



Hermann Hesse's Fictions of the Self: Autobiography and the Confessional Imagination (Princeton Legacy Library)

Eugene L. Stelzig

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This masterful synthesis of criticism and biography surveys all of Hermann Hesse's major works and many of his minor ones in relation to the intricate psychological design of his entire life history. Eugene Stelzig examines what it means to be an "autobiographical writer" by considering Hesse's fictions of the self as an exemplary instance of the relationship between life and art and between biography and autobiography. In a graceful and inviting style, he frees this major confessional writer from the confines of German culture and the status of "cult figure" of the 1960s, and situates him in the tradition of world literature and in a variety of literary, psychological, philosophical, and religious contexts.

Three introductory chapters on autobiography and Hesse set the stage for a chronological study. Then follows a penetrating analysis of the balance between biographical fact and confessional fantasy in Hesse's long career, from the failed autobiography of his first literary success, *Beneath the Wheel*, through the protracted midlife crisis of the grotesque *Steppenwolf* period, to the visionary autobiography of his magisterial fictional finale, *The Glass Bead Game*.

Originally published in 1988.

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