluse that Hesse was expected to imitate when he got older. Hesse rejected this predestined life, first by leaving seminary, and second by leaving his hometown. Although Hesse distanced himself from his religion and his family, gradually isolating himself, he always desired to be a part of a human community instead of focusing only on the company of God.

The isolation from self that repelled Hesse came from “the Pietist principle of ‘breaking the will’” (Stephenson 29); this tenet was one reason, as Stephenson elaborates, why Swabian Pietism was criticized shortly after its short-lived popularity. When Hesse refused to follow in his father’s stead, Hesse’s parents were “unrelenting, psychologically manipulative” and maintained, as Stephenson expresses, “a harsh willingness to ‘exorcise [evil],’” which was Hesse’s will, “with all possible means for the sake of the soul’s salvation” (29). Expressing the reason for his extreme revolt, Hesse writes in a letter to his parents:

My ultimate goal is beauty, or ‘art,’ if you like; I don’t believe my path is any different from yours until one gets to the decisive turning point toward a specifically Protestant form of Christianity.... But let’s not go round and round in circles of words again; we are closer to one another’s truth than we realize (Stephenson 40).

Hesse’s reason for rejecting his parent’s religious approach was grounded in something greater than opposition to Swabian Pietism repression of self-will. Hesse expressed this reinterpretation of religion by imbuing art with sacred character. He believed that his intense desire to create literature would achieve a spiritual elevation similar to that

which his parents gained through their religious practices. Through art, Hesse sought a new inner enlightenment that was later expressed through a recreation of medieval Christianity in his narratives.

Hesse's Research of the Middle Ages and Discovery of St. Francis

While Hesse expanded his knowledge of the Middle Ages during his interest in German Romanticism, Hesse had always been intrigued by medieval literature. Even during his youth, Hesse had a deep fascination with “medieval Latin legends and other types of tales” (Classen 33). Ziolkowski outlines the scope of Hesse’s mature interest in the “great French and German courtly heroic epics to the troubadours and Minnesinger, from Dante to the Goliards” (234). Hesse’s interest in the Middle Ages was not constrained by the specialization of a scholar; instead, personal interest dictated the scope of his reading. His study ranged from works in the Italian Renaissance, including the “earthly novelle of Boccaccio Sacchetti, Bandello, and Firenzuola” to early works of the Middle Ages (Mileck 53). After Hesse’s renewed interest in Romanticism, he was knowledgeable enough to consider a pivotal surge in the Middle Ages. For Hesse, the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (~400) separated “Roman antiquity” from the beginning “atmosphere of the Middle [Ages]” (Hesse qtd. in Wagner 379). Hesse’s surfeit of medieval literature, while not wholly scholarly, functioned to evolve Hesse’s aesthetic appreciation of the Middle Ages into a spiritual exploration of the hagiographical tradition. Mileck recognizes Hesse’s transformed relationship with the Middle Ages after Hesse left his family and was an apprentice book seller:

Hesse’s longtime and many-faceted preoccupation with the past was yet another and even more fruitful secondary manifestation of Romanticism’s impact on him. The Romantics’ grand passion for the golden Middle Ages became Hesse’s fond cultivation, propagation, and imitation of their literary

treasures. Medieval Latin literature centered around Cäsarius von Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*, and the *Gesta Romanorum* was the first of these treasures to attract Hesse. What began in Tübingen as pleasurable reading became an interest in translation, and then spilled over into editorial work (German Romanticism 174).

Just as Hesse's own religion was a catalyst to his appreciation of art, German Romanticism guided Hesse back to religion: "The *Gesta Romanorum* led Hesse to Boccaccio and the Italian novella, the *Dialogus Miraculorum* just as naturally to St. Francis of Assisi and the lives of the saints" (Mileck German Romanticism 176). Hesse's renewed interest in German Romanticism was lasting and comprehensive. Since these works introduced Hesse to the study of saints' lives and inspired him to publish translations, the works mentioned in Mileck's observation will be examined. These works, their authors, as well as other literature that helped ground Hesse's scope of medieval literature will be surveyed briefly.

One medieval genre that engaged Hesse even after his youth were fables. These tales, as Classen refers to them, were both read and published by Hesse. While they were secular fables, Hesse published them alongside other medieval religious works that emphasized adherence to morality. Hesse recognized the overt religiosity of the Middle Ages and compiled edifying works that were both religious and secular. It is useful to note that while Hesse tried to reintroduce the Middle Ages to twentieth century readers through lessons of morality, as in the selected fables that Hesse published with a translated section of the *Gesta Romanorum*, there was not much public interest. Regardless of the public dismissal, Classen notes that Hesse "always pursued...human foibles and recognized in them the basic conditions of human existence" (37). Hesse favored the fables that reminded the public about universal human faults. Of these short secular fables that Hesse included with other religious tales was "Helmbrecht" by Wernher the Gardener. Wernher warns against ambition

with the story of a boy who eventually is hanged because he joins a gang and harms people instead of choosing the traditional livelihood of a farmer. By combining this story with the other short tales in the *Gesta Romanorum* that portrayed the “Middle Ages as a period when the Church dominated all aspects of life and the phenomena of witchcraft and witch hunts were rampant,” Hesse proposes a more universal image of morality (Classen 34). While Hesse’s fictional narratives are the pieces that ultimately achieve public acclaim, Hesse continues his fascination of secular and religious literature throughout his career.

Certain secular works that interested Hesse, but demonstrated his unscholarly approach to the Middle Ages, were the chapbooks of courtly epics. These pieces of literature had little historicity since they were popular and inexpensive pamphlets. Classen recognizes that Hesse discovered these adapted narratives through “Richard Benz’s anthology *Deutsche Volksbücher*” (30). While the material that Benz altered represented the Middle Ages, his adaptations skewed the medieval world. Since Benz made these chapbooks to interest the public of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he portrayed an image that skewed the medieval “orientation, value system, and ethical outlook” (Classen 30). Although Hesse read these works, he did not incorporate their historical inaccuracies in his literature. As Mileck notes in *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Hesse creates an elaborate “medieval world of monasteries, castles, churches, and remote villages, of monks, and priors, peasants, townsmen and knights, artisans and vagabonds, guilds, masters, and apprentices” (Life and Art 214). Since Hesse thrived on learning about the medieval culture and the lives of the common people, these chapbooks only became a part of his medieval repertoire.

In comparison to the range of secular works that interested Hesse, the literature of the Middle Ages was primarily religious. A work that Hesse perceives as merging morality and other ideologies of the Middle Ages is Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Hesse believed the narrative poem to be “an encyclopaedic synthesis of mysticism, scholasticism, metaphysics,

ethics, politics, history, astronomy, etc.” (Hesse qtd. in Wagner 379). This poem may have prompted Hesse to perceive divinity in nature through a Christian lens. Other medieval works that attracted Hesse and highlighted the theme of unification of heaven and earth were the Arthurian legends, such as the *Quest of the Holy Grail*. While these Christian works of the medieval world potentially inspired Hesse’s interest in unifying nature and divinity, there was other more severe religious literature that directly impacted Hesse’s writing.

In relation to Hesse’s religious studies, one piece that likely impacted *Narcissus and Goldmund* was Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*. This piece was a systematic treatise that harmonized all topics of the human and the divine that “carefully explained away or reconciled contradictions” that “occurred within Christian texts” (Rosenwein 268). As Ziolkowski makes note, “during the actual writing of *Nariss* [sic] *and Goldmund* [Hesse] was concerned for months with Sertillanges’s study of Thomas Aquinas” (234). Sertillanges is a scholar who covers the life and teachings of the Catholic saint as Aquinas learns about the human spirit through reason and faith. After Hesse’s renewed interest in Christianity, Ziolkowski also observes that “Catholicism, and particularly its ritual and symbolic aspects, appealed to [Hesse] immensely,” not the dogma of Catholicism (236). This interest rendered “these adapted and modified forms with ideas of a uniquely personal nature” (Ziolkowski 237). These notable observations of Ziolkowski about Hesse adapting themes of Catholicism, a branch of Christianity, are also reflected in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Ziolkowski explains that the setting of *Narcissus and Goldmund* in the 1300’s in a monastery is intentional. Hesse’s “choice of the period was not motivated...by a desire to provide an exciting or exotic setting, but simply by the opportunity offered in the monastic life of the age for an outward manifestation of spiritual order” (Ziolkowski 235). While the monastery for Hesse functions to express his own experiences, Classen argues that Hesse also deeply admired medieval monasticism for its “enviable locations of freedom destined for a life filled

with piety and meditation, and as highly exemplary places of culture and education” (30). The dual impact of his own monastic experience as well as his research about medieval monasticism contributes to the transformation Hesse underwent throughout his readings from the Middle Ages.

It is through this transformation from rejection of Swabian Pietism and interest in the aesthetics of German Romanticism that Hesse finally discovered hagiography. When Hesse stumbled across St. Francis of Assisi during his research, Francis proved to be Hesse’s hagiographical model that he imitated in *Peter Camenzind* and adapted in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Hesse did not discover St. Francis until his second wave of interest in German Romanticism. Mileck suggests that Hesse’s academic interest in German Romanticism was at first brief, “a frail reading acquaintance with half-dozen Romantics that began in 1891, and a number of traditional Romantic poems written largely between 1892 and 1895” (German Romanticism 169). Hesse returned to the movement with renewed interest during his apprenticeship as a bookseller in Basel. During his life as a bookseller in Basel from 1899 to 1904 Hesse “continued his avid reading of the German Romantics. Early Romanticism was still the focus of his interest, Novalis and the “blaue Blume” remained the epitome of Romanticism” (German Romanticism 171). After Hesse’s second interaction with German Romanticism, his fascination extended beyond literature. Hesse also became interested in paintings of German Romanticism, which initiated a transformation of Hesse’s academic motivation.

Hesse admired the literature of the Middle Ages for its content as well as the artistry of its authors. Two primary pieces of literature that impacted Hesse, the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Dialogus Miraculorum*, will be examined to elucidate Hesse’s fascination with the religiosity of the Middle Ages and his discovery of the hagiographical tradition. The first author, Caesarius of Heisterbach, author of the *Dialogus Miraculorum* and prior of a Cistercian

monastery, drew Hesse into the “religious foundation of the Middle Ages as something of relevance for the modern [world]” (Classen 34). This growing admiration of the religious narratives of the past provided a unique model for Hesse’s own creative work (Classen 34).

The *Dialogus Miraculorum* permanently served as a significant influence throughout Hesse’s literary career. Hesse became acquainted with this piece—and was already translating sections of it into German—by 1900, four years before Hesse’s first published novel, *Peter Camenzind*. Even after Hesse’s first novel, his interest in the collection of hagiographical miracle stories did not diminish: “in 1907, he conceived the idea of publishing selected tales from the *Dialogus* in translated form” (Wagner 380). This adoration of Caesarius’s literary artistry as a medieval writer lay not entirely in the content of Caesarius’s work. Instead of being interested in the sermons and doctrines that Caesarius wrote about in the *Dialogus*, Hesse was more interested in Caesarius’s literary techniques. As Wagner observes, Hesse felt that Caesarius’s work was “of remarkable pedagogic commitment and talent” (381). For Hesse, Caesarius was skillful in teaching novices about the lifestyle of being a monk in the Cistercian Order:

Caesarius gibt zwar gewissenhaft formulierte Defini-tionen der Bekehrung, der Zerknirschung, der Beichte, der himmlischen Belohnungen und Strafen ... aber er stopft sie seinen Schülern nicht grausam und in unverdaulicher Trockenheit in den Hals, sondern bietet sie nur gleichsam nebenher in kleinen bekömmlichen Quanten dar [Caesarius gives definite definitions of conversion, of crumbling, of confession, of heavenly reward and punishment ... but he does not stuff his pupils cruelly and in an indigestible dryness in the throat, but only presents them, as it were, in small, quanta.] (Wagner 381, translation by Krista Meuli).

The details that Hesse especially admired about Caesarius were his “details given...at

the beginning of each narrative about time, place, and the witnesses of the events described” that attract a reader’s curiosity (Wagner 382). This engagement of the reader is a significant interest of Hesse, especially because of the potential dryness of the content that Caesarius discusses.

Hesse’s interest in medieval religion—specifically the saints’ lives—in relation to his own writings stemmed from his discovery of St. Francis. While Hesse was primarily interested in St. Francis, he was drawn to the broader study of hagiography, a complex genre that Hesse transferred to create a contemporary approach to saints’ lives. His two novels that will be covered in subsequent chapters make clear the impact that St. Francis, among other hagiographical figures, had on Hesse’s literature. As a figure of explicit admiration in *Peter Camenzind*, St. Francis proves to be an obvious model of Hesse’s. A less clear connection is in *Narcissus and Goldmund*: in this novel, the narrative involves a saint and an artist. This later work is an adaption of the hagiographical tradition that expands on certain medieval Christian conventions. These works show the progress that Hesse makes in artistically realizing his vision of a saint that encompasses a wider human experience that includes both spirituality and sensuality.

Hagiography as a Complex genre

While hagiography is a significant instrument in Hesse’s literature, the genre that Hesse studied to create his novelized saints’ lives requires a closer examination. Hesse did not replicate medieval writing about the life of a saint. Since Hesse had a more inclusive agenda in regards to religion, he was not solely focused on a Christian view of sainthood. Hesse believed that regardless of an individual’s path toward divinity, that relationship and journey are sacred and meaningful. This holistic view changed the way that Hesse reinterpreted his research of saints’ lives. Hesse, as a contributor to the hagiographical tradition had a biased authorial intention when he studied saints’ lives, especially St. Francis.

Since hagiography as a genre is dynamic, the focus of scholars in the field changes.

In the past, medieval authors of saints' legends tried to edify the reader with "examples of holiness breaking into a difficult and painful world [to] give rise to hope" (Mitchell and Howcroft 390). Hesse utilized such stories of resilience and divinity as "influential stimulus for imagination" in his literature (Mitchell and Howcroft 391). In Hesse's novel *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Goldmund perseveres in his faithful search for the universal mother although he faces famine and the forces of nature during his spiritual pilgrimage. These inspirations of traditional medieval hagiography were crafted into novels that depicted traditional as well as progressive saints that befit a modern society's religious needs.

While saints' lives can serve to inspire, they can also cause misconception. Because this type of literature excludes "the writings about persons who would vary greatly in their warranting of widespread admiration," hagiography is biased (Mitchell and Howcroft 391). For an individual attempting to study saints' lives, the intention of the researcher dictates how the bias of hagiography will affect him. For Hesse, the result was therapeutic: he sympathized with St. Francis as an individual that transcended the difficulties of the Middle Ages. This approach that Hesse took toward researching saints' lives was a psychologizing of religion, characteristic of a romantic writer. He wrote about the mental and emotional aspects of the "human experience that [included the] religious and spiritual experience" without specialized language (Mitchell and Howcroft 392). Thus, the focus of works such as *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and Goldmund* present a more holistic version of venerable individuals that are on spiritual journeys. Hesse captures the protagonists, Peter and Goldmund, as having "motivations, conflicts, developmental influences, goals, intentions, and purposes that" determine the courses of their pilgrimages (Mitchell and Howcroft 393). Certain experiences during their journeys are relatable as well as admirable, and these

characters demonstrate the timelessness of the religious phenomena of hagiography.

These characters that Hesse creates represent adaptations to religion in Hesse's time. As Classen argues, Hesse's unique narrative lens illustrated the timeless relevance of the medieval era. Hesse intended to teach his readers about "human weakness, and to explore both good and evil within man." (Classen 37). His medieval value system that he created in his works are meant to give hope to the WWI era of corruption that Hesse lives in. Hesse revived medieval life and literature, illustrating "an essential root of modern life." (Classen 41). After the first world war, Hesse felt that religion was not as relatable any longer, and that an experiment of spiritual renewal could help resolve the identity crisis for the German youth.

In this work, I will examine Hesse's reinterpretation of the hagiographical tradition. While I have explored Hesse's creative origins of his Swabian Pietism and his medieval studies inspired by German Romanticism, the hagiographical tradition remains vague. In the next chapter, I will outline certain conventions of the study of saints' lives and Hesse's relation as a contributor. Following that chapter, I will discuss in chapters three and four two novels, *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*, that illustrate Hesse's adaptation of medieval hagiography to modern ends. In those chapters I will illustrate the conventions of the hagiographical tradition that Hesse's modern saint adheres to as well as the religious practices that he adapts to fit a more modern ethical vision in his literature. The final chapter will examine whether Hesse's modern saint is merely an ideal, or if he is possibly a figure that can contribute to the spiritual life of the everyday individual.

Chapter 2: Hagiography as a Dynamic Genre and Hesse as a Contributor

Introduction: Hagiography as a Genre

Within Christianity, to be recognized as a saint is a remarkable honor conferred for distinct reasons. Before the twelfth century, monks, nuns, kings, queens and bishops were the only individuals considered for sainthood. In later centuries, common and lay individuals could sometimes (though not often) achieve this religious merit. These common people included children, merchants, and housewives. This variation in the conception of sainthood is key to understanding Hesse's creation of the modern-day saint. Prior to examining the modern saint narratives that Hesse creates, we should consider the medieval context for his views of the saint's life.

I will briefly overview the *Lives* of Sts. Gerald of Aurillac, Francis of Assisi, and Christina the Astonishing in this chapter to illustrate alternative versions of sanctity. Their lives provide context for and help frame Hesse's adaptation and revision of the hagiographical tradition. In the Middle Ages, the revered title of sainthood implied that the saintly individual would adhere to strict traditional ascetic practices of abstinence and the belief in a Christian God. I will address them chronologically to show the changing standards of sanctity within hagiography. Their stories demonstrate certain conventions of sainthood that are challenged and transcended over time. On the other hand, while Gerald, Francis, and Christina each represent different varieties of spiritual ideals, as Catholic saints, they also shared common practices, beliefs, and qualifications. Hesse's own fictional narratives follow, akin to the fluid construct of hagiography, a similar pattern of adapting and transcending the conventions of traditional saints' lives.

However, since Hesse does not replicate traditional legends of sainthood, he does not wholly incorporate every aspect that defines hagiography into his novels. As a result, Hesse's creative approach to the saints' lives indicates his modern values and his choice to

challenge hagiographical conventions. Overall, hagiography is and always has been adaptive—changing with the spiritual needs of the people. By the twentieth century, Hesse recognizes the needs of the German youth for a new spiritual ideal, and to them he offers his “modern saint.” His creation captures a new vision of saintliness for disenchanting Germans to imitate. While moving away from the religious elements of Catholic sainthood found in the *Lives* of Gerald, Francis, and Christina. When these saints’ stories are compared to Hesse’s own novelistic conception of the saint, which will be discussed in the following chapters, a distinctly modern revision of medieval morals is revealed.

Hesse’s hagiographical writing is novelistic because it embeds saints’ lives narratives within a larger fictionalized context. In this regard, while Hesse is a contemporary writer of hagiography, he does not apply the same literary methods as other twentieth-century hagiographers. Hesse is inspired by medieval hagiography and writes during the twentieth century, however, he is not a contributor to modern hagiography. In Hesse’s fictions, he reshapes medieval hagiography. Instead of focusing on the historicity of saints’ legends, he blends his passion for traditional hagiography with the literary technique of the novelist and with his own views on the nature of a virtuous life. Typically, traditional writings about saints’ lives are “more legendary” and “edifying,” while also “overtly fictional” (Mitchel and Howcroft 391). The intention of this devotional literature was to inspire admiration instead of providing historical accuracy. Hesse creates—by blending his medieval research with his own concerns—an individual to be admired and imitated, but who is not within the characteristic definition of Catholic sainthood.

In contrast to traditional hagiography, twentieth-century hagiography emphasizes factual accuracy of the represented saints in medieval legends. Hesse’s disinterest in historical accuracy reflects the traditional hagiographer’s desire to “give hope” and to “remind the hearers of particular teachings of faith and morals” (Mitchel and Howcroft 390). But at the

same time, Hesse also adapts the teachings of medieval morality for a modern audience. Hesse's adaptation of sainthood is a new interpretation of a spiritual model; he is not transporting all aspects of medieval sainthood to be applied to the German youth who do not relate to inherited religious traditions. As an artist, Hesse creates a fictional ideal to communicate his beliefs to the German public. For Hesse, hagiography as a fluid construct supports the creation of a novelized modern saint in Hesse's fiction during the twentieth century.

Hesse's motivation for writing fictional pieces that adapted traditional hagiography was triggered by the aftermath of World War I. In tandem with the drastic changes in moral foundation—young people depending on materialistic desires like fashion to ground their identity—there is also Hesse's initial discovery of St. Francis. Hesse initially imitates the religious practices of St. Francis in *Peter Camenzind*, but after the war, he reinterprets sainthood in the novel *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Hesse's personal vision of St. Francis is recast as a new model, through both Peter and finally Goldmund, for the German youth to follow. During Hesse's first encounter with St. Francis's story in 1904, Mileck recognizes that Hesse begins a "survey of St. Francis's impact upon the Italian Renaissance...written in the simple and appropriately aged language and the fervent manner of traditional hagiography" (Life and Art 54). While Hesse begins his relationship with St. Francis in academic admiration, leading him to produce customary hagiographical pieces, he eventually pushes beyond that admiration to transform Francis's story for a modern novelistic audience. The societal needs for a reinterpretation of religion transforms this visceral connection. Hesse's use of the past is as fluid as the construct of hagiography that he studies and reshapes in his fictional pieces.

I consider the three saints in this chapter as progressive individuals within the framework of hagiography because they push the boundaries of accepted religious customs and validate the dynamism of the hagiographical tradition. Their varying religious practices

of asceticism reflect different spiritual needs of the public, which continued to shape new models of religion. These saints, which serve as representative examples of many others, adhere to certain older conventions while also integrating new elements of sanctity in hagiography. I will focus on the three saints' stories, St. Gerald of Aurillac, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Christina the Astonishing and how they display how the conventions of sainthood was reinterpreted during the Middle Ages.

These saints' lives and their differing religious practices demonstrate the expansion of sainthood and hagiography's reformation. The first, St. Gerald, represents a "count saint" whom Odo of Cluny had to encourage his readers to accept. Gerald was, however, also celibate, excessively ascetic, and pacifistic. St. Francis, the saint most adored by Hesse, reflects a "redeemed saint" who founded the Franciscans. But Francis was also, after his conversion, a strict ascetic. The final saint, Christina the Astonishing, represents what I call a "substitutionary saint" since she endured spiritual masochism on behalf of deceased souls. She too adopted an austere Christian life after her first death. Each of these saints represent different spiritual needs of the public at the time the *Lives* were written. Hesse, adopts a creative interpretation of saints' lives. He selectively renews some of their practices for his refashioning of the tradition, while also casting aside other medieval ascetic values. While these saints illustrate the fluidity of hagiography they require, as respectively revolutionary figures, a traditional model for comparison.

The traditional hagiographical archetype, Benedict of Nursia (~480 – 543), exemplifies the conventions upon which these three saints offer variations. Born in central Italy near Nursia and educated in Rome, Benedict left academia to learn about the ascetic life. Although Benedict did not initiate the spread of monasticism, the Rule of St. Benedict he created shaped monastic foundational ascetic practices. These rules governed the pious lives of the eremitical isolated hermitage and the coenobitical ascetic life practiced in a

monastery. While these rules applied to monks of the Benedictine Order, they were also guidelines for obedience and humility, two teachings that were fundamental for any life devoted to God. Any monk admitted to a monastic order renounced all personal property, including his own body, for life. The rules were strictly scheduled, involving prayer, reading, psalmody, sleep, labor, meals, and penalties. Any wandering monk was condemned because he would be living off the impoverished public. This Rule of St. Benedict instilled a motivation for members to ascend to spiritual perfection and embody Christ. It is St. Benedict's Rule that presents the beginning of hagiographical tradition since it inspires the creation of monastic orders throughout the Middle Ages. From this archetypal narrative, we are able to see how stories of sainthood grow and change in the legends of the following saints, while also perceiving the common themes of hagiography that unite each of these individuals.

The Three Saints: Expanding the Hagiographical Conventions

The first example of sainthood that demonstrates an alternative saint's life is the life of Saint Gerald of Aurillac as written by Odo, an ambitious abbot of the Cluniac Order. The individual St. Odo of Cluny (926-44) had the radical intention of expanding on the tradition of sainthood because of his already ambitious nature. He was the second abbot who ran the Cluny Abby after the first abbot Berno. With St. Odo spearheading the new monastic institution based on rigorous prayers and strict liturgical practices, he also created a new interpretation of sainthood by writing about the life of St. Gerald of Aurillac. He sought to show that a good-hearted man, while serving his people, was also capable of serving God. Odo proposed a new possibility of sainthood in the tenth century: the count saint. What is different about the story of Saint Gerald is that he was a count and a soldier. To legitimize this saint, Odo describes Gerald's lifestyle and ruling as a count. Odo traces "his picture of Gerald on the prescriptions of the Rule" of St. Benedict, "allowance having been made for

Gerald's lay status" (Odo 301). Before the millennium, it was unusual for a saint to be both a count and a saint. That Odo pushed the boundaries of what people accepted as saintly begins to demonstrate how fluid the construction of sainthood is.

The story of Gerald's life represents a man attached to worldly duties as capable of devoting his life to God. Living between the years 855 and 909, Gerald exemplifies certain conventions of sainthood that are praised, while also challenging other conventions, expanding established hagiographical conceptions. How Odo qualifies this saint's life to make it as palatable to both the clergy and the public illustrates how Gerald was a soldier that did not abuse force, as well as a count that enacted judgement with compassion.

Odo, therefore, makes this initial push for an armed Christian before the first crusade in 1095, in which Urban II encouraged Christians to use violence in the service of God. Augustine of Hippo, discusses that a Christian would have to be ordered by their lord—with a purpose to faithfully serve God—to transgress the "natural order" of things and the act must warrant "righteous retribution, giving to all what they deserved, and warning those who needed warning" (Augustine qtd. in Allen, Amt 5,6). Gerald lived in accordance with this ideology whenever he faced battle. Odo, prior to a time when men could not regularly both be saintly and armed, suggests a viewpoint that foreshadows Urban II's call-to-arms, showing that an armed man can also be an admirable Christian. This proposal of St. Gerald as a figure that can lead a worldly life and achieve sainthood is made during the later years of the ninth century by Odo. He writes Gerald's legend to inspire justice for and devotion to Christianity in the lives of individuals required to use weapons.

A pacifist by nature, Gerald is never portrayed as an abuser or even enactor of force although he is an armed soldier. Gerald's praiseworthy avoidance of violence is ridiculed by Gerald's own men at first. Yet, once the men go into battle, their minds are changed. When Gerald goes into battle, "it [is] with piety" (Odo 302). He commands his men to fight with

the butts of their swords and with spears reversed. When the battle is successful, Gerald's men change "their scorn to admiration" (Odo 302). Gerald's nonviolent fighting demonstrates how an armed Christian should engage in battle, rather than use weapons as a force only for violence. Odo chooses to acknowledge that Gerald faces battle and takes part in action, but he also shows that Gerald does not use his weapons to harm every offender. Odo endeavors to create a new saint's life that is both temporal and celestial. Even when violence appears inevitable, Gerald escapes enacting force against others. Odo, aware of the inevitableness of confrontation from outside forces that would compel Gerald to use force to defend himself, shows God's grace upon Gerald. When a fellow count, Arlaldus, encroaches on Gerald's lands and abuses the people living on that land, Gerald is forced into action. As a protector of his people, Odo presents Gerald facing Arlaldus and punishing the man; it is not with force, but the showing of arms that is enough to frighten Arlaldus. Similar events in Gerald's life when violence is miraculously avoided occur because of God working through and protecting Gerald. In all circumstances involving battle, Odo describes Gerald as a soldier who does not administer meaningless violence.

Gerald's life as a count also included his actions as an arbitrator. Although Gerald acted as a judge, he could rightfully identify the culpable party. The individual that committed the crime may have had reasons more important than the rules that he was breaking. Gerald transcends the societal assumptions of the justice system, understanding the personal trials that a transgressor may face. This ability reflects Gerald's charitableness, which he expresses even when a criminal assaults him. When a thief comes into Gerald's home, Odo writes about Gerald as forgiving and understanding of the thief's unspoken rationale for thieving. When Gerald awakens and discovers the man trying to steal his silk pillow, he only asks for the man's identity. When the man is too frightened to answer, Gerald tells him to continue "and depart carefully lest anyone hear (Gerald qtd. in Odo 315).

Odo's account of Gerald's compassionate justice extends past domestic cases, including peaceful provincial resolutions.

Even in political warfare, Gerald's actions are portrayed as righteous. Another instance that Odo recounts is when Gerald treats a fugitive as a friend. When the man is brought before Gerald and his men, "Gerald [is] no servant of avarice" so the "fugitive [is] not betrayed" (Odo 317). This man is treated with generosity instead of being turned in as a criminal for money. Even during moments of war when money is scarce, Gerald refuses to take advantage of any money or materials that are gotten wrongfully. When Gerald goes with the Duke William of Aquitaine into a district facing war, Gerald again resists temptation. When William cannot pay his army, the soldiers loot for valuables, but Gerald does not stoop to indulge in this sin. From this time on, Gerald is known as "Gerald the Good" (Odo 319). Odo illustrates Gerald as, even in dire times, an example of a saint whose piety is based on a grounded theological conviction that transcends societal standards.

This "count saint" that Odo legitimizes is progressive because he adapts certain conventions of sainthood, but he is not as revolutionary as Francis or Christina since he embodies the Rule of St. Benedict more strictly. He represents an early phase in the progression of the hagiographical tradition that allows for weapons but not redemption from an earlier life of sin. Both Francis and Christina are redeemed and converted to Christianity during their lives, while Gerald is a Christian even in his youth. Since Francis and Christina were once sinful individuals who repented and became saints, their actions inspired a wider public to embrace Christianity and imitate their religious practices. When Odo discusses Gerald's youth, there are no childish faults to mar the predestined life of a saint. This lack of imperfection suggests that Gerald is not someone to imitate; Odo's portrayal of Gerald is only to be admired and venerated. The idea of the relatability of venerated individuals is only slowly incorporated into hagiographical narratives over time—in lives like Francis's or

Christina's—until the immediate present with Hesse's novels. Therefore, Gerald is more of an archetypal figure to contrast saints that come after the millennia and that continue to emerge in the modern age.

An example of Gerald's predestined sainthood occurs during Gerald's youth. He obediently becomes strong and learned, not because Gerald had other desires, but because of his faithfulness. Gerald's youth also included modesty and humility even after Gerald inherited his parents' property. Although Gerald attends to the "occupations of earth" he turns to the "divine love and the meditation of Holy Scripture [to escape] the ruin of spiritual death" (Odo 301). Gerald's actions of taking care of his parents' property while also attending to his spiritual health presents an ennobling image of Gerald, even in his youth, fit for sainthood. Odo also shows Gerald to be a man of great religious piety in maturity. Odo presents Gerald's dedication to his spiritual wellbeing as a fundamental part of Gerald. When one Sunday Gerald is unable to attend mass, he instead sings psalters that are unlike any mortal song (Odo 306). This dedication is also paired with perseverance when Gerald's physical body goes through trial. When Gerald is blinded from cataracts, he stays silent and waits because he knows that "every son is chastised" (Odo 305). Odo depicts Gerald as a man, like the biblical Job, who has a ceaseless trust in God.

Not only is Gerald a saint with authority and justice, but he is also strictly abstinent. Outside of his role as a soldier and count, there are more expectations of a saint before the millennia than either Francis or Christina. Odo elaborates on Gerald's moderation of spirits, sensuality, and pride to display Gerald's ardent resistance to his desires. Odo explains that "no one can be filled at once with wine and the Holy Spirit," portraying Gerald as against drinking in excess (Odo 308). Odo asserts this ideology of separation of spirit and body in the example of Gerald's own home: neither Gerald nor anyone in his household is given to strong drinking since Gerald attached much "importance to sobriety" (Odo 307). Odo also

addresses the idea that a saint must keep the body pure and untainted by marital relations as well as material desires. This principle is especially evident in relation to sensuality. Although Gerald is once tempted by a woman's beauty, he never succumbs to her seductions. Instead, Gerald refuses any romantic endeavors or passions: he does not give into any of his lustful thoughts, but prays to God when at one point he comes close to sacrificing his purity. His prayers to Christ alter his sight so that the girl is no longer beautiful. Odo demonstrates Gerald's compassionate justice even in marital relations. To prevent an eventual arranged marriage, Gerald gives the girl her liberty and some land to live in freedom, under the guise of a marriage dowry. Odo proposes that Gerald's empathy is not restricted by his job as a judge. And although Gerald has an affluent position as a count, he does not wear any opulent clothing. Instead, Gerald "forbade himself to wear gold" or even to possess it (Odo 310). This abstinence from bodily desires is one key facet of sainthood that continues throughout all traditional hagiographical stories.

Akin to Gerald's saintliness as a man who cannot live sheltered from temptations is St. Francis (1181-1126). As the "redemptive saint," St. Francis's youth is irreligious. His childhood influences him to have a prideful desire for showy clothing and an aspiration to be a war hero. Once he converts to Christianity, however, St. Francis leads a humble life that does not take place in a typical church or monastery. He is, similar to Gerald, adherent to traditional values of sainthood involving abstinence, but his story also innovative because of how Francis had converted to Christianity. St. Bonaventure, the writer of St. Francis's life, legitimizes St. Francis as the "redemptive saint" that founds the Franciscan Order. While St. Bonaventure writes to validate the legitimacy of St. Francis to the critics of the Franciscan Order, his narrative is used here to exemplify him as the "redemptive saint." Thomas Celano, another author of some of St. Francis's hagiographies, was commissioned to write about the life of the saint during Francis's canonization. In this section, Celano's account of

St. Francis's life demonstrates progressive evolution in the tradition of hagiographical conceptions of sainthood.

The conversion story of St. Francis's life illustrates the experiences that Francis both endures and embraces to become a Christian. Early in St. Francis's life before his conversion, he spends prodigally and indulges in instigating mischief and out-dressing others with his "soft, flowing garments, for he [is] very rich" (Celano 8). This kind of flippant bourgeois attitude earns him the name "Francesco, 'the Frenchman,'" (Celano 9). St. Francis's conversion does not happen until he undergoes a severe sickness that keeps him from going to war. During this time of sickness, Francis undergoes a sudden change, believing that "people who like [what 'normally delights the eye'] ...[are] utter fools" (Celano 10). This abrupt change does not stop with Francis's attitude toward the outside world. In addition to Francis's new outlook, he also changes his financial condition. He sells all his possessions and gets rid of his money by giving it to the poor priest of a local dilapidated church. Since this clergyman knew St. Francis before his conversion, the priest believes Francis to be playing a joke. When the priest refuses the money out of caution, Francis throws it against the church's windowsill and leaves (Celano 15). After this rejection of money, Francis makes the public aware of his conversion and faces persecution. Since hagiographical tradition did not emphasize redemption during Francis's life, his actions are treated with skepticism. His family and friends respond poorly, treating Francis harshly after his announcement. However, their condemnations are in vain since Francis replies that "the more bruised he is, the greater his triumph will be" (Francis qtd. in Celano 17). Even when Francis's father, Pietro, imprisons him and mercilessly beats Francis to break him away from this newfound faith, St. Francis never renounces his Christianity. Once St. Francis's father realizes that he cannot change his son's beliefs, he brings Francis to the bishop of Assisi where St. Francis rejects all his worldly possessions (Celano 18). St. Francis is finally able to

renounce his materialist life when he strips naked—a deliberate action to disown even the garments given to Francis by his father—in front of the bishop. The kind bishop, in response, covers Francis with his own mantle (Celano 19). This dedication to Christianity after Francis’s conversion and his repudiation of everything to do with corporeal temptations becomes a principle tenet of St. Francis’s life.

When St. Francis commits himself to Christian practice, he strictly imitates the lifestyle of Christ’s disciples (Celano 26). He abandons material comforts to actively live based on a literal interpretation of the Bible and its Gospels (Lawrence 32). St. Francis chooses voluntary poverty, giving alms, begging, and laboring for daily food so that he can preach the Gospels on foot and understand the lessons of Lady Poverty. When judged by the Rule of St. Benedict, St. Francis is condemnable because he “lives off the impoverished public.” However, St. Francis earns his meals, coming directly to the people to explain the teachings of the Bible to the public. His apostolic religious practices challenged the traditional contempt of the wandering saint. The followers of the Franciscan Order were similar to St. Francis: the early Franciscans “recruited their members from all social groups except the unfree” but they also intentionally sought out the wealthy “young people who had never experienced real want” (Lawrence 34). St. Francis, from his own humbling experiences and redemption, encourages this spiritual freeing from sin even when an individual is in the thicket of materialism.

St. Francis is an important figure in the history of hagiography because he illustrates how conceptions and narratives of sainthood change. Although I discuss Francis to illustrate the dynamism of the hagiographical tradition, St. Francis is especially important because he was a primary literary influence on Hesse. St. Francis, to Hesse, is “a dreamer-poet awed by the beauty of creation, a troubadour-mystic in accord with the self, the world, and God” (Hermann__Art 55). This saint, whom Hesse stumbled across in his readings, became an

inspiration to his career as a writer. St. Francis is the original figure that Hesse attempts to emulate in his writings. He is explicitly mentioned in *Peter Camenzind* as Peter's spiritual guide to love all creation. St. Francis is the beginning of Hesse's relationship with hagiography, as well as the inspiration for Hesse's own fictional saint. Hesse's modern saint, Goldmund from *Narcissus and Goldmund*, is a transhistorical figure that transforms Francis's model of sainthood even more to accommodate the new spiritual needs of the people of the twentieth century.

While the last saint to exemplify how narratives of sainthood are transformed over time does not create a religious order, St. Francis's contemporary Christina does represent a new adaption of hagiographical convention. She was, similar to Francis, a convert and ascetic. Among the saints during the twelfth century, Christina the Astonishing (1150-1224) stands out as a saint not only because she is a convert and woman, but also because she is leader of a more individualistic approach to spiritual practices. Mary Ann Stouck, a writer of Christina's life, strives to communicate the variety of pious Christians by emphasizing saintly women like Christina. Stouck uses the Thomas of Cantimpré's legend of Christina since he was a medieval theologian. A redeemed and lay female, I consider Christina to be the "substitutionary saint." The term "substitutionary" comes from Christ's substitutionary atonement and his suffering for humanity. Since both Christina and Francis were redeemed Christians, I distinguish Christina by her life after conversion acting as a substitute for other people's sins. Stouck is tactful, like Odo, in portraying Christina as having religious authority, although her gender and sinful upbringing are not conventional as aspects of sainthood.

Christina's life, like Francis's, is redemptive: until Christina faces a severe sickness, she is not religious. When assumed dead after a very extreme seizure, Christina still opens her eyes and sits up at her own funeral. Christina's first death is a turning point in her ascetic life since the experience changes her spirituality as well as her physical body. She is like a bird

at times, getting to tree branches with ease to escape the “smell” of mankind (Stouck 442). Christina’s determination to escape from the sinfulness of others does not at first turn out well. Her spiritual practices are returned with reprisal from the public who do not believe her sudden conversion to Christianity. Christina perseveres in her spiritual fortitude when her friends and family challenge her faith. To punish Christina for her peculiar spiritual practices, the people around her bind her repeatedly until she shows them a miracle. They ask forgiveness from Christina only after she is yoked to a wooden contraption that causes wounds on her shoulders. When, miraculously, oil comes from her breasts that is both ointment for Christina’s wounds and salve for her bread, her family finally ceases to persecute her. Stouck describes the dual life of Christina to give credit to the spirituality of which Christian women are capable and legitimize the devotion of individuals that convert to Christianity.

Stouck distinguishes Christina’s religious devotion from Gerald’s and Francis’s primarily by highlighting her spiritual masochism. Christina’s self-inflicted pain of throwing herself into places like ovens and coming out unscathed is her reason for living. As Stouck explains, during Christina’s first death, Christina sees the souls of purgatory suffering. Christ gives her a choice to come to heaven or return to earth to help souls in purgatory reach heaven sooner. Christina, in response, comes back to earth to suffer the torments of Hell that bodiless souls are suffering. She embraces this ambitious mission by herself and is scorned, but is eventually praised for her saintly selflessness. While Christina torments her body externally, she also practices the traditional bodily abnegations of extreme fasting. To separate her body from earthly desires, Christina fasts until she is nearly emaciated. The only food that Christina endures is the Eucharist. But the small wafer symbolizing Christ’s body is not a substantial diet though. Ill-nourished and wrecked by continuous self-inflicted spiritual masochism, Christina models a new type of sainthood that is dependent on the body. Unlike

Francis, Christina cannot freely travel to teach the gospel to others. As a woman, Christina has little control over her life outside of what she can do to her own body. Therefore, her refusal of food and choice to engage in self-torture represents a new adaptation to the hagiographical conventions of self-abnegation. Stouck demonstrates Christina's independence from a religious community as an empowering choice for women restricted by the possessiveness of domesticity and demands of society.

The other miracles that qualify Christina for sainthood happen during her time in contact with the public. Stouck explains Christina's miraculous ability to foretell the future in order to legitimize her spiritual nature. When Christina comes across people near death, she foresees whether their souls are destined for Heaven or Hell (Stouck 444). This celestial knowledge also extends to larger political events. One example is Christina's foretelling that the Saracens would capture Jerusalem (Stouck 445). Stouck's description of Christina's life as a spiritually independent, knowledgeable laywoman models an innovative conception of sainthood that focuses on the power of the individual as a substitute instead of a teacher, unlike St. Francis.

This development in the tradition of sainthood portrays a new relationship with God as one that is closer in proximity than St. Gerald's, and reveals a new role for humanity that is more self-sacrificing than St. Francis's. As Stouck elaborates, Christina becomes Christ-like during her life after her conversion: she is like the human Christ who is weak, fleshly, and suffering. The life of Christina is the story of a laywoman who practices Christianity outside the convent. Her devout life of self-torment for the souls already passed and the vigor of her spiritual experiences show Christina is no ordinary woman. Regardless of her status, by committing her life to God, Christina overcomes the general exclusion of women, especially lay women, from a religious life of sainthood.

Conclusion: Hesse's Modern Adaptions to the Hagiographical Tradition

The themes of abstinence and virtue in these stories represent key features of medieval hagiographical narratives. Each of these saints, while representing strikingly different adaptations to the hagiographical tradition, all share common themes of Catholic sainthood. Therefore, while they represent progressions of sainthood, they do not completely redefine the nature of sacredness within medieval hagiographical tradition. Constantly, writers refashioned the ideal of spirituality and the person to represent that ideal. Although subtle, each variation of sainthood in these three saints' lives demonstrates the evolutionary nature of hagiography. Gerald, Francis, and Christina, demonstrate how medieval hagiographical narratives adhere to certain conventions while also always transcending limiting assumptions about sainthood. Over the span of less than a millennium, with the spread of Christianity beginning in the fourth century, the religious institution's expectations about sainthood grew to include all society because of their spiritual potential. By the modern century, Hesse also offered a new interpretation of spirituality within the Christian lens. Hesse, however, reinterprets these narratives in accordance with his German Romantic influence; he creates the modern saint who unifies, rather than separates the body and spirit.

With this brief overview of hagiography and three saints that demonstrate its transformative nature, a comparison between Hesse's fictional characters Peter and Goldmund to this genre is possible. While Hesse became fascinated by medieval hagiography particularly because of St. Francis's story, Hesse was not just a reader or admirer of it: nearly six hundred years after the Middle Ages, Hesse himself entered the hagiographical tradition. Using his novelistic skills to create a new idea of saintliness, he adds a fresh chapter in the story of hagiography's evolution.

Hesse's modern saint is ultimately a fictional figure that does not reject worldliness, but does develop a spiritual connection with a greater Divine force. In the following

chapters that unpack in depth two of Hesse's novels, this saint is unveiled as a figure who offers a wholly encompassing spiritual model for a twentieth-century German youth. The modern saint embraces a vision of art that embraces sensuality as a part of the human experience, in contrast to medieval saints, who reliably rejected sensuality in favor of abstinence. How this figure can even be considered a saint requires a close literary analysis and comparison to the conventions and values that defined medieval hagiographical stories.

Chapter 3: Hesse's First Attempt at a Novelized Saint's Life

Hesse's Intentions as the Author of the Artist Saint

Among Hesse's fictional narratives, *Peter Camenzind* (1904) is less frequently read in comparison to his last work *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), which won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946. *Peter Camenzind*, Hesse's first novel, can be distinguished by its narrow narrative focus and autobiographical character. In this chapter I examine *Peter Camenzind* because of that novel's explicit admiration of St. Francis and the protagonist's imitation of certain conventions of sainthood. The character Peter Camenzind is Hesse's first contribution to the hagiographical tradition. Since Hesse's internal struggle between art and religion is not resolved in this novel, Peter reflects Hesse's first move toward idealizing the artist's life, the attempt to create a modern saint. While the novel highlights Peter's artistic aspirations when he leaves his rural village, the work ends with Peter eventually returning home to love and care for his aging father. Peter is an incomplete version of Hesse's idea of the new artist saint because Peter chooses to abandon his own artistic ambitions to emulate St. Francis's compassion for all creation, making him a more traditional medieval saint and less a modern one.

During the composition of *Peter Camenzind*, Hesse projects his own artistic and spiritual inclinations onto Peter, experimenting with Peter as an early model of sainthood. Peter's spiritual story reflects key aspects of Hesse's essay of 1926, which begins the first chapter, urging the spiritual experimentation of the German youth. However, Hesse's urgencies are more focused on romanticizing instead of reinventing self through religion. Since Peter's "aspirations and disappointments, his inclinations, problems, and efforts to resolve these were by and large Hesse's," Peter's individually motivated decisions express Hesse's values during his first novel (Mileck *Life and Art* 32). One value that eclipses Hesse's internal conflict between art and religion is joy.

In Hesse's first novel, he addresses the small joys in life instead of reconciling the relationship of art and religion. In Hesse's "On Little Joys" (1905), an essay written a year after the publication of *Peter Camenzind*, Hesse expresses his interest in fulfilling joy instead of responding to the debate between art and religion. Hesse acknowledges the forceful pull from each side of the relationship, claiming that the church cries "What you lack is faith!" while Hesse observes that Avenarius (a German-Swiss philosopher that taught at the University of Zurich, which Hesse attended) asserts, "What you lack is art" (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 7). Hesse responds to these competing demands by aggrandizing the available pleasures in the small details throughout a person's day. The joy that Hesse urges for the "masses of people...in a dull and loveless stupor" will not be found in grand social and public experiences of the theatres, operas, and art exhibitions (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 8). Instead, Hesse asserts that joy must come from within and be experienced on a personal level, which can be found by recognizing the beauty of nature, giving due attention to one single painting, or using the senses to appreciate any small ordinarily overlooked details. While *Peter Camenzind* represents the story of a partial artist and a partial saint, Hesse portrays joy as the value that transcends the would-be saints' conflict between art and religion.

Since *Peter Camenzind* is a modern fictional work, how Peter represents a saint requires explanation. In the previous chapter, Gerald, Francis, and Christina are all people who were alive in the past, while Peter is Hesse's creation. Peter, as a reinterpretation of a medieval saint by the modernist Hesse, is a representative of the dynamic hagiographical tradition for a twentieth-century audience. Hesse's novel centers on an individual who is personally inspired by St. Francis, for Peter transforms his admiration of the saint to imitation of the saint's life.

Peter's Acquaintance, Adoration, and Imitation of St. Francis

Since Peter represents a new phase of the hagiographical tradition, his story, similar

to the saints in the last chapter, will be summarized. How he compares as a figure of progress from or adherence to tradition in relation to the saints Gerald, Francis, and Christina, will be examined. The story of Peter differs from the saints of the Middle Ages because he represents Hesse's testing of the idea of an "artist saint." However, Peter differs from the modern saint Goldmund; Peter's journey begins with art created out of devotion, but after meeting Boppi, Peter adopts a selfless life that excludes his art. The role of art in Peter's life is sacred, but it excludes humanity. When Peter listens to nature with love, as "if it were a person," he longs to "understand [and] perhaps...one day be granted the gift of expressing this heartbeat [of nature] in poetry which other would awaken to" (PC 120). Since Peter derives meaningfulness from divinity in the form of nature and through his poetry, he represents a sainthood that sanctifies art. Peter's relationship with art, which appears to fulfill his life, is eventually overshadowed by the religious emulation of St. Francis.

Peter's narrative begins in his artistic youth: "On my poor little soul, still blank and calm and full of expectancy, the lake and mountain spirits etched their proud deeds" (PC 1). Peter poetically personifies nature as divine, illustrating that his childhood began with artistic inclinations. This attitude toward nature recalls Hesse's letter to his parents about art. In it he made clear his sense of divinity in nature was rooted in Christianity; he believed his "path" of art was not "different from [theirs] until one gets to the decisive turning point toward a specifically Protestant form of Christianity" (Hesse qtd. in Stephenson 40). Likewise, while Peter admires nature, he is not pantheistic. Peter does believe in God, but he does not explicitly place faith in a particular type of Christianity.

A key difference between Peter and medieval saints is their religious beliefs. All three saints in the previous chapter dedicated their lives to God as faithful Catholics. In Hesse's novel, God is present throughout the narrative, but his presence is peripheral. For example, when Peter's mother passes away, Peter does not seek consolation in God. Instead, Peter

kneels beside his mother for two hours watching her gradually yield to death. In her final moments, Peter simply states that he “felt little grief, for [he] was overcome with amazement and awe at being allowed to watch the great riddle solve itself” (PC 40). Peter’s religious belief is not defined by the habits and rituals of medieval Catholicism. He practices his religious belief through art, demonstrating a Christian spirituality blended with a modern, but not secular, aestheticism.

Peter, after he leaves home, discovers how to express his Christian artistic inclinations through poetry. After he learns about this literary outlet at seventeen, “the world spread out before” Peter, awaiting his efforts to immortalize his findings “through the gift of poetry” (PC 29). While Peter’s adoration for art lingers, his own creations are little discussed. Before Peter recognizes this new gift, Peter recounts his early life by describing his childhood, other bucolic scenery, his family, and the school he goes to in his rural village. Aside from Peter’s perception of divinity in art, he also finds spirituality present in love. During his childhood, Peter dedicates his attention to “the love of women [as] a purifying act of adoration” in which Peter takes on the role as a “solemn priest” (PC 31). Acting as a priest, Peter practices fasting and offers sacrifices for the sake of love. While the fast lasts for a day and the sacrifice is a flower, the practices are no less sacred to Peter. These devotional actions of Peter are adumbrations of his consequent decision to embrace a more traditionally selfless practice of sainthood.

Peter’s life is first transformed after his mother’s death, inspiring Peter to choose his poetic aspirations over his father’s domestic needs. This journey leads Peter to study literature in Zurich. During this time, Peter reads “sources and monographs about the late Middle Ages in Italy and France,” making his first acquaintance with his “favorite among men, the most godly and most blessed of saints, Francis of Assisi” (PC 58). This significant period of Peter’s life marks his internal conflict. The psychomachia between art and religion

first appears in Peter's life when he sees the "intimate and devout" saint of the Middle Ages through his modern lens of "ideals and passions" (PC 58). As an artist, Peter discerns the beauty of the historical saint; however, rather than use his modern lens to adapt St. Francis's teachings so that his artistic aspirations can co-exist with his spiritual inclinations, Peter imitates his adored saint, rejecting his artistic desires. Before that final rejection at the end of the novel, Peter follows his artistic inclinations as manifested in alcohol and secular love.

When Peter consumes alcohol, he is inspired both poetically "by the sweet god of wine" while also tempted to destruction after his friend Richard's death by his "malicious tongue" (PC 79, 99). Through drinking, Peter gains a new artistic perspective, yet this view is subject to change. After Richard's death, Peter goes to bars and carelessly criticizes others, demonstrating the destructive power of wine as well: "At times it surprised me that I treated people so boorishly and derived pleasure from snapping at them" (PC 107). Peter's special, while also delicate, relationship with wine is a departure from the abstinence from spirits characteristic of saints in medieval narratives. His spiritual inspiration from wine challenges Odo's assertion that "no one can be filled at once with wine and the Holy Spirit" (Odo 308). By contrast, Peter drinks wine in secular contexts to achieve spiritual elevation, rather than drinking only the Eucharist. Hesse, thereby, modernizes the convention of abstinence as a necessary aspect of sainthood.

Although Peter gradually gains control over his weakness for wine, his dislike of people and passivity results in a solitary life that plagues him. Peter's romantic experiences suffer because of his eremitic behavior. This lifestyle prevents him from being honest with the women he falls in love with throughout his narrative—Rösi, Erminia, Elizabeth—and keeps him at a distance from any romantic relationship. Peter's involvement with women as an "artist saint" poses a unique revision of sainthood. He does not actively challenge the conventional hagiographical practice of corporeal abstinence, but his unabashed desires

demonstrate a different religious standard. He modernizes the bodily abnegation by not attempting to separate his sensuality from his spirituality. Rather, the love Peter feels for these women is an elevated devotional love, not lust. Women to Peter, are “a race which we must hold sacred. For...they are remote from us men and appear to be nearer to God” (PC 31). Therefore, while this “artist saint” does not engage in sexual relations, he does not choose celibacy to serve God. Peter’s ceremonious love illustrates an adaptation to saintly convention; however, it also demonstrates Hesse’s inability to address sensuality in relation to spirituality.

When Peter eventually begins a friendship with Boppi, he is freed from his passivity and is capable of honesty and care for others outside of romantic relationships. Since Peter dislikes people in general, when Peter meets Boppi, the invalid produces feelings of “pity and...some contempt too” (PC 162). Peter’s initial distaste for the sufferer with no neck, a hunchback, and little control over the rest of his small body, contradicts Peter’s beliefs in his loving of St. Francis. Peter realizes his falsity in a memory of Assisi, the town of St. Francis: “I had told the neighbors in Assisi about St. Francis and had boasted that he had taught me to love all mankind” (PC 164). After Peter’s spiritual awakening to love his fellow man, Peter devotes himself to Boppi as a constant and devoted companion. From Boppi, Peter becomes an “astonished and grateful pupil of a wretched cripple” (PC 169). Although Boppi is limited to watching people, “and [has] never been part of the mainstream of life...he [knows] life much more accurately than” Peter (PC 178). Boppi’s wealth of knowledge about nature and human nature teaches Peter a different perspective that is greater than his own artistic desires. When Peter begins to appreciate humanity and the smaller joys that Boppi shows him, Peter’s perspective changes. He envisions a purpose in his life that is greater than his poetry. When Boppi’s health fails and he passes away, Peter returns home to take care of his father. Peter’s friendship with Boppi transforms Peter’s ideals in life from the “sacred”

task of creating art to the selfless caretaking more characteristic of traditional hagiography.

The character Boppi represents Hesse's sentiments on joy and is the catalyst for Peter's transformation into a saintly figure. Since Boppi is an invalid, he remains in a wheelchair and can only look at his own limited surroundings. Akin to Hesse's example of watching one painting for a day, Boppi enacts this suggestion at the zoo by watching the lions:

He would describe everything he had seen during the day. What particularly impressed him was how courteous the lion treated the lioness. As soon as she lay down to rest, the lion redirected his restless pacing so as not to brush against her or have to step over her. (172)

While Peter desires at first to imitate St. Francis by caring for Boppi, after also learning about the small joys in life, Peter's aspirations change. When Boppi passes away, Peter relinquishes his dream to be a poet to continue being a selfless caregiver. Peter's transformation demonstrates a theme of admiration in the hagiographical tradition. In the Middle Ages, one of the goals of hagiographical writers was to inspire admiration instead of providing historical accuracy about sainthood. Hesse's early portrait of Peter, inspired by St. Francis but completely fictional, was also written to inspire others in achieving personal spiritual elevation.

Peter's narrative concludes with him helping his father with domestic tasks and becoming involved with improving the town. Peter, in ceasing to pursue his artistic aspirations, resolves that he belongs in the village, not the city. While patching the roof of his father's house and engaging with neighbors that pass by, Peter succinctly and abruptly encapsulates his life with the adage "fish belong in the water, farmers on the land" (PC 197). This brief statement captures how Peter's desire to fulfill his artistic aspiration is engulfed by the larger obligation to imitate St. Francis's love of nature and mankind. Thus,

Hesse portrays Peter as subscribing eventually to traditional religious ethics over art because of the little joys that Boppi teaches Peter. Therefore, the “artist saint” Hesse experiments through Peter as ultimately connected to a more traditional saintly model.

Hesse’s nascent construct of a new saint as an addition to the hagiographical tradition begins with Peter, a precursor to the modern saint, partially an artist and partially a religious figure. Since the first half of Peter’s narrative involves his pursuit of his own desires, and the latter half illustrates Peter’s increased focus on traditional spiritual virtues, he is an incomplete representation of each hagiographical aspect. Peter, as an artist saint, will be compared to the saints Gerald, Francis, and Christina to illustrate how Peter emerges as Hesse’s first modern contribution to the evolution of hagiographical narratives.

Peter as an Artist Saint in Relation to the Count, the Redemption, and the Substitutionary Saints

Peter has a distinct vision of spirituality that differs from the traditional hagiographical archetype of St. Benedict. Peter’s religious practices challenge fundamental elements of sainthood: bodily abstinence, selflessness, fasting, and sacrificing. Recalling some of the religious practices that Gerald, Francis, and Christina demonstrate, I will use their examples to illustrate the connection that Peter shares with medieval sainthood, as well as how Peter reflects Hesse’s initial attempts to forge a modern version of sainthood. Hesse’s attraction to the stories of medieval saints and his aversion to Swabian Pietism catalyzed his exploration of a new religious ideal through Peter, an ideal he brings to fulfillment with the character Goldmund in the novel he wrote during the chaotic period after World War I.

The three saints I have used to characterize the fluidity of the hagiographical tradition offer narrative conceptional coordinates for mapping Peter’s story in relation to medieval hagiographical stories and for understanding how his story begins to chart a new course for the artist saint. St. Gerald, as written by Odo, was a count with worldly duties as a

soldier and an arbiter, but he was still a faithful and empathetic Christian. St. Francis, whose legend was recorded by St. Bonaventure and Thomas Celano, was a redeemed Christian who independently founded the Franciscan Order to embody the life of the apostles, teaching the gospels on foot and living a life of voluntary poverty. St. Christina, as written by Thomas of Cantimpré, was also a redeemed Christian, but she spent her life enduring spiritual masochism as a substitutionary sacrifice for the souls in purgatory. When comparing these saints' lives to Peter's narrative, there is a marked severity of these medieval individuals' lives that Peter does not embody. Rather, Peter's story illustrates a modern adaption of spirituality for a twentieth-century public, where Peter is a more relatable being but still worthy of admiration.

Compared to St. Gerald, the count saint, Peter shares a controversial occupation. Since Gerald was a Christian soldier, battle was inevitable; however, since he was a pacifist, he fought with the butt of his sword and with his spear reversed. Additionally, under God's grace, he avoided any bloodshed with other counts by merely intimidating them with weapons. Peter, in comparison, as a poet who is fascinated by nature, is in an irreligious position. However, since Peter imbues divinity in nature without idolizing nature as the physical manifestation of God, his art is no more contrary to fault than was Gerald's military work. Additionally, since *Peter Camenzind* is largely autobiographical, Hesse's assertion that art inspired by nature is a Christian practice, akin to the religious liturgy of his parents, his character Peter's art is an expression of Christianity. Therefore, while Peter is not an armed Christian, he shares Gerald's role of adapting a controversial position—in this case, that of an artist—to a venerable Christian vocation.

Another clear attribute of Gerald's life that Peter transforms more radically relates to the saintly practice of bodily abnegation. These fleshly abstinences involve spirits and corporeal desires. In Gerald's life, he avoided wine to separate his spirit and body and to

more easily resist other material temptations. In Hesse's narrative, Peter discovers that drinking wine leads to spiritual elevation. He, drinking glasses of wine, "[becomes] calm and dreamy; as [Peter continues] to drink, it [casts] its spell over [him] and [begins] to compose poems as if by itself" (PC 81). In Peter's narrative, wine immerses him in a divine reality, in which Peter achieves poetic insight and inspiration. These spirits, while enchanting, can be abused. Peter, however, does not consider wine inhibiting, though he does recognize that it is a substance that has repercussions if misused.

The other bodily abnegation, which both Gerald and Peter focus on, but respond to differently, is celibacy. Gerald, when faced with lustful temptations by a beautiful woman, prays for the alteration of his sight to maintain his abstinence and faithfulness to God. Gerald's focus was to remain virginal and, therefore, clean of sin, while Peter in contrast, perceives romance and love as sacred instead of lustful. Peter elevates the idea of earthly love, as he does nature, and imbues it with divinity. He reinterprets certain traditional conventions that Gerald associated with corruption and portrays them as artistic. In Peter's youth, when he thinks of his first childhood love Rösli, he "[senses] the nobility and simplicity of her character... conjuring up a clear image of her," which he conceives as a "part of her blessed being" (PC 32). Peter's vision of Rösli demonstrates his reinvention of earthly love, while still only admiration from a distance, as a religious practice

The second saint, who is overtly referenced, in *Peter Camenzind* is Francis. In comparison to Peter as an artist saint, Francis functions as a spiritual model of selflessness toward all creation. Peter lionizes Francis because he valued nature as he did humanity. Peter perceives Francis as superseding "the Middle Ages, even Dante, to discover the language of the eternally human" (PC 120). Peter is captivated by the language of St. Francis that represents the language of nature. It can be heard by listening "to the wind sing in the trees...to brooks roar through gorges and gentle streams glide through the plains" (PC 118).

These sounds do not involve human interference or molestation. Peter considers the plucking of a flower as humanity asserting superiority over nature. Rather than regarding nature as subservient to humanity, Peter yearns to elevate nature as equal to humanity, deserving of the same respect and empathy. This perspective is shared by St. Francis: “He calls all creation and natural phenomena his dear brothers and sisters” (PC 120). While Peter’s personal admiration of Francis begins their relationship with nature, through Peter’s friendship with Boppi, Francis also teaches Peter to develop his love for all creation, including his fellow men.

Christina, the last saint discussed, presents interesting parallels and contrasts to Peter in regards to bodily sacrifices. Christina harmed herself to atone for the sins of the souls in purgatory and sacrifices his appetite and thirst for the love of Rösi, but these practices are motivated by different reasons. As mentioned, Peter’s saintly devotions are less severe than the traditional saints of the Middle Ages. His sacrifices are driven by earthly, but perceived by Peter as divine, love. For Peter, earthly love produces an elevated spiritual state. His love for Rösi Girtanner motivates Peter to fast, an ascetic practice Peter regards as a spiritual devotion. Peter describes climbing steep and difficult terrain on a mountainside, and once he returns home, Peter decides “to go without food and drink until evening, all for the sake of Rösi” (PC 33). While Peter denies fleshly desires, akin to Christina, his bodily asceticism is for the sake of adoration, not otherworldly sacrifices for souls.

While each of these saints represented certain stages in the evolution of the medieval hagiographical tradition, Hesse develops a different standard of veneration, beginning with Peter, for his twentieth-century audience. Hesse envisions an individualistic reinterpretation of the saints’ lives that resonates with the German youth of the early twentieth century. They “felt that [Hesse] was a writer of their own generation who understood their sensitive recoil from modern machine civilization and urban intellectualism; who like themselves was

embracing a life of rusticity; a return to nature” (Rose 24). The generation that Hesse communicates to in *Peter Camenzind* are freer spirited than the rigid austerities that the traditional hagiographical saints represented. They are on their own self-involved spiritual journeys, for which Peter represents a relatable and romantic ideal model.

Hesse, in *Peter Camenzind*, ultimately has a narrative lens that is less involved with his internal conflict between art and religion. His first fictional novel presents an exploration of Hesse’s conscience and personal pursuit of the smaller joys in life. Since *Peter Camenzind* is written before World War I, Hesse does not wholly reinvent religion. As recognized by the German youth of 1904, Hesse romanticizes religion but eventually illustrates that both art and religion cannot exist concurrently. Hesse’s inability to rectify these two aspects of his life is evident in Peter’s final decision to selflessly return home to his father.

Therefore, while Hesse contributes an addition to the fluid tradition of hagiography, he only conveys subtle variations of religious practices. Through Peter, Hesse adapts saintly conventions that express the changing spiritual needs of the modern individual, yet he does not wholly transcend the Middle Ages. Peter, while attempting to assert his personal artistic ambitions, cannot avoid adhering to a medieval ideal. The spiritual model St. Francis represents perfection for Peter, and also Hesse, which leads Peter to leave art and imitate the selflessness Francis. However, this vision of Peter, the artist saint, is not Hesse’s final religious ideal. After World War I, this vision is adapted for the German youth that demand the reinvention, not romance, of religion.

In *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Goldmund represents Hesse’s new ideal and fresh contribution to the hagiographical tradition. Although there is a saint, Narcissus, who represents a religious model—as St. Francis is to Peter—he ultimately demonstrates the pitfalls in a modern society of separating spirituality and sensuality. Goldmund, dissimilar to Peter, does not imitate Narcissus, rather, he endures a journey that unifies both art and

religion. In the following textual analysis of *Narcissus and Goldmund*, I will examine Hesse's transformed perspective, as expressed through Goldmund's story, in which art is used to achieve spiritual perfection.

Chapter 4: Hesse's Creation of the Modern Saint

Narcissus and Goldmund and Hesse's Transformed Perspective on Art and Religion

The novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) was a popular addition, as Ziolkowski and Mileck recognize, to Hesse's fictional narratives (Theme and Structure 229). Hesse's work on that novel began during an agreeable period of his domestic life: his permanent residence in Montagnola, and the beginning of his long-lasting marriage to Ninon, his third wife. Yet, Hesse was also aware of a public issue larger than himself, which the German youth faced, and began a spiritual experiment that could potentially provide a "philosophy of life" for that abject community (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief*). This fictional experiment was to fashion a modern saint who used sensual experiences to achieve spiritual elevation.

While Hesse's novel laid bare his lifelong internal friction between art and religion, *Narcissus and Goldmund* is a less directly autobiographical work than *Peter Camenzind*. Although the story about the protagonist Goldmund represents Hesse's own psychomachia efforts to transcend his "beauty-conscious" artistic inclinations from 1904, the novel ultimately exhibits Hesse's mature vision of 1926 as "life-conscious" and "living with... fellow men" (Life and Art 33). Hesse created this story, as Stephenson suggests, employing "the literary motifs of wandering and pilgrimage as vehicles to narrate his life's journey" (174). An immersive fantasy in which the medieval monk Goldmund undergoes a journey to sculpt the archetypal image of the mother he never knew; Hesse wrote about a life that fit his ideal aspirations but did not explicitly mirror his own autobiography.

When Hesse wrote *Narcissus and Goldmund*, he continued to revisit his memories from the seminary Maulbronn, but the school becomes a tool for the plot instead of a representation of Hesse's life. In *Peter Camenzind*, the monastery is a place where Peter, akin to Hesse, attends school. However, the monastery Mariabronn in *Narcissus and Goldmund* marks transformative experiences for Goldmund. In *Narcissus and Goldmund*, the monastery is

not only a location from Hesse's life; rather, it becomes a place for growth in spirituality and sensuality. As Mileck notes, "Hesse's tale is more an airing of views than a depiction of life, more an exposing of minds than a telling of deeds, less a narrative that unravels than a portrait that emerges" (Life and Art 214). While details of Hesse's life are still present in his narratives, *Narcissus and Goldmund* conveys Hesse's mature views on his relationship between art and religion and a portrait of a new kind of saint.

Hesse's progress in harmonizing his internal conflict is evident when comparing *Narcissus and Goldmund* to its precursor, *Berthold*. The unpublished *Berthold* that Hesse wrote during 1907-8, shortly after *Peter Camenzind*, as Ziolkowski explains, "did not succeed in rendering convincingly the realms of nature and spirit" (Theme and Structure 242). Mileck shares Ziolkowski's sentiment that "at the outset of Hesse's career, art and life were virtually incompatible and mutually exclusive areas of human experience" (Life and Art 206). Twenty years later, "Hesse [resurrects] the figure of Johannes"—which is the name of Hesse's religiously oppressive father—as Narcissus, who "[rescues] Goldmund from execution" (Theme and Structure 242). Hesse's differing perspective distinguishes religion as eventually redemptive in *Narcissus and Goldmund*, instead of destructive, as it was in *Berthold*. Hesse transforms Johannes, whom Berthold kills, into the character Narcissus, who saves Goldmund, a transformation which demonstrates Hesse's reconciliation with his religious upbringing. Mileck acknowledges that Hesse returns to *Berthold* because of his revolutionized "interest, inspiration, [and] ability" in 1926 to tackle the dichotomy of flesh and spirit that Hesse could not confront and resolve in his earlier years (Themes and Structure 242). Thereby, Hesse refashions *Berthold* into the illustrative tale of a religiously "healing" pilgrimage of Goldmund in *Narcissus and Goldmund*.

Through this transformed perspective, Hesse creates a new saint who transforms the hagiographical tradition even more than Peter does; however, the modern saint, whom

Hesse depicts as the character Goldmund, is set in the Middle Ages, a period associated with traditional religious conventions and practices. Yet, as Mileck observes, while *Narcissus and Goldmund* “may suggest a return to German Romanticism’s best tradition of storytelling, it is anything but [a] traditional narrative” (Life and Art 213). Stephenson asserts that *Narcissus and Goldmund*, as a German Romantic tale, represents ““those inner truths that resist direct autobiographical presentation”” (175). Stephenson’s observation highlights why Hesse’s later novel may have greater significance for Hesse’s artistic and spiritual development than *Peter Camenzind*; his assertion implies that *Narcissus and Goldmund* has some meaning or moral that has gone unnoticed in Hesse’s early autobiographical work from 1904.

Akin to his fellow German modernists, Hesse romanticized the medieval era and reinvented the period with modern values. Through that modern lens, he introduces the medieval monk Goldmund a new kind of saint. This figure, as Hesse’s second contribution to the hagiographical tradition, differs for two distinct reasons: first, Goldmund shows that Hesse as an individual has reconciled his internal conflict between art and religion; and second, he is created for an audience of German youth who no longer envisioned inherited frameworks of religion as trustworthy. The modern saint, thereby, is both a union of art and religion while also a reinterpretation of religious belief for an audience increasingly skeptical of traditional religion.

Hesse’s continued interest in art and his more mature perspective on religion motivated a new story that depicts an evolved artist saint in *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Peter, the artist saint, as discussed in the previous chapter, initially challenges and changes some conventions of traditional hagiography, but eventually he adopts a life more akin to traditional saints’ lives. While Hesse’s first contribution to the hagiographical tradition demonstrates traces of his modern values, Peter also represents Hesse’s inability, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to resolve his internal conflict between art and religion.

Goldmund, in contrast, is a sensual, yet spiritual individual who contradicts the expectations of a religious model. The saints of traditional hagiography are not merely adapted in *Narcissus and Goldmund*; by inserting modern values within a medieval world, Hesse reinvents the saints' lives through Goldmund's spiritual journey. I assert that Goldmund, as Hesse's vision of a modern saint, is an ideal figure to admire and learn from, rather than emulate, since Goldmund is a radical character. As I will examine, Goldmund's extreme actions during his story depict, through sensuality and spirituality, a full range of the human experience that Peter lacks but Hesse presents as a holy ideal.

The Emergence of the Modern Saint

The modern saint, whom Hesse casts as Goldmund, is strikingly different from the traditional saints of the Middle Ages. As Stephenson argues, Goldmund, as the representative spiritual experiment for the twentieth-century German youth, is Hesse's attempt at "making a statement about the meaning of life and of his life" (175). This creation of a new saint reflects Hesse's quest to harmonize his artistic and pietistic outlooks. Goldmund is created for a "society and culture that, in losing connection to the 'mother' has lost touch with the perennial human themes of how to love and how to die" (Stephenson 175). Since the modern saint Goldmund represents Hesse's further attempts to transform the hagiographical tradition, I will compare him closely to Peter. In comparing Goldmund to Peter, I will explore Goldmund's narration in relation to the hagiographical conventions that Peter's story adapts.

The conventions that Peter, as the artist saint, adapts during his narrative involved his artistic aspirations, his devotional love for women, the assertion and eventual elimination of his self-will, and wine as his inspiration. Goldmund, similarly, extends Peter's adaptations; however, Goldmund has a different motivation. Peter desires to express the beauty of nature through poetry, while Goldmund yearns to illustrate the archetypal universal mother through

art. Additionally, the conventions that Goldmund adapts also include the sexual experiences with women as inspiration for his art, while the use of wine becomes simply a curative or an accoutrement to a meal.

In Goldmund's story, beginning with the depiction of the chestnut tree outside the cloister and the generations of boys to be educated at Mariabronn, Hesse introduces Goldmund as a "delicate, good looking boy" who is enchanted by beauty (NG 9). The beauty that captivates Goldmund differs from the beauty that Peter admires. For Goldmund sees a beauty in humanity and nature, while Peter's perspective must undergo a transformation before he sees humanity as beautiful. Goldmund is fascinated by the physical and natural beauty of "the image-and-sound world" (NG 36). On the first day of his classes, Goldmund takes "pleasure in the straight, slender figure; the cool sparkling eyes; the firm lips that were forming clear precise syllables; the inspired, untiring voice" of his teacher Narcissus (NG 11). Goldmund's fixedness on Narcissus's features illustrates Goldmund's early artistic inclinations. Other demonstrations of Goldmund's passion for art occur during seminary lessons: a Greek letter becomes "a galloping horse, a rearing serpent that quickly slithered off through the flowers, leaving the rigid page of grammar in its place" (NG 63). Narcissus recognizes that Goldmund "[bears] all the marks of a strong human being, richly endowed sensually and spiritually, [and is] perhaps an artist" (NG 34). Although Narcissus labels Goldmund as an artist, he also considers Goldmund as capable of living a religious life outside the cloister. Through Narcissus's advice to remember his mother, Goldmund chooses to embrace his artistic journey in the world of the senses.

Although Goldmund leaves Mariabronn without a clear purpose, aside from his artistic passion and his newfound awareness of his own mother as an essential part of his journey, Goldmund discovers his life goal to craft the universal mother in a church one morning. After staying the night and going to mass, Goldmund is struck by a wooden

carving of Madonna in a side chapel. She conveys youthfulness and a delicate naivete, full of a grief and spirit that enchants Goldmund. This carving elucidates Goldmund's vocation as a modern saint: she is "inexpressibly beautiful," as is Goldmund's image of the universal mother, and yet the Madonna is "too modern and worldly," akin to Goldmund's sensualized approach to spirituality (NG 146-7). What the madonna embodies is similar to Goldmund's vision of the universal mother. Goldmund, as the modern saint, envisions through Hesse's modern lens, the mother as a magnificent presence that transcends the limits of the medieval world in which he lives. Goldmund never abandons these artistic inclinations, even when he feels the universal mother "seducing [him] into dying and with [him] dies [his] dream, the beautiful statue" (NG 311). When Goldmund eventually dies, he imparts to Narcissus the potentialities that art has for life.

The love that Goldmund dedicates to the universal mother is similar to the devotional love that Peter has for women. The love is ceremonious, expressed as Goldmund practices faithfully carving statues to reach spiritual perfection. To realize one's self, which Goldmund tries to do by creating the universal mother, he goes "from potential to deed, from possibility to realization, we participate in true being, become by a degree more similar to the perfect and divine" (NG 278). For Goldmund, he is dedicated to the universal mother, which he at first envisions as the mother he never knew. Out of a dream, "he [sees] her: he [sees] the tall, radiant woman with the full mouth and glowing hair—his mother" (NG 51). Although Goldmund's devotion begins with a personal vision, the conception of his mother becomes universal. Goldmund's perception changes after he becomes a master sculptor. He comprehends his mother as an archetype while walking through the marketplace, ruminating on his achievement and his murder of the beggar Viktor. When Goldmund realizes the transience of existence as "a brief flowering that soon [wilts] and [is] soon covered by snow," he sees a new vision of his mother as a universal mother who

represents both life and death (NG 178):

He saw the face of the universal mother, leaning over the abyss of life, with a lost smile that was both beautiful and gruesome. She was looking at birth and death, at flowers, at rustling autumn leaves, at art, at decay.

Everything had the same meaning to the universal mother.... The dying carp on the cobblestones of the fish market was as dear to her as Goldmund; she was as fond of the scattered bones of Viktor who had once tried to steal [Goldmund's] gold as she was of [Goldmund's] master's proud cool young daughter Lisbeth. (178-9)

To Goldmund, the mother in his mind transforms into a “saint that [he'll] have to make some day” (NG 180). Goldmund treats the universal mother ceremoniously, offering himself as sacrifice to better understand her. He desperately desires, as the modern saint who unifies both art and religion, to “experience the world, taste its beauty and its horrors. I want to suffer hunger and thirst” (NG 180). Through these experiences, Goldmund yearns to better understand the universal mother and finally create a representation of her.

There are two sculptures Goldmund creates that express his connection with and knowledge of the universal mother. The first, St. John the Apostle, intended to be an addition to a crucifixion group, gains Goldmund the title of master sculptor. In this wood carving, Goldmund sees “his friend Narcissus, the guide of his adolescent years” with “an expression of stillness, devotion, and reverence.... Suffering and death were not unknown to this beautiful, pious, spiritualized face” (NG 171). Goldmund evinces his conception of asceticism in this carving, a life that he could not wholly embrace, and his friendship with Narcissus; however, this creation of Narcissus does not know “despair...and disorder, and rebellion...it suffered no [discordance]” (NG 171). Goldmund creates an admirable carving, but it is a veneer of the complex archetype.

The second wood carving, who is his first love, is Lydia. She too, though, is one-dimensional with her “inclined neck, her friendly-sad mouth, her elegant hands, the long fingers, the beautifully arched cups of her fingernails” (NG 294). Goldmund’s sculpture of Lydia is beautiful and sad, but she is not a representation of the universal mother. The mother is finally revealed to Goldmund when he lies in his deathbed: “she is everywhere. She [is] Lise, the gypsy; she [is] Master Niklaus’s beautiful madonna; she [is] life, love, ecstasy. She [is] also fear, hunger instinct. Now she is death; she has her fingers in my chest” (NG 310). Goldmund reconciles that he will never be able to make others perceive her harrowing beauty. His search for the universal mother proves to be transformational. Goldmund, who begins his search for God through prayer, becomes an artist that searches for God through the beauty that human love can provide as guidance.

When Goldmund first begins his journey into the world, he gradually realizes and fulfills his personal ambitions. In contrast to Peter’s story, in which Peter at first chooses his artistic aspirations over his father’s needs, Goldmund’s decision to embrace his self-will is reversed. In Goldmund’s youth, Goldmund’s father convinces him that he should abandon self-will. This internal conflict of Goldmund denying his will for the sake of his father is revealed early in Hesse’s narrative. Although Goldmund intends to stay at the cloister “indefinitely perhaps, dedicating his life to God,” this desire reflects his father’s, not Goldmund’s, wish (NG 14). Beneath Goldmund’s youthful desire to follow his father’s command, he has “an original burden, a secret destiny of atonement and sacrifice” (NG 15). The intangible weight that Goldmund feels his father has placed on him is Goldmund’s penance for his mother’s promiscuity. Through Goldmund’s friendship with Narcissus, Goldmund learns that he has forgotten his mother, which is why he was willing to abide by his father’s will and not his own.

Although Goldmund initially oppresses his will, eventually, he asserts his artistic

aspirations, journeying into the world and experiencing both a sensual life and spiritual life. Unlike Peter, Goldmund never abandons his personal ambitions. While Goldmund, similar to Peter, eventually returns to Mariabronn, Goldmund never adopts the traditional and wholly selfless lifestyle of sainthood, as Peter chooses. Stephenson proposes that *Narcissus and Goldmund* is therefore a harmonizing of self-denial and self-will. Since *Narcissus and Goldmund* has hidden autobiographical roots, the struggle of Goldmund represents Hesse's conflict of the self to reconcile art and religion: "Hesse would both criticize and assimilate various elements of the Pietist conception of breaking the 'natural man'" in the character Goldmund (Stephenson 173). This "natural man" was a consequence of the Swabian Pietist doctrine, in which the self and its desires should be discarded. Through Goldmund's achievement of his personal ambitions without discarding religion, Hesse explores a new dimension of sainthood, in which a saint is not wholly selfless.

As a saint who does not subscribe to the asceticism common to many medieval saints, Goldmund's relationship to wine is not as liberal as Peter's was but nor is it completely restrained. Unlike Peter, Goldmund does not use to induce new perspectives. Wine, in Goldmund's youth at the cloister, appears to revive him when he feels ill after being kissed by a village girl. This illness exemplifies the early conflict of Goldmund between his will and his passion, which will be examined in greater depth through Goldmund's romantic relationships. After Goldmund leaves Mariabronn, wine is treated as simply a refreshment. When Goldmund comes across a tavern owner, "she [is] friendly," giving "him a mug of wine" (NG 232). The overarching inspiration for Goldmund's creations do not come through spirits, but through the edifying sensual explorations of Goldmund's journey. The statues that Goldmund creates are possible because he "needed [his] entire youth, [his] wandering, [his] live affairs, [his] courtship of many women. That is the source at which [Goldmund] drank" (NG 294). The wine which Goldmund consumes is more metaphoric,

he is intoxicated—similar to Peter’s induced state—by the sensual relationships that inspire his wood carvings.

Goldmund initially believes that sexual experiences are immoral. Peter, in contrast, never believes sensuality to be a taboo, yet he also remained celibate. Goldmund’s experiences demonstrate a different adaptation to bodily abnegation. In addition to eventually consummating his love with various women, Goldmund uses those experiences to develop and shape his artistic ideas. Goldmund’s youthful aversion to sexual encounters is illustrated on a night excursion into town with some fellow cloister boys. As the boys sit with two girls, Goldmund is horrified, thinking about how “visiting girls at night, [sic] was more than just forbidden; he felt it was a sin” that would separate Goldmund from “all virtue, of all love of God and good” (NG 21, 30). Yet, after Narcissus teaches Goldmund that a spiritual life can include art, which for Goldmund is inspired by sensuality, he undergoes a change of perspective. When Goldmund wakes after a stroll in the forest outside the cloister, he is resting on a woman’s lap. The woman, whose name is Lise, kisses Goldmund and teaches him about making love. Even before Goldmund is aware of his purpose to create a representation of the universal mother, he perceives of all love’s actions through an artist’s eyes: “it seemed he had entered a wordless world, in which one called to one another like owls.... Blind, mute groping and searching, this sighing and melting” (NG 81). Goldmund’s impassioned descriptions, while artistic, are at first secular and unconcerned about religion.

Goldmund undergoes a secondary transformation after his lovemaking to Lise. At first Goldmund is merely breaking a taboo, his artistic desires focused on detailing sensual pleasures. While Goldmund does not make love to all the women he admires, he observes the idiosyncrasies of their features. He notes the “childlike and greedy, simple and still chaste in all its strength” beauty of the farmer’s wife during love (NG 97); “the beautiful shy girl

figure...the delicate image...her elegant hands, the long fingers, the beautifully arched cups of her fingernails” of Lydia, whom Goldmund admires and who also becomes a representation of the universal mother (294); Julie, like a “little nun” (103); and the peasant woman’s face in labor, “screaming...distorted...little different from those...during the moment of love’s ecstasy” (128). These passionate experiences Goldmund catalogues and eventually uses as inspiration for the universal mother.

The sensory experiences that are Goldmund’s inspiration are not typical of a spiritual pilgrimage. When Goldmund leaves the monastery, he has many lovers who provide him a better understanding of beauty. This beauty is manifest in the art that record these sensory experiences. It is in these wanderings of Goldmund, he learns to use art to bring himself closer to the divine. Goldmund never fully brings the complex idea of the universal mother out of his unconsciousness into the real world. His atypical search is not by definition saintly, however, as Stephenson perceives about Hesse as an author, it is not the medium that determines the sanctity of the pilgrimage, rather the individual’s ascension toward understanding something greater than one’s self (174). This choice to search for God in other ways than prayer demonstrates Goldmund’s ability to live a spiritual life that is not restricted to static religious conventions.

Narcissus, the teacher and role model of Goldmund, catalyzes this spiritual journey and transforms Goldmund’s life. Although Narcissus is a saint and appears at first to be the model spiritual figure, he represents a traditional religious austerity. He separates, akin to Gerald, Francis, and Christina, his spirit from his body through strict bodily abnegations: “[bending] down in front of the alter on tired knees” Narcissus is “prepared and purified for a night of prayer and [contemplation] that permitted him no more than two hours’ sleep” (NG 79). As Goldmund’s story develops, Narcissus’s “ascetic life of the mind” is eventually antiquated. Narcissus demonstrates, when compared to Goldmund’s harmonizing of art and

religion, a spiritual life that remains unfulfilled by the conclusion of the narrative (NG 34). Narcissus represents the pitfalls to isolating one's self from humanity. As Father Anselm of Mariabronn cloister recognizes, Narcissus values "his Greek more highly than all living creatures of this world" (NG 49). Goldmund and Narcissus are like two halves of two extremes of life: one the saint and the other the artist. However, Goldmund is not solely an artist who is saintly; rather, he represents a modern saint, a new contribution to the hagiographical tradition. While St. Francis teaches Peter to love humanity selflessly, as he does nature, Narcissus shows Goldmund that a life dedicated to God does not demand a life attached to formal religion:

'Love of God,' [Narcissus] said slowly, searching for words, 'is not always the same as love of good. I wish it were that simple. We know what is good, it is written in the Commandments. But God is not contained only in the Commandments, you know; they are only an infinitesimal part of Him. A man may abide by the Commandments and be far from God.' (31)

Although Narcissus claims that Goldmund is not meant for traditional monastic life, he does not exclude Goldmund as a faithful Christian. Rather, Narcissus does not "believe in Goldmund's calling to be [strictly an] ascetic" (NG 28). Goldmund, after listening to Narcissus's advice, learns how to live a life serving God without separating his fleshly desires.

The sensual and spiritual aspects of Goldmund's journey do not occur within the same moment. Instead, as Mileck observes about *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Goldmund recognizes that these divisions of flesh and spirit are indomitable, and he accepts a life of pendulation. It is "thanks to this flaw in God's creation life is a frustrating either-or and never a rich simultaneous experiencing of its diverse possibilities" (Life and Art 203).

Although Goldmund faces a necessary vacillation, he "swings freely and with no

compunctions between sensuality and spirituality,” he “is as much at home in the monastery as in the world” (Life and Art 205). Goldmund’s art engenders a self-realization for Goldmund once he learns to carve wood from Niklaus. From his pious teachings and sensual adventures, “Goldmund is something of a very human compromise between two intimidating possibilities” (Life and Art 203). While Narcissus represents the impossible expectations of asceticism, Goldmund demonstrates a life that is more realistic, but is not void of spirituality. The complex relationship of the two friends, as Mileck argues, is not a mere “allegory” where the “protagonist and friend are but flesh (*Natur*) and spirit (*Geist*)” (Life and Art 205). Goldmund, while constantly thriving for inspiration in nature also craves the complacency and security of the monastery; Narcissus denies his bodily desires enough to separate nearly all temptations of the world except the love for his friend Goldmund. Both individuals achieve experience,

Conclusion

Goldmund, as the modern saint, is the representative of another contribution of Hesse’s to the hagiographical tradition. Although Goldmund’s story is set in the distant Middle Ages, he adapts the conventions of sainthood to relate to a twentieth-century audience. As Mileck recognizes, “Goldmund’s emphasis is upon life for all that it is and upon its living” (Life and Art 203). His story differs from the medieval saints because he does not embrace a strict life of austerity. Goldmund’s narrative advances the progression of sainthood. Hesse reinvents sainthood, first through the artist saint that focuses on nature over humanity and eventually imitates St. Francis. The artist saint represents Hesse’s inability to reconcile art and religion. As Hesse’s second contribution to the hagiographical tradition, Goldmund represents a new model for the German youth. He demonstrates, through his spiritual pilgrimage to the universal mother, an individual adaptation of religion that can coincide with art. A passionate and reverent character, Goldmund illustrates through his

carvings inspired by love, that religion does not have to be formally practiced to be sacred. Yet, Goldmund also shows that achieving spiritual elevation is not singularly beautiful; the experience is filled both with joy and pain, as Goldmund learns through sexual exploration and death. Goldmund's journey depicts a dynamic understanding of art and religion. Hesse explores these different approaches to practicing religion more thoroughly with the modern saint as a spiritual experiment.

In comparison to the saints Gerald, Francis, and Christina, Goldmund does not represent traditional sainthood. Although those individuals were examples of progression in the hagiography tradition, Goldmund is altogether different. His story resembles, loosely, certain adaptations to conventions of sainthood. Akin to Peter, Goldmund is not as severe in practice as these saints, and he does not dedicate his life to God as a traditional faithful Christian of the Middle Ages. Goldmund is, similar to Gerald, in a controversial position. Yet, Odo argued for Gerald as a Christian soldier and judge, while Hesse illustrates Goldmund as a religious adulterer. Hesse's cannot argue that Goldmund contradicts the practice of abstinence. In comparison to Francis, Goldmund is not redeemed. Bonaventure illustrates Francis's conversion to Christianity as a wholly transformative experience. Francis achieves a new perspective and abandons his worldly life to preach on foot. After Goldmund murders the thief Viktor out of self-defense—which demonstrates a critical sin—and confesses his sins, he discovers the universal mother. Goldmund's confession could represent a change to a less worldly life, but he does not abandon his sensual life to pursue his goal. Christina is, as Thomas shows, not adherent to formal religious practices. She conversed with God, and she had a personal relationship with the Divine. Goldmund is similar to Christina through his practice of religion on his own outside the cloister. However, Goldmund does not harm himself to atone for other's sins. He sacrifices his thirst and hunger to have clearer visions of the universal mother, which is a less selfless goal than

Christina. Goldmund uses art to connect with the divine, but his inspiration appears to contradict, not adapt some of the hagiographical conventions. Although Goldmund continues to serve God before and after leaving Mariabronn, he dedicates his life to the universal mother. Hesse's portrayal of the modern saint demonstrates that Goldmund's story is only a spiritual experiment and a reinterpretation of inherited medieval religious foundations.

Hesse creates the modern saint Goldmund as a blend of traditional hagiography while also a representation of Hesse's modern values. Goldmund's story is "more legendary" and "edifying," while also "overtly fictional" (Howcraft Mitchel 391). Hesse does not define the nature of sainthood; alternatively, Hesse writes, as a knowledgeable writer fascinated by the Middle Ages, about Peter and Goldmund as representations of spiritual models that can inspire others and to "remind the hearers of particular teachings of faith and morals" (Howcraft Mitchell 390). Since Hesse is not an academic scholar, or a representative of the Catholic church, he cannot assert with authority all that encompasses sainthood. As a modern German Romantic writer, Hesse offers a new interpretation on the nature of the hagiographical tradition

In accordance with Hesse's essay about the identity crisis of the German youth after World War I, Goldmund provides questions and answers. After watching innocent suffer during a plague, Goldmund asks God "why did you create us thus... Are there no saints and angels to guide us? Or are they all pretty, invented stories that we tell to children at which priests themselves laugh?" (NG 226). Although Goldmund is pained by the transience of life, he continues to devote his life towards an immaterial goal. He wishes to bring the universal mother into existence through art, which is "the overcoming of the transitory" (NG 268). A new kind of saint, Goldmund reinvents the relationship between art and religion, using art for spiritual elevation.

The response of the German public to *Narcissus and Goldmund* was positive, as Rose observes. He notes that the parable has a “certain didacticism” that “is not obtrusive and does not jar the reader,” and Hesse’s German peers “read with delight, though perhaps not always understanding” (Rose 98, 107). The public’s reaction to Hesse’s novel leaves opportunity for alternative interpretations, for which I assert a hagiographical lens as applicable. Through the two narratives, *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*, there is a transformation of Hesse’s spiritual ideal, which demonstrates the fluidity and individuality of religion. Since Hesse believed, as Rose argues, that after World War I, the “soul had to be searched before any change could be initiated in the outside world” I argue for a modern saintly ideal that emerges in Hesse’s novels (Rose 154). Whether this modern saint is theoretical, or if it can be read into everyday current life and be adapted to fit the needs of an individual spirituality will be examined in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 5: Hesse's Conception of Saintliness and Its Future in Twentieth-Century

Germany

The modern saint who emerges in Hesse's fiction, and whom I examined and compared with traditional saints of the Middle Ages, is not a saint to be canonized, and therefore, in that sense, not a saint at all. However, I would argue that Goldmund is, nonetheless, a spiritual model to admire and imitate. Hesse's modern saint illustrates the author's resolution of his own internal conflict between art and religion, a conflict spurred by his Swabian Pietist upbringing. As a fictionalized modern saint, Goldmund represents the embrace of personal expression, the sanctification of sensual life, and the glorification of the artist's work. In this thesis, I have explored the religious dimensions of Hesse's work through the lens of hagiography since Hesse was so attracted to the study of the saints' lives, particularly that of St. Francis. I have portrayed the hagiographical tradition as fluid, and Hesse as a writer who enters into that fluid stream to reinvent saintliness from his unique perspective as a modernist still shaped by Romantic inclinations. Of course, the differences between medieval conceptions of saintliness and Hesse's own vision are striking. As a twentieth-century writer, Hesse responds to medieval hagiography. In this work, I do not examine him as a modern hagiographer. For Hesse, a saint is both a holy person and a figure worthy of imitation, but his understanding of holiness and his vision of moral character worthy of imitation radically depart from traditional medieval ideas.

Hesse's Re-Conception of Holiness

In the Middle Ages, the revered title of sainthood implied that the saintly individual would adhere to strict traditional ascetic practices of abstinence, belief in a Christian God, and—another element that I have not emphasized in this work, but nonetheless a general requirement after the thirteenth century—miracles through the grace of God. The four saints I have discussed—Benedict, Gerald, Francis, and Christina—all illustrate examples of

these religious qualifications for Catholic sainthood. They are all ideals of holiness and models whom the public sought to imitate if they wished to achieve spiritual perfection. Since these saints cultivated a common set of holy practices, they were perceived of as closer to the divine and, therefore, figures worthy of imitation.

One religious practice common to the medieval saints was their severe asceticism. Each one of these saints worshiped God by rejecting aspects of their physical, material self; they often renounced, all personal property, including their own bodies. Benedict himself was an eremite who strove to isolate himself from community and from his body to develop his spiritual relationship with God. Benedict represented an ideal of holiness achieved through obedience and humility. Living three hundred years later, St. Gerald represented an expansion of the spiritual model of Benedict; however, even his narrative did not actively contradict or overturn the most fundamental values within the hagiographical tradition. As a non-violent, although militarily skilled and dedicated Christian, for instance, Gerald never missed Mass. He would spend his mornings singing psalms to praise God, serving as an ideal of holiness for soldiers who were also Christians.

In the later Middle Ages, new interpretations of spiritual perfection emerged. Francis, the penultimate saint I examined, embodied an even stricter asceticism than that demanded by the Rule of St. Benedict. When he converted to Christianity, he left all his worldly possessions, including the robes on his body, to adopt a life of voluntary poverty. Although St. Francis broadened the conception of the spiritual ideal of holiness because he did not behave in a saintly way from childhood, as Gerald did, he nevertheless maintained a belief in God and rejected most physical pleasures even before his conversion to the ascetic life. Meanwhile, Christina continued the common theme of severe asceticism. She intensified the conventional abnegations of Gerald and Francis; she would cause herself pain in addition to denying her body food and water, willingly throwing herself into ovens. But, through the

grace of God, she came out unscathed. She also represented an innovative relationship with God that was more personal than previous saints, but she was still an ascetic who worshiped God and experienced miraculous divine interventions. Considering all four of these saints' narratives helps to delineate a shared concept of saintly holiness based on denying the bodily self to elevate the soul and, thereby, grow closer to God, even though the shifting emphases of their stories reflect the fluidity of the hagiographical tradition, a tradition that subtly changes with the spiritual needs of new generations of readers.

Hesse, however, boldly overturns the traditional medieval definition of holiness. He conceived of holiness in the sense of a wholeness of being; in other words, he considered the unification of both body and spirit, of both the human being and the natural world as necessary in order for holiness to be achieved. This ideal of a personal union of opposites achieved through the artist's activity is partially indebted to the influence of the Romantic movement. Although Hesse was classified as a modernist, his renewal of core aspects of the early Romantic tradition defines his unique modernist approach to hagiography and the idea of holiness.

Major writers in the nineteenth-century Romantic tradition foreshadow ideas central to Hesse's re-conception of holiness. In the American tradition of Romanticism, we see Walt Whitman offering an ideal union of flesh and spirit in *Song of Myself* (1888). As the American Bard, he catalogues a democratic conception of all aspects of American life. In one stanza, he addresses spiritual growth in physical love. In that scene, Whitman depicts two people coupling in the shape of a cross, representing God in the flesh as "the hand of God is the promise of my own" (1027). Whitman's ideal of unifying God, self, and nature is similarly portrayed in European Romanticism. In the British tradition of Romanticism, Lord Byron poetically celebrates the outsider whose "sacred" goal is Nature, not God. For instance, his poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) concludes with the protagonist's spiritual journey

ending with the ocean, in which nature replaces the role of God. And William Blake's poetic work portrays the desired unity between divinity and man. He reveals in "Introduction" from *Songs of Experience* (1789), that the Bard is the new prophet who proclaims a redemption through the imagination; the creative artistry of the individual becomes the new savior for humankind.

Some of these ideas are paralleled by those of the German Romantic writers whom Hesse read and was inspired by in creating a new figure of holiness. In Hesse's family library, there were "both works of theology and literature...especially after the rise of Romanticism...the intermingling of literature (or more broadly, art) and religion" (Stephenson 39). These resources from his family's library guided him during his youthful aversion to Swabian Pietism: "the world of literature, especially Romantic literature, became for Hesse a spiritual home, an orienting centre, in short, his new religion" (Stephenson 40). Hesse's newfound belief in art as holy inaugurated the vision of the artist figure as holy for Hesse. He too, strove against Enlightenment rationalism following the movement of German Romanticism. He turned inward since "the essence of Christianity could no longer be found in an unshakable faith in historical events, person, and revelation, [rather] it could be found in the inner life of the soul" (Stephenson 43). Hesse's developing mysticism of body and spirit is perhaps unusual among modern writers of the early twentieth century because he innovates a fictional figure of holiness by looking back to the Romantic movement and the even earlier medieval past for spiritual inspiration.

Hesse's Saint as Model for Imitation

I earlier asserted that Hesse saw his fiction as serving a spiritual need for the misguided youth of the 1920's. He recognized the desperate circumstances that national unemployment caused, leaving a restive generation to find meaning in life through materialistic outlets. However, he did not provide them with a traditional ascetic model that

separated body and spirit, nor did he merely transfer medieval morals to the disenchanting youth. His new spiritual model was a Romantic vision that sought to provide a holistic approach to human experience. By this modern saint figure, Hesse wished to help the German youth “not only to endure this difficult uncertain existence but to value it highly and to sanctify it” (Hesse qtd. in *My Belief* 140). The implications of redefining the saint inherited from medieval tradition was to give the youth a spiritual foundation in the time of chaos after World War I. In Hesse’s fictional narratives, he creates a figure that escapes into nature from the urbanization that came with the turn of the century. However, his approach is not pantheistic. Hesse’s spiritual experiment was a new interpretation of Christianity that was meant to unify the dualities that characterized life during the 1920’s, unifying even art and religion.

Whether this modern saint served Hesse’s purpose of reviving the German youth’s investment in a religious foundation or became a lost ideal—an ideal of personal integration overshadowed by pressing world historical events—has two answers. In the years following Hesse’s essay to the German youth and his publication of *Narcissus and Goldmund*, the period of the Third Reich ensued and World War II began. For many German youth, these globally destructive events ended any personal quests for individual psychic integration of the kind Hesse idealized, as families were separated and sons were drafted for combat. The escape into nature that consecrated both body and spirit was not practically possible when the individual was preoccupied solely with enduring bloodshed and coming out alive. Therefore, within the decade following the inauguration of this modern saint, Hesse’s ideal may have found few imitators.

However, Hesse’s popularity was long-lasting; it endured as he wrote more works encouraging personal development over societal conformity. Hesse’s conception of self-reliance is evident in his other novels as well: *Siddhartha* (1922), *Journey to the East* (1932), as

well as his final work, *The Glass Bead Game* (1943). Since Hesse always lionized the individual spiritual journey and the salvific escape into nature, generations of German youth continued to read and follow him. His ideal of nonconformity has been fashionable for all generations of German readers because of the humanitarian values that he addresses in his literature. In fact, Hesse was awarded the Nobel prize in literature in 1946 for ““for his inspired writings which, while growing in boldness and penetration, exemplify the classical humanitarian ideals and high qualities of style”” (Nobel Foundation).

The modern saint that emerges in *Peter Camenzind* and *Narcissus and Goldmund* captures his individualistic inclinations in the form of a spiritual model existing outside of societal and political restraints. It even proposes an individualistic religious model that, paradoxically, opposes the restraints of traditional religion. Goldmund represents art as a way of sanctifying life, unifying body and soul, nature and art, human and divine. The modern saint of the 1930’s may not be a spiritual model for imitation in the twenty-first century, given our current age’s reservations about idealism, which Mark Edmundson suggests is “progressively more practical, materially oriented, and skeptical,” where ideals are “[potentially] disappearing from the world” (1). However, Edmundson is also optimistic that society will continually strive for these ideals because of their ability to transcend an individual and make her feel larger than previously thought possible.

While these ideals have been synthesized in the twenty-first century, they are still ever-present in society. Edmundson also expresses that “in every act of courage or compassion or true thought, she’ll feel something within her begin to swell, and she’ll feel a joy that passes beyond mere happiness.” (258-9). Therefore, while Hesse’s spiritual experiment may not have served as a widespread model for imitation, no one knows what future readers in Germany, America, or elsewhere will discover in his work. The adage “no man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same

man” by Heraclitus appears appropriate; as an archetype of ever-present change, Heraclitus’s statement suggests that in each reading of Hesse’s works, a different spiritual model can be perceived for each individual reader.

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