

David G. Richards

*Exploring the Divided Self: Hermann Hesse's "Steppenwolf" and its Critics*

Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996. Pp. 169. \$54.95

Reviewed by Daniel L. Wright

David Richards's book is a well-ordered, if voluminous—indeed encyclopedic—assembly of the popular and scholarly responses to Hesse's most celebrated novel that have been published since *Steppenwolf* first appeared in 1927. However, Richards's study of *Steppenwolf* is no indifferent compendium of the scores of books, articles, and dissertations that have been written on *Steppenwolf*; it goes well beyond its impressive and exhaustive survey of the international scholarship that has been inspired by what is probably Hesse's best-known novel; it probes the significance of that vast body of critical commentary and compellingly evaluates the merits of that commentary with clarity, understanding, and informed, persuasive authority.

Richards permeates his study with illuminating remarks that classify, and convincingly account for, the broad and often puzzling character of Hesse's appeal to many generations of readers of often widely varied temperament and conviction—readers who, nonetheless, have bestowed upon Hesse his perhaps primary reputation as something of a prophet among disillusioned moderns. Richards never generalizes regarding Hesse's popularity among his many passionate enthusiasts, as his study identifies the disparate sources of Hesse's popularity among his highly varied readers. A mystic to some, a visionary to others, Hesse is also to many a psychologist, a theologian, a political commentator, enigmatic dreamer, mythmaker, and philosopher.

Richards uses the relatively simple technique of chronological ordering to systematize the bulk of the critical corpus on *Steppenwolf*, but he embellishes that presentation by demonstrating the dynamics which account for Hesse's simultaneous reception by constituencies as different, for example, as existentialist psychoanalysts and romantic German nationalists. The sum of Richards's efforts, therefore, is not only to see in Hesse's work the account of one of literature's great novels, extensively detailed by a well-informed exploration of the character of its critical reception, but to see displayed something of a history and application of the dynamics of literary and cultural theory in the twentieth century.

*Exploring the Divided Self* reflects the author's vast knowledge of the subject matter whereof he writes; his investigation of the history of *Steppenwolf* scholarship, accordingly, inspires confidence in his analysis by readers who probably are too tiringly accustomed either to pretentious dilettantism in literary

criticism or to scholarly commentary composed solely in the service of some limited and limiting ideological perspective or dogma.

Richards, however, never abandons a guiding precept for Hesse studies in his own evaluation when it comes to examining Hesse's works in general and *Steppenwolf* in particular: the need to employ, at least in part, a Jungian hermeneutic in the interpretive task. As Richards himself puts it: "some knowledge of Jung's theories is an unavoidable prerequisite for interpreting texts which owe as much to Jung's psychology as ... *Steppenwolf* do[es]" (111). Indeed, as Richards's book illustrates, if there is a unifying constant in Hesse studies, it seems to be a preoccupation with readers' urgency to explore and perhaps resolve the enigma of the human condition—if not the deliberate application of a Jungian perspective itself—particularly when it comes to readers' assumptions that the Self is less likely a harmonious unity than a composition of dualities, including elements of good and evil, male and female, etc.

This study's fascinating account of the critical history attending the reception of *Steppenwolf* recognizes that, for all the profusion of variegated critical responses of the past, not much new in this field of inquiry has been generated in recent years. This current lull in *Steppenwolf* criticism suggests to Richards that "Hesse scholarship now appears to be in a period of consolidation and synthesis" (146). That little of merit or note has been generated of late should not lead anyone to believe, however, that little or nothing of interest and challenge is forthcoming in the field. In fact, interested readers may look forward to the publication of Steven D. Jackson's doctoral thesis of 1995, "'The Lonely, Hungry, Sad Steppenwolf': Hermann Hesse's Lost Gothic," in which the author examines *Steppenwolf* as a work broadly representative of, and at least partially indebted to, the Gothic tradition in Western literature.

Richards's book is testimony to the convulsiveness and unpredictability that are the defining traits of much Hesse research—especially with respect to *Steppenwolf*—traits that, in the hands of skilled and insightful critics, promise to open to us new and exciting directions.

Patricia Ingham

*The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel*

London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 197. \$59.95 \$16.95

Reviewed by Jane Campbell

In this book Patricia Ingham refines and develops the work of her two earlier books, *Thomas Hardy: A Feminist Reading* (1989) and *Dickens, Women and Language* (1992). Her new study examines six novels—*Shirley*, *North and South*, *Hard Times*, *Felix Holt*, *The Unclass'd*, and *Jude the Obscure*—in relation to the interlocking