

## Original Paper

# The Narrative Strategies of Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*

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### Abstract

*Hermann Hesse's Steppenwolf manifests its narrative strategies in three aspects: narrative levels, carnivalized narrative spaces and dialogism, corresponding to the research idea from the external structure to the internal plot and characters' dialogues. The different narrative levels based on the two dimensions of "story" and "discourse" surround each other and drive the narrative process together. The novel comes to a climax when the main character, Haller, wandered to the "tavern" and the "magic theatre", two places with carnival atmosphere, and expressed the flow of Haller's consciousness through the artistic technique of time-space montage. Finally, in the analysis of the Haller's inner monologue and dialogues with the others, the path of salvation is made clear, which is to confront the reality with humor and to be firm in the inner faith.*

### Keywords

*Steppenwolf, narrative levels, carnivalization, dialogism*

## 1. Introduction

*Steppenwolf* is the representative work of Hermann Hesse, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Since its publication in 1927, it has been translated into 36 languages and spread all over the world. So far, there have been numerous studies on *Steppenwolf*, mainly focusing on character images, themes of the work, comparative studies and interdisciplinary studies. However, in the existing materials, there is still a lack of research on the narrative strategies. Based on the close reading, this paper uses the relevant narrative theories to discuss the narrative levels, carnival art, dialogism in the novel. Specifically, the first step is to analyze the different narrative levels of events in narrative works in the two dimensions of story and discourse. Then, the carnivalization of the two significant spaces involved in Haller's journey and the conscious expression under the montage perspective are explored. Finally, we will enter into the dialogue of the characters, interpret the self-splitting inner monologue of Haller

and the asymmetric dialogue with other characters, in order to better grasp the main theme of the work on this basis.

## 2. The Narrative Levels of *Steppenwolf*

Hesse arranged a very clear three part structure for the entire work: Preface, Harry Haller's records, and Treatise on the steppenwolf, indicating the content and order of the writing. Under the influence of Russian formalism, Todorov proposed in 1966 that the representation of story in narrative works can be divided into two levels: *histoire* and *discours* in French, corresponding to story and discourse in English. "Story is the content plane: who does what, when, and where. Discourse is the expression plane: a representation of story in language or some other medium" (Kafalenos, 2018, p. 40). Based on the narrative hierarchy of *Steppenwolf*, this part conduct a specific analysis from these two different dimensions, which surround each other and drive the narrative process in different meanings.

### 2.1 Discourse Level: Meta-narrative Games

Genette divides the "narrative levels" as follows: extradiegetic, diegetic or intradiegetic, and metadiegetic (Genette, 1980, p. 228). The main body of work is a self-narrative by a man who calls himself the steppenwolf. To analyze specifically, Haller's self-narrative about his journey through the inner world of hell can be seen as the intradiegetic. The preface written by the narrator as the nephew of the Haller's landlord can be seen as the extradiegetic, while also introducing the main body of the work. The treatise narrated by Haller in his autobiography belongs to the second narrative and is a metadiegetic. From the definition of "narrative levels" by Genette, the landlord's nephew is the external subject of the story, and Haller is the main subject of the story. In this way, the narrative level of the entire book at the discourse level is very clear.

From the perspective of the meta-narrative, one prominent feature is the intervention of different genres, which essentially involves different language styles. The preface functions as a paratext, which facilitates communication between the narrator and the narrative receiver. An autobiography can be seen as a diary, highly personalized and vivid. The treatise is an analysis of the character of the steppenwolf, reflecting the rigor and abstraction of academic language. The work also inserts three poems, but abandons the vague imagery typically found in poetry. Instead, they tend to give people an intuitive impact, consistent with Haller's mental activities in the illusion. What is easily overlooked is the mention of Haller in the newspaper, which can be classified as political discourse, reflecting the authorities' rejection of Haller's anti-militarist stance.

The meta-narrative is the narrator's reflection on the narrative behavior or process, which "need not destroy aesthetic illusion, but may also contribute to substantiating the illusion of authenticity that a narrative seeks to create" (Neumann & Nünning, 2014). Hesse leads the readers step by step into the narrative trap he has set up. Genette considers that "the paratext is a threshold". "It is a zone that always conveys commentary that is either authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, at the

service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (Genette, 1997, p. 2). The preface, as a paratext, informs readers of the content of the book from the beginning. The author, the nephew of Haller’s landlord, recalls his impression of Haller from his perspective. However, in Haller’s autobiography, there are some findings that correspond to the preface. For example, Haller’s views on renting a house, his various feelings of watching a concert and his recognition of his own contradictions (opposing power and exploitation while still maintaining his identity as a property owner). This arrangement allows readers to perceive the same life segment from different narrative perspectives. The narrator uses external focus in the preface to observe the characters in the story, which is more objective. The autobiography is an internally focused narrative, reflecting Haller’s views on civil society and his conflicting emotions within himself.

The narrator of the preface constantly intervenes and interrupts the narrative. “I wish to leave my own personality as far as possible in the background” (Hesse, 2009, p. 14). “I will not pretend to justify this espionage” (Hesse, 2009, p. 18). “He left nothing behind but his manuscript. I may do with it whatever I desire” (Hesse, 2009, p. 25). “I neither approve nor condemn them. Let every reader do as his conscience bids him” (Hesse, 2009, p. 29). The narrator demonstrates to the readers that his identity as the nephew of the landlord allows him to interact with Haller. Moreover, his act of espionage and observations of Haller reveal his thorough understanding of Haller, thereby suggesting the reliability of the narrator’s account and the authenticity of the second part. This ensures that readers can smoothly accept the story and that the narrative process proceeds normally. At the same time, his attitude towards the manuscript is “most part fictitious” (Hesse, 2009, p. 25). This proves the importance of the preface, guiding the readers to remain skeptical as they read the rest of the book, and into the next narrative trap.

Haller achieved self-awareness and personal growth through wandering. He first encountered a neon sign reading “Magic Theater—For Madmen Only” on the street. Later, in an old alley, he met a solitary night wanderer, from whom he received a booklet. The protagonist of the booklet is also “Harry Haller, who calls himself the steppenwolf”. The treatise provides a detailed analysis of several aspects: the two conflicting personalities that steppenwolf believes reside within him, the multifaceted nature of human character, and suggestions for steppenwolf’s self-reconciliation. The steppenwolf must keep moving forward, traversing the inner hell and embarking on a difficult path of self-improvement. In the autobiography, Haller likewise seeks self-redemption in this manner. Given the various coincidences mentioned above, we have reason to believe that the treatise might be another form of documentation of Haller’s inner journey, presented through a meta-narrative game, thereby enhancing the aesthetic illusion of the story.

## 2.2 Story Level: Reverse Narrative

The explicit narrative level of *Steppenwolf* is the discourse level, which is the most directly felt by readers. People are often attracted to it and ignore the story level. It is also important to explore the

narrative level of the text from the story level. On the story level, the work is divided into two parts, marked by Haller's entrance into the Black Eagle Tavern and his encounter with Hermine. Before encountering Hermine, Haller was deeply disturbed by his different views from the professor and was plagued by suicidal thoughts, yet he dared neither to commit suicide nor to go home. After encountering Hermine, under Hermine's leadership, there was a change in mindset, allowing him to survive in the secular world and enter the Magic Theater to dare to face his desire. This was due to Hermine's intervention that the story was reversed.

Before entering the Black Eagle Tavern, Haller was caught in a conflict between the elite and the common people. As a representative of the elite, Haller persistently pursued the wisdom and spirit brought by art and literature, and was fascinated by the quiet and peaceful family environment of ordinary citizens. This would satisfy his nostalgia for his hometown, yet he despised the bourgeoisie's complacent optimism. Haller's daily life, though "without special pains, without special cares, without particular worry, without despair" (Hesse, 2009, p. 33). However, his strong sense of class identity prevented him from indulging in the bourgeoisie's mundane pleasures. At times, he resorted to opium to relieve his physical pain and often contemplated when he could end his life. In those chaotic days, he wanted "near enough to the immortals to share in one measure of old music their cool, bright, austere and yet smiling wisdom" (Hesse, 2009, p. 84). He often wandered the streets at night. When he discovered a riddle light with the words "Magic Theater-Entrance not for everybody", his heart is filled with the desire to find the entrance to the Magic Theater. It was not until he attended a funeral and visited a professor's home that the conflict between human nature and wolfish one became intense. He bade farewell to this hypocritical world of bourgeoisie, unable to survive in the real world any longer. The only option left for him was suicide, marking the triumph of the steppenwolf. This part of the story portrayed Haller's extremely contradictory real life, and it was clear that redemption cannot be achieved by self-reliance alone.

Haller arrived at the Black Eagle Tavern with fear of death, where he began his second life. Hermine transformed into the "Anima" who guided Haller's rebirth and played an important role in his growth process. "When the anima is strongly constellated, she softens the man's character and makes him touchy, irritable, moody, jealous, vain, and unadjusted. He is then in a state of discontent and spreads discontent all around him" (Jung, 1969, pp. 70-71). Hermine taught him to appreciate pop music and dance fox-trot. Hermine's values were grounded in the present world. She believed that truly devout was impossible in real life, only by fully embracing momentary pleasures could avoid harming herself. This "truth" profoundly influenced Haller. Hermine encouraged Haller to confront the human soul, and Haller gradually adapted to a life of pleasure. Hermine then introduced Haller to Pablo, who took him to the magic theater's masquerade ball to help him realize human's multifaceted desire.

The plot of Hermine's death in the Magic Theater also hints Haller's future development. "The projection ceases the moment it becomes conscious, that is to say when it is seen as belonging to the

subject” (Jung, 1969, p. 60). Initially, Haller’s persona was that of human, meaning that only by learning to enjoy pop music and dance the fox-trot could he live a normal life, accepted by society and others. However, before he met Hermine in the tavern, his wolfish nature had overcome his human one and replaced it as his outward persona. But the reality was that such a Haller would not be accepted by the real world. At this point, Hermine (as the Anima) represented the human nature. Under the wolfish nature, Haller’s unconsciousness actually didn’t want to choose death. He still desired to live within a community, which meant he could not abandon human nature. Only by continuing to complete this transformation could Haller return to the real world. At the end of the story, Haller perhaps out of jealousy, killed Hermine under the guidance of his wolfish nature. In this game, Haller is a loser, but he also learns how to play the game of life well, so the future outcome remains positive.

At the discourse level, the three parts can exist independently of each other and fit well into the text through the flexible transformation of meta-narrative and various narrative perspectives. They reveal three perspectives on understanding Haller. The preface is “objective but superficial impressions of Haller”. The autobiography is the “subjective interpretation of himself”. And the treatise is “the observation of a higher intelligence to view Haller” (Ziolkowski, 1965, p. 186). At the story level, Hermine becomes a key character in redeeming Haller, helping him to break free from the lonely world of denial and learn to enjoy the human nature.

### 3. The Carnival Narrative Spaces of *Steppenwolf*

Whether it is the meta-narrative at the discourse level or the reverse narrative at the story level, both drive the narrative to reach its climax. Haller broke away from the civic world represented by the professor and entered the Black Eagle Tavern and Magic Theater in a helpless moment. And this part of the plot arrangement fully reflects the carnival art of *Steppenwolf*. In general, the carnivalization defined by Bakhtin has the following characteristics. “It marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. And carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. The city marketplace, the town fair and the carnival square are important places with carnival atmosphere” (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 10-11, p. 146). Specifically in *Steppenwolf*, the Tavern and Magic Theater are enlarged carnival spaces. Haller followed Hermine to a dance party in the tavern, and travelled through different illusions in the Magic Theater, where he engaged in crazy behavior. Furthermore, Haller found these two places through traveling. And the narrator created a consciousness chronotope in the narrative process. In this mode, the time montage allows Haller to exist in a relatively fixed space, and breaks the time boundaries of past, present, and future with the help of consciousness. By using spatial montage to simultaneously display scenes or events from different spaces in front of Haller, presenting several scenes without logical sequence, it also creates a carnival effect of images.

### 3.1 Carnival Square Spaces: Tavern and Magic Theater

The original western carnival was performed in squares and streets. In late medieval cities, the carnival season could last up to three months. With the continuous application of the celebration and ritual represented by carnival in literature, the squares used for carnival performances are constantly expanding. The Tavern and Magic Theater in *Steppenwolf* are spaces with a carnival atmosphere. For Haller, these spaces not only meant that he began to accept the human nature and became accustomed to indulging in the vulgar world of bright lights and wine, but also meant a rebirth after despair.

Haller left his professor's house, signifying the absolute victory of the steppenwolf and the end of a life of hypocritical lies. Overwhelmed by despair, he contemplated suicide, but his timidity made him want to back down. In the end, propelled by a fervent desire to survive, he found his way to the Tavern. "It was a free night-crowds, smoke, the smell of wine, and the clamour of voices, with dancing in a room at the back, from which the frenzy of music came" (Hesse, 2009, p. 102). Haller has never experienced anything in his daily life. He has learned difficult and complex things in his past life, but has not learned simple things like dancing. At Hermine's request, Haller gradually integrated into the party environment. He experienced "the sweet intoxication of a common dream and of music and rhythm and wine and carnal lust" (Hesse, 2009, p. 197). In this space, whether one is of high or low status, the boundaries between them are broken down, and class distinctions and prejudices are dissolved. They are all equal individuals, each with the right to display an expression of ecstasy. This is precisely the valuable aspect of a human society, which is not always hypocritical. Through living in the Tavern, two personalities dissolved in the intoxication of the festival. He gradually weakened his fear of going home and regained hope for life, without the need to force himself to achieve liberation through passive suicide.

The Magic Theater that Hermine and Pablo opened for Haller is another carnival narrative space. The Magic Theater is actually Haller's inner world. The countless doors in the Magic Theater represent Haller's various personalities. The mirrors depict different desire, and walking inside will lead to crazy behavior. Haller kept shuttling through the corridor, gradually seeing all of himself. The adventure activity of "hunting cars" is actually a struggle between humans and machines. People only fought for themselves, and machine civilization didn't not bring benefits such as order, culture, and law. Instead, it intensified conflicts. Haller, who was once anti-war, also took up arms. The tamer trained the wolf, but the wolf could also become a trainer. These exaggerated images do not appear in real life, but the text magnifies Haller's inner desires through various illusions, revealing that people may exhibit crazy and uncontrollable behavior after losing rationality. Haller travelled into his inner hell through dreams or fantasies, discovering that he also had the qualities he hated, but this time he dared to face his inner desires. And instead of getting stuck in the twisted dilemma of the human-wolf conflict, he actively hoped for redemption.

### 3.2 Consciousness Chronotope: Time Montage and Spatial Montage

By distorting and deforming time and space, the carnival narrative effect can also be achieved. In the process of traveling through the two narrative spaces mentioned above, the use of time montage and spatial montage not only reflects the connection between time and space, but also depicts Haller's own state of consciousness flow. This is an important art form in *Steppenwolf*, which deconstructs the narrative style of traditional novels through the reversal of time sequence, fantastic dreams, and collage of spatial scenes, reflecting a carnival like way of thinking.

Time montage refers that the space remains unchanged, while the inner monologue of the characters flows freely in time. And the protagonist can temporarily leave the objective time of the present and enter the past or the future. The *Steppenwolf* uses dreams to showcase the technique of time montage. After Hermine danced and left, Haller had a dream on the marble table in the Tavern, talking to Old Goethe. At this moment, the space was temporarily fixed in the tavern, which can even be said to weaken the sense of existence of the space, while allowing oneself to shuttle back to Goethe's era. Haller questioned Goethe, expressing the spiritual crisis of modern people. Although he longed for the faith and optimism expressed by the immortals, the reality of life was full of doubt and despair. When Old Goethe handed over the "a woman's leg on the dark velvet" (Hesse, 2009, p. 116) to Haller, Haller realized that the so-called immortal would also pursue pleasure. In a brief dream, Haller realized the reason for his pain. He demanded strict standards of himself and always hoped to maintain noble pursuits in reality, but was exhausted by the inability to realize utopian ideas. "Seriousness lies in putting too high a value on time" (Hesse, 2009, p. 116). Eternity is something that transcends time, and it may be difficult to touch within the limited time of life. However, being tolerant of real life does not mean that pursuing faith and eternity is meaningless. The spiritual efforts made by immortal figures such as Goethe and Mozart are still worthy of praise. Only the strength of an individual's inner world can reshape the external world.

Another plot that clearly employs the technique of time montage is a memory of Haller and Maria together. Being with Maria evokes warm memories within Haller's heart. "At the magic touch of Eros, the source of them was opened up and flowed in plenty" (Hesse, 2009, p. 165). However, they are merely passers-by to each other, not in a relationship of possession. Maria seemed to be Haller's emotional mentor, guiding him to regain the ability to love. Apparently, such a healing approach was correct. Haller gained his hope for life, and he got out of denying himself. Because the warm pictures of the past were indestructible, they were the value of his life. At the same time, it inspires readers that the life experience full of love is the link between the spiritual and the real world, and it serves as the force that supports people to pursue their beliefs and achieve spiritual fulfillment.

Spatial montage can achieve the effect of changing space while keeping time unchanged. It presents a series of scenes or events that take place in different spaces through rapid cross-cutting. The most prominent plot of spatial montage is Haller's journey through the magic theater. The countless room

doors in the Magic Theater corresponded to different spaces, and the content on the doorplate seduced Haller into entering, and then returned to the circular corridor through magical power. The countless doors in the Magic Theater could be regarded as the display of different personalities of Haller. The stories behind each door needed to be integrated to form the complete personality of Haller, which was also the true mystery of the Magic Theater. It helped Haller realize that one cannot simply understand oneself through the binary of human nature and wolfish one. Everyone has a thousand faced soul. After experiencing these, Haller became mature and realized that it was he who hoped to become immortal, and it was he who indulged in desire. He had to accept his complete self. One day, he has to learn to laugh and be humorous, learn to enjoy the game of life, and not worry about whether his actions at that time would make him unacceptable. Laughter and humor are the methods provided by the immortals for Haller. The internal logic of this method is that humor is accompanied by sadness, and only a strong heart is the powerful force to fight against the unbearable reality. Mozart wanted Haller to be able to keep a sense of humor in the face of adversity, and to believe that although the machine would play poisonous music, they will never destroy the spirit of the real music behind them. Intellectuals like Haller should use their talents to become stronger in the pain and resist the dark reality.

Overall, Hesse created a carnival square space, accompanied by time montage and spatial montage to show the carnival art of *Steppenwolf*. In places with carnival atmosphere, such as Taverns and Magic Theaters, Haller dissolved the personality of steppenwolf under the guidance of Hermine and Maria, learned to dance the fox-trot, gradually accepted the luxurious lifestyle, and liberated his ability to love. At the same time, in the Magic Theater constructed by the subconscious, he dared to face his own desire. Each of us is actually a pawn in life, and fundamentally we need to seek our own inner development path. One day, we need to learn to enter every game in life with a humorous attitude and achieve redemption.

#### **4. The Dialogism of *Steppenwolf***

*Steppenwolf* creates carnival square spaces, in which different characters can have intimate contact and make jokes regardless of class. In this carnival atmosphere, the dialogue between characters naturally arises. Bakhtin believed that polyphonic dialogue was the highest form of dialogue. "The essence of this kind of dialogue lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and are combined in a unity of a higher order than in homophony. If one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills takes place, that the boundaries of the individual will can be in principle exceeded" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 21). We can see that the most important thing in dialogue is the others. The dialogism of *Steppenwolf* is also presented by Haller's dialogue with different others. The others refer not only to the different individuals produced by Haller's schizophrenia, but also to other characters such as Hermine, Pablo, the immortals, who have similar experiences to Haller's.



#### *4.1 Inner Monologue: Self-splitting and Difficult Choices*

Harry Haller sometimes experienced a kind of mental split. From the beginning, he believed that he had a mixed personality of wolfish and human. On many issues, these two sides contradicted each other, which was the source of his distress. After entering the Magic Theater, Haller saw a mirror on the wall representing desire. In the mirror, he saw many versions of himself. These versions of Haller were objectified expressions of himself. With the help of these versions of himself, Haller gradually better recognized himself and was able to truly maintain himself.

Through the treatise, we can know the living situation of the Haller. "In him the man and the wolf were in continual and deadly enmity" (Hesse, 2009, p. 52). "He looked down upon the ordinary man, nevertheless his life in many aspects was thoroughly ordinary" (Hesse, 2009, p. 62). In other episodes, there are also monologues of the two personalities. "At many moments the old Harry appeared to be dead, then of a sudden there he was again giving orders. The young Harry was silent for very shame, but at other times he took the old by the throat" (Hesse, 2009, pp. 157-158). The split of different personalities represents Haller's difficult choices in real life. It creates a dialogic relationship between the self and the other within the protagonist's divided personality. This hidden dialogue, presented through interior monologue, is a form of double-voiced discourse. In these hidden conversations, two versions of the Haller are imagined. Based on the behavior of one personality at a given moment, the readers can imagine the reaction of an invisible other personality.

The division of Haller's personality is completely completed in the Magic Theater. Here, the various facets of his character are vividly reflected through mirrors. In the process of entering the door of desire again and again, Haller alternated between indulging in temptation and judging his own actions from an outsider's perspective. For example, in the car hunting activity, he and his classmate Gustav were both hunting, but Haller also realized that it was a war between man and machine. In the conversation with the illusions, Haller realized the diversity of his personality. Only after truly understanding himself can Haller embark on the right path of redemption. Enduring the pain of division and difficult choices is the necessary path for his own growth.

#### *4.2 Dialogue with the Others: Seeking Redemption and Self-growth*

Haller's journey to redemption was arduous and tortuous. At the beginning, he took Don Quixote as an example of redemption. However, this path ultimately failed. The character of Don Quixote occupies a relatively minor portion of the text. Nevertheless, as a character already created in other works, Don Quixote is inherently established, engaging in a dialogue with the early Haller. Haller perceived himself as a noble figure akin to Don Quixote, who pursued honor and heroism. They were both idealistic dreamers. Haller longed to maintain a pure pursuit of art, hoping that refined art could transform German society. Both of them found themselves trapped in the predicament where ideal and reality could hardly coexist. But Haller did not fall into a vortex of self-reflection. Instead, he proactively sought new methods through travel. Once he entered the tavern, his dialogue with Don Quixote came to an end.

After being influenced by Hermine, Maria, and the immortals, Haller had the opportunity to overcome the gap between ideal and reality, rather than becoming a victim of idealism.

When Haller entered the Black Eagle Tavern, he was dismissive of the life held by Hermine, Maria, and Pablo. However, Haller had to seek help in a state of extreme despair. He needed to listen to the advice of others, which created an equal dialogue. Haller encountered Hermine, who reminded him of his childhood friend Hermann and also of himself. Thus, he guessed her name. Hermine seemed to take on the role of a God of redemption, loving and guiding Haller. Haller saw Hermine as the embodiment of the miracle he was pursuing, his subconscious “anima” that could lead him to the highest meaning. Hermine taught Haller to dance, breaking through the barriers he set for himself and helping him learn to enjoy the simplest pleasures of life. She also introduced him to Maria, who could liberate his erotic potential, and Pablo, who emphasized the importance of happiness. Pablo, who later appeared as Mozart, played the role of an immortal who provided artistic enlightenment. He helped Haller find himself, taught him humor and laughter, and showed him how to integrate his self into the eternal moment. This implied the importance of seeking faith through musical art. Their dialogues with Haller are educational in tone. Pablo criticized Haller that “music does not depend on being right, on having good taste and education, however, the purpose of making music is to see how eyes sparkle, legs twitch and faces begin to laugh” (Hesse, 2009, pp. 155-156). In the final illusion of the magic theater, Mozart stimulated him with the music that Haller valued most, played the music from the radio that he could not bear, and inspired him again and again through laughing, leading Haller to the path of redemption. The figures of the others with whom Haller engages in dialogue are fixed. They appear when Haller needs them to offer guidance. A significant reason for this is that their relationships with Haller are constructed in his subconscious. They are embodiments of Haller’s persona, not existing in isolation nor for their own development, but solely to help Haller gain deeper self-awareness. Once Haller learns to laugh and embraces humor, they can disappear. When Haller is in inner pain, he chooses to step out of his existing environment and wanders around in search of the Magic Theater. Eventually, he chooses a path to the inner world. The spiritual crisis of Haller is a disease of the times. The central question explored by *Steppenwolf* is whether individuals who pursue the immortal spiritual ideal can truly live happily away from the civic life, and how the wise man can maintain his heart in the desperate reality.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the narrative strategies in Hesse’s novel *Steppenwolf*. By integrating narrative theories, it analyzes the narrative strategies of the work from three aspects: narrative levels, carnival art, and dialogism. These three aspects are closely interrelated and progressive. They finally point to a central point, that is, to explore the path of individual internal development: to fight against reality with humor, adhere to inner faith, and promote the progress of civilization with personal spiritual development.

*Steppenwolf* is a representative work in the middle period of Hesse's creation. As a semi-autobiographical writing, to some extent, the formation and development of Hesse's self-consciousness affects the development of Haller's character, and also reflects Hesse's thinking on life problems and the solutions provided. Hesse's answers are as follows. First, he affirms the complex and diverse nature of human beings, acknowledging that individuals are a combination of multiple contradictions, without questioning the correctness of ideals. Second, he advocates learning to reasonably enjoy the pleasures of the world, mastering humor and laughter, and forging a strong inner self in the face of a dark reality. Most fundamentally, however, he emphasizes the importance of shaping one's faith. No matter what gifts fate and the times bestow upon an individual, one still has the right and the confidence to maintain one's true self. As long as people's mental illness is not cured, *Steppenwolf* will never go out of fashion. It will span the river of time and guide us from different perspectives in a new era.

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