



Hesse, Woolf, and the Art of Reconstruction

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Continuity, Discontinuity and the Experimental Turn
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The Second Coming (1919)
William Butler Yeats

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

Hesse, Woolf, and...

Der Steppenwolf (1927), Hermann Hesse

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

The Waves (1931), Virginia Woolf

... « The Art of Reconstruction »

What we here term the art of reconstruction is a way of filling in the gaps in science's inadequate view of human psychology. [...] Just as writers create a drama from a handful of characters, we are forever able to regroup the separate pieces of our dismantled selves and thus offer them new roles to play, new excitements, situations that are constantly fresh. Look what I mean! (209-210)

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

Hesse, Woolf, and...

Der Steppenwolf (1927), Hermann Hesse

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

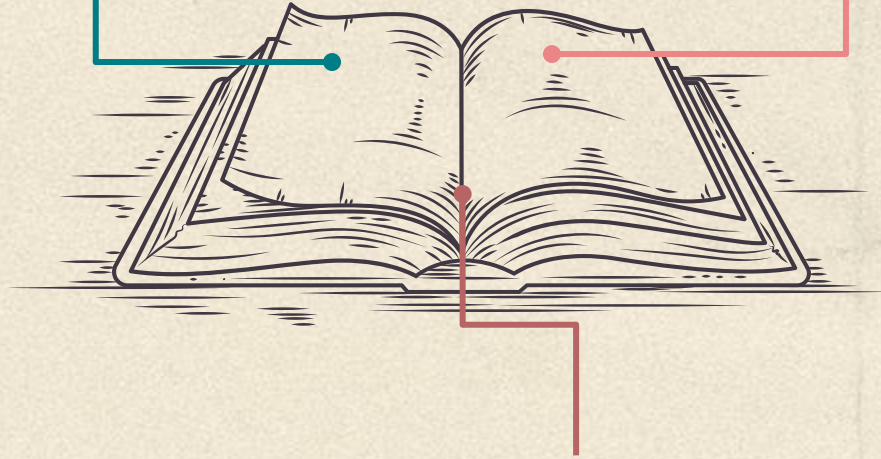
The Waves (1931), Virginia Woolf

Gebildete Romane
(“constructed novels”)

Fragmented narrative (*Der Steppenwolf*)

Editor's
Preface

Harry
Haller's
Notebooks



+ Hallucinatory episodes of
the “mask ball” and
“magic theatre”

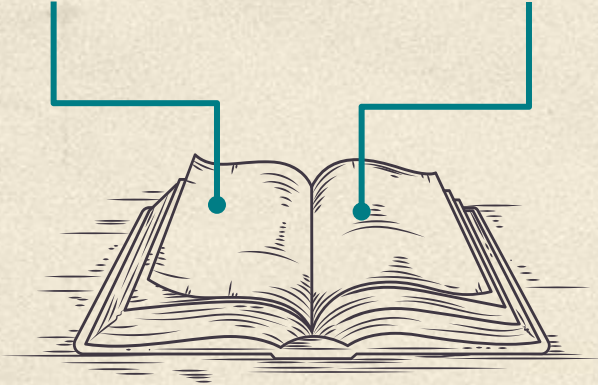
On Steppenwolf: A Tract

(Inserted inside Harry Haller's notebooks)

Fragmented narrative (*The Waves*)

The “Interludes”

The “Dramatic Soliloquies”



Bernard
Susan
Rhoda
Neville
Jinny
Louis

(Perceval)

The Waves (5)

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

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

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

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

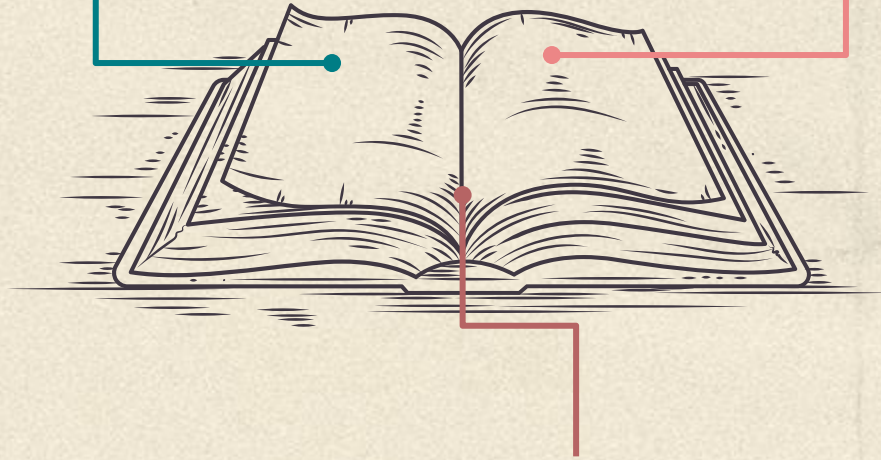
‘I see a crimson tassel,’ said Jinny, ‘twisted with gold threads.’

‘I hear something stamping,’ said Louis. ‘A great beast’s foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.’

Fragmented narrative (*Der Steppenwolf*)

Editor's Preface

External homodiegetic opinion about Harry Haller.



Harry Haller's Notebooks

- Autodiegetic exposition of his internal crisis.
- Dialogues with Hermine (/Hermann), Maria, Pablo.
- Hallucinatory episodes (mask ball; magic theatre).

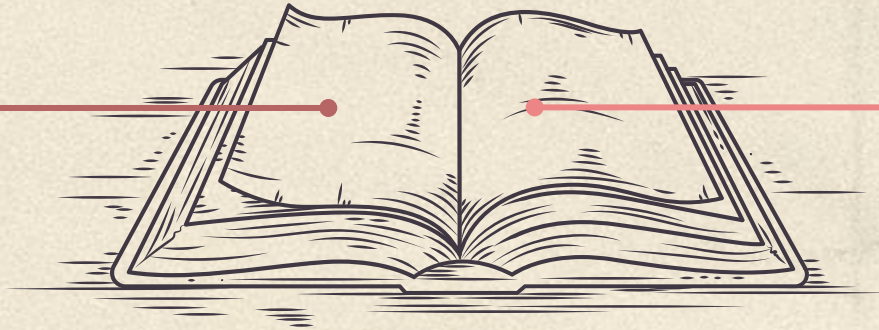
On Steppenwolf: A Tract

External "heterodiegetic" analysis of Harry Haller's case.
"Mock psychoanalytical tract" (Breugelmans 39)

Gebildeter Roman (Der Steppenwolf)

Steppenwolf's Tract

Haller's Notebooks

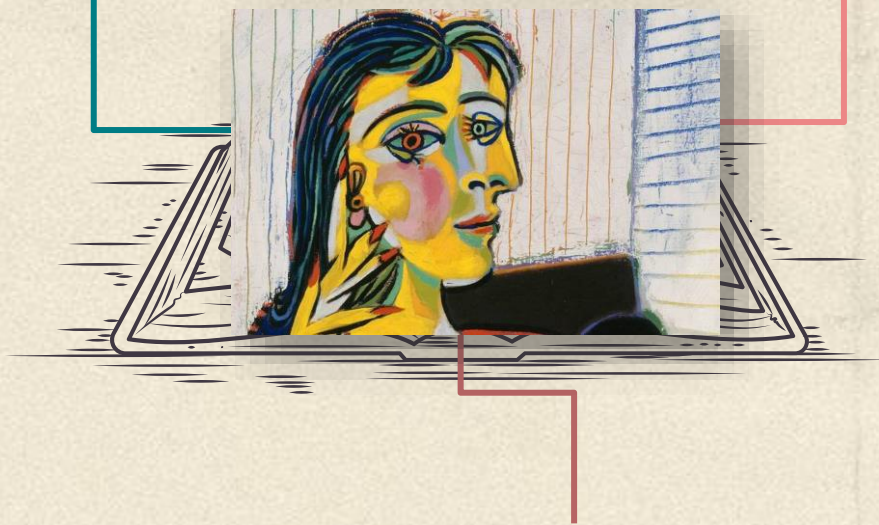


Da hatte ich nun zwei Bildnisse von mir in Händen [...] Und diese beiden Bildnisse zusammen, mein schwermütig stammelndes Gedicht und die kluge Studie von unbekannter Hand [...] hatten recht [...]. Gegen Mittag erwacht, fand ich in mir alsbald die geklärte Situation wieder, das kleine Büchlein lag auf dem Nachttisch und mein Gedicht [...] (88; 92)

Gebildeter Roman (*Der Steppenwolf*)

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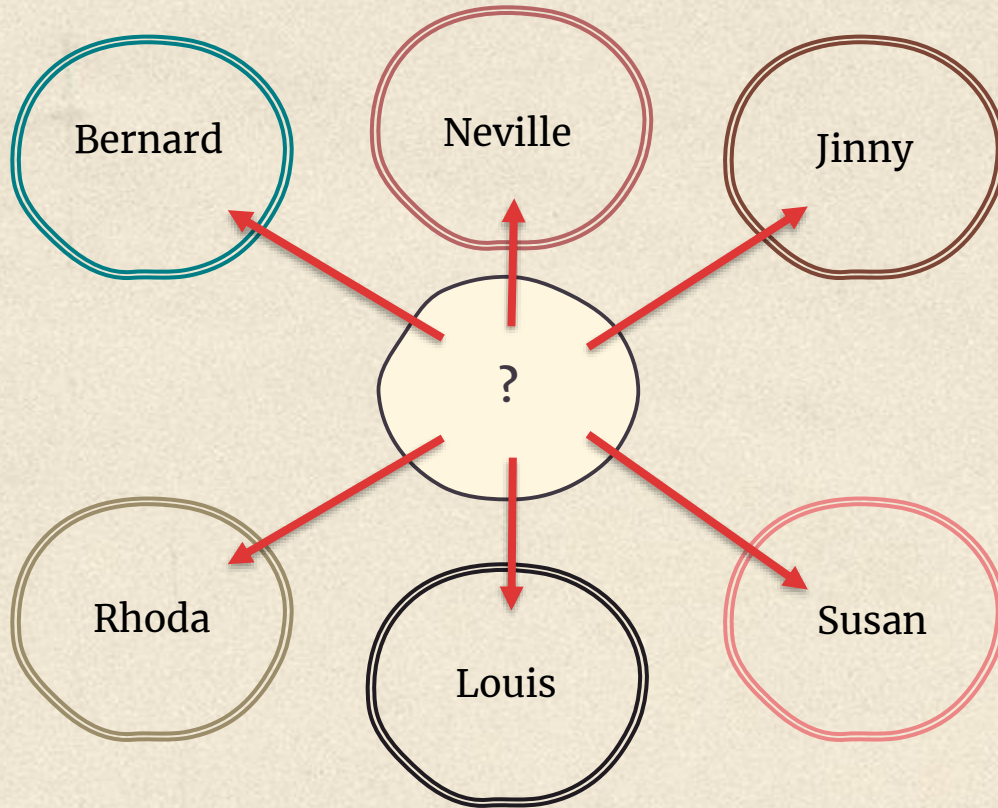
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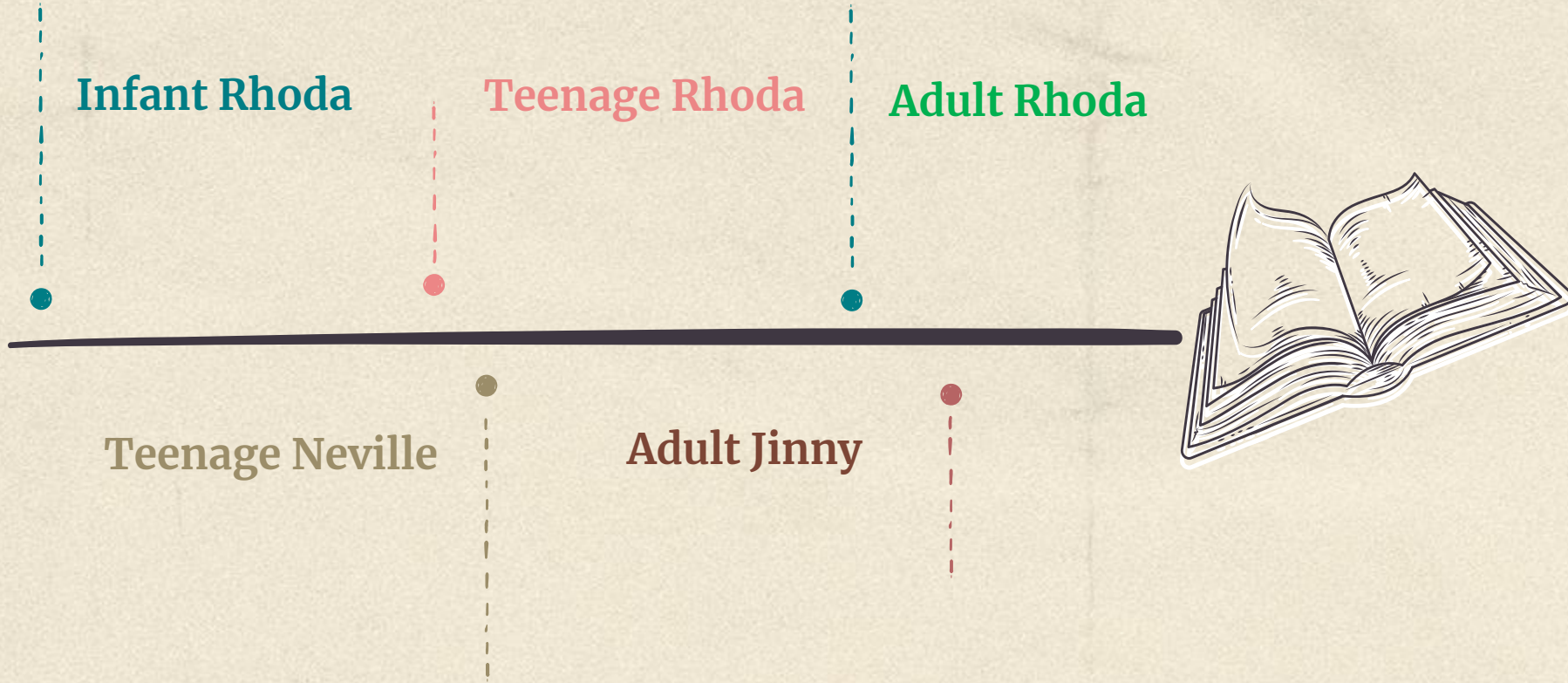
Multiple points of view of a single subject (*The Waves*)



Multiple points of view of a single subject (*The Waves*)



« An abstract mystical eyeless book » ?



From « story-teller » to scriptor / creator : Bernard

The “Interludes”

The “Dramatic Soliloquies”



“Now to sum up,” said Bernard. “Now to explain to you the meaning of my life.” [...] But unfortunately, what I see (this globe, full of figures) you do not see. [...] [I]n order to make you understand [...] I must tell you a story [...]” (183)



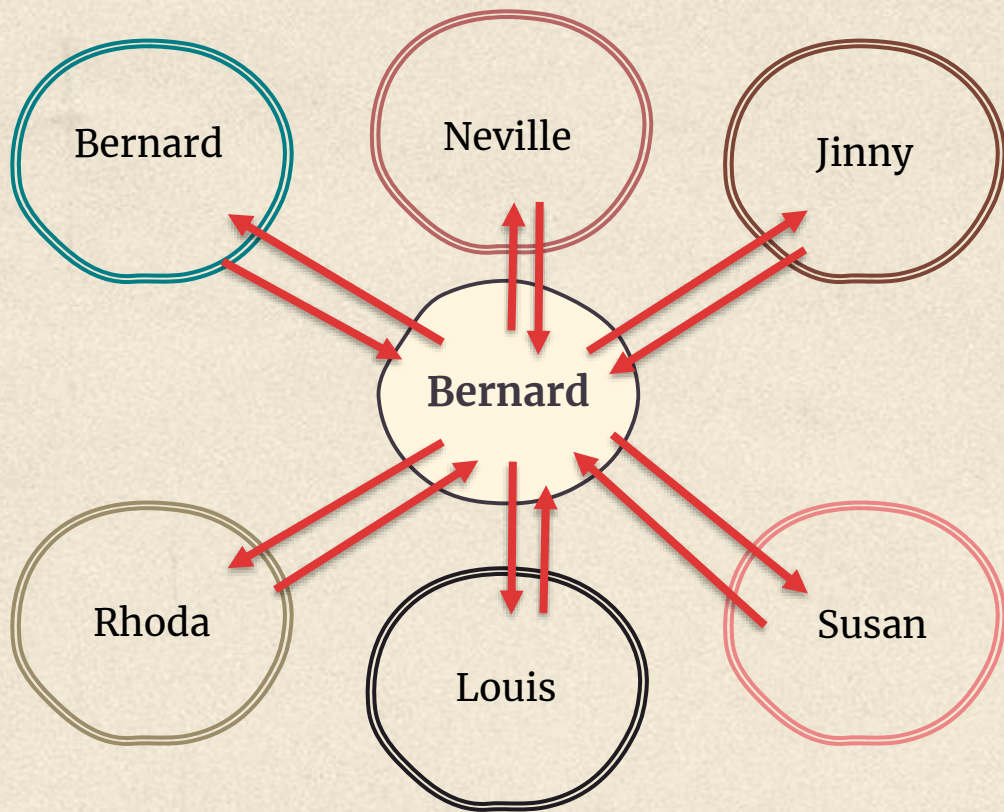
Bernard
Susan
Rhoda
Neville
Jinny
Louis

(Perceval)

J.W. Graham , “Point of View in ‘The Waves’: Some Services of the Style”

[I]t is clear that Virginia Woolf's decision to break [the] prevailing convention[s] of the book [...] altered the reader's relation to what is narrated in the summing-up, and therefore to the work as a whole. (207)

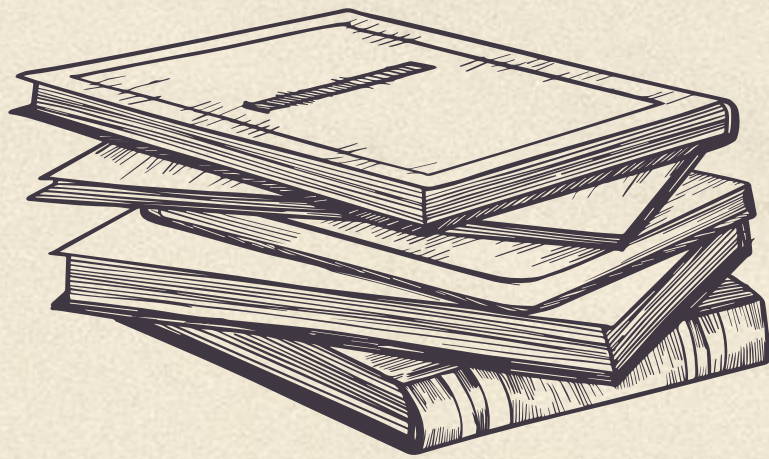
« Let me then create you ↔ You have done as much for me » (63)



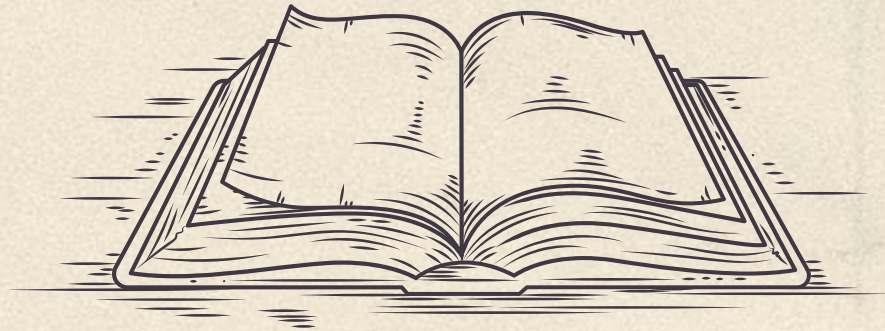
when [...] I try to break off, here at this table, what I call “my life”, it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs. (188)



“The waves broke on the shore.”



Conclusion : Reconstruction as Art



A modernist paradox: continuity and discontinuity

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

Zum Schluß unsrer Studie bleibt noch eine letzte Fiktion, eine grundsätzliche Täuschung aufzulösen. Alle „Erklärungen“, alle Psychologie, alle Versuche des Verstehens bedürfen ja der Hilfsmittel, der Theorien, der Mythologien, der Lügen; So ist denn auch, um es kurz zu sagen, der „Steppenwolf“ eine Fiktion [...] so machten wir uns in der Hoffnung auf leichteres Verstandenwerden eine Täuschung zunutze [.] (74-75)

Thank you for your attention.

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