

“As far away from Berlin as I can get!”

Hermann Hesse on Lake Constance

Lecture given by Volker Michels

Hermann Hesse was 27 when he came to Gaienhofen, and 35 when he moved away again. He thus lived there for just under 8 years (from 1904 to 1912), a period equivalent to a bare tenth of his life. Yet it was a period that was to prove formative both in terms of his own future development and also for the Untersee region, the part of the “Swabian Sea” where the Rhine flows out of the lake, and the area that has remained the most beautiful and quietest section of Lake Constance (“Bodensee” in German) right up to the present day. For this stretch of country, as later in the case of southern Switzerland, Hesse’s decision to settle there marked the beginning of a period in which many other artists were drawn to the region. Yet it never became a homogenous artists’ colony - not a Worpswede on Lake Constance, in other words - no matter how numerous the motivations shared by the fellow writers and artists that lived there, a community seeking to live an alternative lifestyle far away from the devastations of civilization and industrialization in countryside that had remained intact and unspoilt. And they knew why they decided to do so. None of them came to the region from the provinces but from big cities: Hesse from Basel, Otto Dix from Berlin and Düsseldorf, Erich Heckel from Dresden and Berlin. Where, after all, is one more aware of the disparities, and better able to depict them, than when confronted with the unspoilt obverse of the denaturalization and overstimulation of the metropolises, be it as reflection or contrasting programme?

The first statement Hesse is known to have made on the subject of Lake Constance concerns a cold he appears to have caught on a boat trip from Meersburg to Kreuzlingen during his third visit to Emmishofen in Switzerland, home of fellow writer Emil Strauß, eleven years his senior and author of the novel of school life, *Freund Hein*, a work published a year before, and one that created quite a stir, subsequently prompting Hesse to describe his own schooldays in the story *Unterm Rad*.

“I have,” Hesse recounts on December 9, 1903, in a letter to his painter and architect friend Hermann Haas, “such awful catarrh that I can barely see out of my eyes any more. I picked it up on Lake Constance, where I spent five days with my friend Hein-Strauß. It was really marvellous, and I saw an amazing amount of beautiful things. The town halls in Überlingen and Konstanz, the castle in Meersburg, the churches in Reichenau, and the Alte Kanzlei in Überlingen are among the most beautiful places I have ever been, and worth far more than a touch of catarrh.”

Hesse was 26 years old at the time, having completed his apprenticeship as a bookseller and antiquarian three months previously in Basel, and having made a name for himself following the publication of two volumes of verse and prose, yet also through book reviews that appeared in Swiss and German newspapers. That same year, Hesse’s first novel, *Peter Camenzind*, had been accepted by Samuel Fischer in Berlin, then the most important publisher of contemporary German literature. Preprints of the work had generated such a response that the international success of the book edition, which was translated into Norwegian, Russian and Swedish as early as 1905, already seemed assured.

In 1902, while living in Basel, Hesse had got to know Maria Bernouilli, the daughter of a lawyer, a woman nine years his senior who ran a studio for photographic art - “Kunstfotografie” read the sign outside the studio - together with her sister on Basel’s

Bäumleingasse. As it was she who soon set about making plans for them to settle on Lake Constance, we need to take a closer look at this woman and the history of her life up until this point.

It was with Mia (as Hesse came to call her) - a woman who was, incidentally, the first professional photographer in Switzerland, as well as being a passionate pianist and climber - that the writer and poet made his second trip to Italy in spring 1903, and shortly afterwards he asked her father for her hand. Yet the father did not even want to begin to consider the idea of a poet as son-in-law, responding to the suitor as follows when Hesse made a second attempt on September 23, 1903. "Your vocation to be a writer is one I am unable to approve of." *Peter Camenzind* left him so unimpressed that, while acknowledging the author to be of "quite admirable character," he wrote - possibly on account of the paean to wine featuring in the story - "Yet a betrothal to my daughter is something I cannot agree to."

Hesse, who had an "indefinable dread" of marriage as it was, fearing that it would act as both a shackle and an obstacle to his artistic work, seems - as evidenced by the letters that his Mia wrote him shortly afterwards - to have seen father Bernouilli's reservations as confirmation of his own misgivings, and initially adopted a more distanced attitude. "I ache for you so terribly," Mia subsequently wrote to him in 1904, "that I must at least come to you for as long as there is nothing forthcoming from you to me! ... It may be that I was once too insistent about the marriage, and that may have made you impatient and despondent, and I would like you to be free of this pressure, for I am - notwithstanding all the apparent impediments - convinced in my innermost being that we shall prevail and get through this. I occasionally have the impression that all the time I spend without you is but a useless waste of time." And two days later: "You ought to be free. You have never given me a solemn oath ... I appreciate that, for the sake of your artistic development, it has to be that way, that you cannot afford to show any consideration ... I believed that I would, with my love, be able to serve you and make your life more enjoyable but it has now become the opposite of what I intended ... Farewell, you one and only, forgive me ... if I am unable to break free without you having to feel it ... But allow me to also tell you that my entire love shall always be yours, even if I shall not be allowed to keep you."

Unfortunately, Hesse's replies to Mia's letters have not survived. With the exception of one or two items, they were destroyed in a fire at Mia's house in Ascona in February 1942. Yet the letters she wrote him show that her urgings had not been in vain: "Sweetest darling," Mia wrote to thank him three days later, "a thousand thanks to you for saying that you do not want to remain alone and for allowing me to stay with you ... I want all my love to shower down on you like a bright, warm shaft of sunlight. We belong to each other, and nothing, nothing, may ever be allowed to keep us apart."

After this, events proceeded remarkably quickly. The engagement - with or without father-in-law - was announced at Whitsun, and from this point on there is no mistaking Mia's influence, also with regard to the future plans to settle on Lake Constance. In February 1904, for example, when Hesse was, with an eye to the financial security of his marriage, considering whether to accept a position as editor with the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which had been offered to him through Wilhelm Schäfer, she advised him against doing so. When, in April, he was thinking of possibly moving to Schwäbische Alb after the marriage, she wrote him: "To be honest, I would not be too keen to go for the Swabian country ... and, what is more, I consider there to be too little water in the Schwäbische Alb; I feel that, when moving to the country [*a decision which would thus seem to have already been made*], one also has to ensure that, in the summer, you do not have only the tub to bathe in but have

at least a brook or stream.” For this reason, and no doubt also on account of the greater proximity to Switzerland, she stated that she preferred the Baden part of the Black Forest, adding that she had, however, also thought of “Stein am Rhein in Switzerland, which I’ve heard is delightful and a cheap place to live. And it would also be close to Emil Strauß, something I wouldn’t consider at all bad.”

Hesse would appear to have agreed to this, yet without having committed to any one place. In May 31, 1904, Mia took out a want ad for a flat in the Baden section of Lake Constance, yet without specifying any one place. Two weeks later, she travelled to see Emil Strauß in Emmishofen to spend four days looking at apartments in Überlingen, Unteruhldingen, Wangen, Hemmenhofen and Gaienhofen, the little house next to the village chapel in Gaienhofen having been the one she took to most. She returned there again with friend Hans Hindermann, a Basel architect, on July 2 to have the place looked over by an expert, after which she immediately signed a lease. All of this was done without the active participation of her fiancé, who had retired to Calw since October 1903 in order to conclude *Unterm Rad* in the place where the schoolboy tragedy was set, and to complete two assignments that had been commissioned by Berlin publishing company Schuster & Loeffler, who had asked Hesse to write monographs on Boccaccio and Francis of Assisi.

On August 2, after the manuscripts had been dispatched and the nest on Lake Constance had been prepared by the bride, the couple were finally able to marry, Basel being chosen as the place for the ceremony to make things easier for their many friends and relatives. “My wedding,” Hesse reports to his fellow writer Stefan Zweig, “went off at a gallop since the father-in-law didn’t agree to the marriage ... I rode on into Basel just when he happened to be out of town, and off we went - *subitissimo* - to the registry office. Now, the old man is thundering from afar, yet would appear to be gradually calming down, and now I am a married man, the gypsy existence having come to an end for the time being.” And that very same evening - no doubt with a view to evading the father-in-law - the newly wed couple “did a bunk,” stopping off in Schaffhausen, Konstanz, Rheineck, and Ermatingen on their way to Steckborn, where they took a ferry from the Swiss side of the lake to cross to Gaienhofen. Six boxes of books from Basel had already arrived. Yet they had to wait several days for their furniture, and the desk made to Hesse’s precise specifications by his friend Hermann Haas in Munich did not arrive for another three weeks.

At the time, the village of Gaienhofen had less than 300 inhabitants. The German side of the lake had neither electricity nor gas nor running water, let alone any easy way to get to the place. The most convenient way to get there was by taking the steamer from Konstanz to Steckborn on the Swiss side, and to then take the ferry boat across the lake. Neither were there, with the exception of a bakery, any places to shop, which meant that Hesse would in future have to row to Steckborn on the other side of the lake to stock up on all the provisions they needed. “I know all the customs tariffs for kitchen stuff, etc. off by heart,” he wrote to Alexander von Bernus three weeks after his arrival, “though might be better off indulging in a bit of smuggling.” Yet, he added, it was a cheap place to live. For a dream price of 150 marks a year (a sum which was, however, worth somewhat more than it is today), farmer Hepfer had rented the residential half of his homestead - five little rooms - out to them, while the other half, with its barn and stables, continued to be used for husbandry. Now, Hesse wrote shortly after his former housemaid from Basel moved in, he was heading a household consisting of “a house, wife, cat, maid, and countless bugs and snails.”

“Opposite the Mauritius Chapel and the village pump, close to the schoolhouse and the mighty peace linden of 1871,” Hesse recalls in a letter written in the 1950s, “is where we set up house. The residential part of the house consisted of a kitchen and two rooms, the larger of which, with a big green tiled stove and a so-called ‘Kunst,’ served as living and dining room. Bare, untreated wooden benches lined the wood-panelled walls, and it was warm and snug in there.”

This sparse ambience, far removed from the pomp-and-plush culture of the belle époque of Kaiser Wilhelm II, was right in tune with the ideals of the newly-weds, who were determined to follow the example set by Hesse’s own literary figure Peter Camenzind - a descendant of Rousseau, Thoreau and Tolstoy, the ancestors of today’s Greens - by living the alternative, healthy, modest but industrious life far away from the big cities, albeit with just one luxury - that of living in beautiful and remarkably distinctive countryside. A writer is, after all, as Hesse noted in his piece *Wahlheimat*, “one of the most undemanding beings in the world.” In other respects, however, Hesse asks for a lot and would rather die than do without. “I, for example, would find it impossible to live without surroundings that offer my senses at least a minimum of genuine substance, of real images. In a modern city, amid stark utilitarian architecture, amid imitation wood, amid nothing but ersatz and deception, I would find this completely impossible, and would soon wither and die.”

From the very beginning, Hesse was the very opposite of a slick member of the “civilized literati.” Wherever possible, he avoided metropolitan areas and intellectual circles. Similarly, he was no friend of the public, having found it a strain to live in surroundings where he was known only as a name and brand. “My life just couldn’t be private enough, and that’s why I never attended any ‘celebrity’ gatherings, whether they might have been in salon, club, ball, or banquet; it was easy for me to avoid such events because I always lived way out in the sticks somewhere,” he noted in 1933.

Decadence, cliquishness, patronage, and showy social events were anathema to him, though there was no shortage of opportunities if he had had the inclination to indulge. *Peter Camenzind* had, after all, since also created a stir in the capital: “There are a thousand reasons,” Hesse wrote from Gaienhofen at the time, “why I really ought to go to Berlin, and that’s something I dread. The only thing I like about Berlin is the fact that it is so far away from here,” He never - despite constant requests to do so, and unlike virtually all of his colleagues with S. Fischer - visited his publisher there, and in a poem written shortly before his move to Gaienhofen, he tellingly wrote:

*“Man hatte mich eingeladen
Ich wusste nicht warum.
Viele Herren mit schmalen Waden
standen im Saal herum.*

*Es waren Herren von Namen
und von gewaltigem Ruf,
von denen der eine Dramen,
der andere Romane schuf.*

*Sie wussten sich flott zu betragen
und machten ein großes Geschrei,
da schämte ich mich zu sagen,
dass auch ich ein Dichter sei.”*

In the same way as the smart and slim-calved literary set described in the poem, Hesse's neighbours in Gaienhofen would at first never have imagined him to be a writer. As there were, at the time, few craftsmen other than farmers and fishermen in the village, he had to rely on his own skills and resources, restoring the old tumbledown property from floor to roof virtually single-handedly.

Hesse, no less parsimonious than his fellow Swabians, a people of legendary thriftiness. reports that he "took the nails from the packing cases and banged them out straight on our stone threshold, and plugged the yawning cracks on the upper floor with tow and paper, and subsequently painted the half-timbered exterior red." Yet barely was the house more or less ready to be lived in when his wife Mia - possibly because of the unusually humid lakeside climate, possibly because of the strains of moving house - went down with such painful attacks of rheumatism that she had to be taken back to Basel to spend three months in hospital. Small wonder, therefore, that Hesse, in a letter to fellow writer Helene Voigt-Diederichs, lamented: "And however small the house may be, up pops Satan and hangs his tail in the door."

This was something witnessed at first hand by Stefan Zweig, one of the hundred or so friends and colleagues who visited Hesse during his first year in Gaienhofen. A man with an enormous capacity for enthusiasm, the writer from Vienna entered the little study Hesse had on the first floor of the house in such exuberant fashion that he failed to see how low the transom was and hit his head on it so hard that he had to lay down for a quarter of an hour before he could even manage to get a word out. Yet other visitors, too, were at a loss for words - especially those who arrived unannounced. In such cases, Hesse was, during the summer months, often to be encountered in a costume consisting of just glasses and cigar - a naturism he cultivated not only when swimming in the lake (though he admittedly dispensed with the cigar when doing the latter).

Whether he seriously pursued his intention of warding off unwanted visitors and irksome tourists with a crossbow, while welcoming friends by firing a gun salute, can no longer be verified, though is by no means improbable given his fondness for fireworks and general passion for fire. Hesse writes in one of his replies to readers' letters - already countless even during this early period - that he had, at the end of 1904, applied to the relevant district office of the Grand Duchy of Baden in Konstanz, requesting that he be given a post office of his own for Gaienhofen. Three weeks after his arrival on Lake Constance, he acquired a rowing boat in which to make shopping trips and the many excursions to destinations such as the nearby island of Reichenau, to the Thurgau region, or down to Stein am Rhein and Schaffhausen. "Were one to have a healthy contempt for life," he wrote in November 1904 to fellow writer Wilhelm Schmidtbonn, "one could even use it to go sailing in." We have such boat expeditions to thank for the vivid character and seasonal colour evident in many of the moods captured in his Lake Constance book.

When reading these descriptions, which today still have the same elementary effect on us as the cry of a gull or a ray of sunshine, one feels not like a mere onlooker or outsider but as an actual part of the countryside set between rushes and lake. This quite remarkable sensuality of his prose - highlighted even by a man as critical as Kurt Tucholsky - prompted Viennese satirist Franz Blei to characterize his colleague in his *Literarisches Bestarium* as follows: "The Hesse is the name given to a charming woodland pigeon that is no longer to be encountered in the wild. Its gracefulness has made it a popular cage bird that delights visitors by continuing to act as if it were in the wild when already living in captivity. This gives urban dwellers the sense of being in the great outdoors, and this sensation is enhanced still further by small little glands from which it secretes a fragrance

slightly resembling that of pine scent." These lines were inspired by fond, perhaps also somewhat envious, mischievousness.

Hesse described people no less vividly than he did the natural world around him, the *föhn*, the cloud and water formations, and the varied lakeside, Alpine and mountain foothill scenes. In the course of the many excursions he embarked on from Gaienhofen into the surrounding area, he did not, for example, fail to notice how, on a journey through Appenzell, the train seemed, from around Romanshorn on, after several locals had boarded it, to "slow somewhat in a very amiable fashion. The only reason for this is the dialect, the figures, faces, and gestures." Similarly, he did not fail to notice the role played by deaths which, occurring relatively rarely in communities such as those in his village on Lake Constance, attract far greater sympathy than they do in the cities, "where people die every day without anybody but the Almighty taking any note of the fact." There is no mistaking his appreciation of shared, bonding elements in the writings produced on Lake Constance. Not only on account of the spirit of kinship prevailing in this "tri-state" region, but also thanks to his own transnational heritage, Hesse never had any problem overcoming arbitrary borders and narrow-minded nationalism. "My belief in races," he writes in 1919, "has never really been that much alive. Yet I am Alemannian, and probably feel this more strongly and more consciously than most of those who really are so in strictly ethnic terms ... This region in southwestern Germany/Switzerland is my home, and the fact that the region is crisscrossed by several state borders and one Reich frontier is something I was often made to feel quite acutely in both minor and more major matters, yet I have, in the inmost depths of my being, never been able to consider these borders to be natural Nowhere, and never, did the presence of these borders manifest itself in any noticeable differences in terms of the people living there, their language and customs, and neither were there any appreciable differences, this or that side of the border, with regard to the countryside, the way the land is tilled, the style of houses built, or in terms of family life. ... For me, home meant both sides of the Upper Rhine, whether the area be called Switzerland, Baden or Württemberg ... I learned to live my life along the border between Germany and Switzerland not as something natural, self-evident and sacred, but as something arbitrary, which made me see brotherly regions as being divided. And, at a very early age, this experience caused me to develop a mistrust of national or state borders, and a fervent, often passionate love for all human assets whose essence enables them to overfly borders and to create other attachments than those of a political nature." This attitude, one viewed suspiciously by many of his critics as being "unhistorical," "escapist," and "sentimental," later made it impossible for Hesse to share in an unsentimental sense of reality and the "historic receptiveness" to two world wars. Instead, he felt, with increasing age, "everywhere driven to value more highly those things which unite nations, ideologies and religions than those which divide them."

And it this element, too, that sets Hesse's depictions of Lake Constance apart from the customary kind of devotional "Heimatliteratur." Equally, however, the man who never, right up to an advanced age, ever disowned or discarded his Swabian dialect, had a well developed sense of the significance of home and heritage. Yet he never extols his own origins at the expense of those with other ties and associations. At the beginning of the first world war, for example, he writes:

"Among the simplest needs that one otherwise never really reflects on, because one never has to hunger for them, is one's homeland. Yet by that I do not mean the fatherland ... I mean the images that each of us has preserved as the best memories treasured from childhood. They are beautiful not because one's homeland is necessarily more beautiful than the world outside but because they were what we saw first, and are what we beheld

with the first gratitude and freshness of our young eyes of a child. That is not sentimentality. The safest thing we have when we have not as yet scaled the highest intellectual pinnacles is our native homeland. And that can be taken to mean a variety of different things. It can be a stretch of countryside, or a garden, or a workshop, or the sound of a bell, or a smell. What we are speaking of here is the memory of a time in which we were growing up, of the first most powerful and most sacred impressions gained in our life. And it also includes the way people speak in the place where we were born and raised. For me, as someone who lives in "foreign" climes, the first Swabian railway conductor is a true bird of paradise when I am returning home!One is stirred to the very core, the safe little treasure trove of memories we have had since our very earliest youth being thus evoked. Images and impressions to which one often attaches little value are all jumbled up, but all of them together create a heady solution that one is unable to stir without crystals being produced."

But back to Lake Constance. The literary fruits of the eight years Hesse spent in Gaienhofen were prodigious and of remarkable diversity in thematic terms, 25 major narrative works having been written here. Examples one could name here include *In der alten Sonne*, *Die Marmorsäge*, *Der Lateinschüler*, *Heumond*, *Schön ist die Jugend*, *Ladidel*, *Das Nachtpfauenauge*, *Casanovas Bekehrung*, and the first part of *Knulp*, some of which are still set in Calw. Barely having been finished, the majority of them were published by German, Swiss and Austrian newspapers - long before they appeared in book form in the anthologies *Diessseits* (1907), *Nachbarn* (1908), and *Umwege* (1912). Several volumes of verse, either Hesse's own poems or works edited by him, and the novels *Unterm Rad* and *Gertrud*, were written during the Gaienhofen years. To the chagrin of his publisher Samuel Fischer in Berlin, Hesse had the "musicians novel" *Gertrud* published not by his company but by its Munich competitor Albert Langen, to whose satirical weekly *Simplicissimus* Hesse had been contributing short prose pieces and poems since 1905.

In association with the brilliant illustrator Thomas Theodor Heine, the agile publisher Albert Langen had first visited Hesse on Lake Constance in March of 1905, and attempted to lure him away from Fischer Verlag with the promise of fantastic royalties. Yet it was less the financial enticements - which Hesse used, if it all, only to exert pressure on his Berlin publisher - that impressed him and more the cosmopolitan attitude and courage of his own convictions displayed by Albert Langen, an enterprising man, who was forced to live in exile in France due to the attacks he had made on Kaiser Wilhelm II, and yet who nonetheless managed to turn his publishing company into a tool helping him achieve his aim of opening Germany up to its neighbouring countries in cultural terms. Similarly, Hesse welcomed Langen's resistance to the prepotent, condescending, and centralistic dominance of Prussian cultural policy (directed towards the artists of southern Germany, who were ridiculed as being provincial backwoodsmen), causing him to be kindly disposed to Langen's proposal that he work as editor of a new magazine to cover everything south German, Swiss and Austrian culture had to offer and which, in remembrance of the new democratic dawn of 1848, was to be called *März*. With a view to achieving this objective, the tiny village of Gaienhofen became a focal point of German culture once the Munich publisher returned, this time in the company of Ludwig Thoma and Olaf Gulbransson, to Gaienhofen in April 1906 in order to found this new magazine. They came, throwing up dust and creating a minor furore, in one of the first series-produced automobiles, the then 33-year-old Albert Langen having developed such a passion for this newfangled means of conveyance that, one year later, he even became general sales agent for automobiles in Bavaria and Württemberg - a passion he was soon to pay for with his life.

Having not even having reached the age of forty, Langen died in 1909 from the effects of a severe case of otitis media he had contracted while trying to catch up with a zeppelin he was racing in a cabriolet with the top down.

The cultural and review pages of the magazine *März*, which Hesse described as a “militant publication of decidedly oppositional character,” was edited by him for five years until he moved away from Gaienhofen. This necessitated many trips to the editorial office in Munich. Since the death of Albert Langen, however, his work there had been made so difficult that he got the young Theodor Heuss to act as future editor of the title.

Early in 1907, when the first issues of the new magazine appeared, Hesse began to start work on a house of his own to be built in nearby Erlenloh, one son having since been born, and two more to follow during the time spent in the Lake Constance region. An interest-free loan from the father-in-law in Basel, who would seem to have since reconciled himself to having the now-famous Hesse as his son-in-law, made it easier to raise the requisite 20,000 marks, and the family finally had electricity and running water.

This magnificent country house with eight rooms, a veranda and terrace, with the big study on the upper floor affording what was then an unobstructed view of the lake, across to the Münstertum in Konstanz, and the line of Alpine peaks, also boasted the very first garden of their own, which was designed to facilitate a large degree of self-sufficiency. Landscaping and the task of laying out the garden soon became one of Hesse’s favourite pastimes. Numerous visitors filed reports on the fruits of his zeal: the richness and fecundity, the blaze of magnificent country blooms to be admired in the garden in Gaienhofen, his beds edged by flowers, an orchard numbering no less than thirty trees, and a path lined with sunflowers. “There is a kind of a creative delight and creative boisterousness about layout out a garden,” Hesse noted at the time. “You can shape a piece of earth any way your fancy takes you, and for the summer you can create your favourite fruits, favourite colours, favourite fragrances. You can turn a little patch, a few square metres of bare soil, into a surging wave of laughing colour.”

One of his guests, a young teacher (from the Glarisegg “Landeserziehungsheim” on the opposite shore of the lake) reported years later in the *Gazette de Lausanne* that Hesse led him through the new garden, drawing particular attention to the sand-strewn main path: “Please note how nice and firm this path is. There is a firm bed below the sand, though it is made not of stone but of the entire canon of contemporary German literature, works having been neatly layered on top of one another.” In a letter to his youngest son Martin written in 1944, Hesse confirmed this episode. “We had plenty of sand in Gaienhofen but no stones, and I laid the bed for the path using loads of useless books and masses of magazines.” This proved to be as practical as it was unconventional. On account of his widely read book reviews, Hesse was already receiving some 500 books a year from his publishers, and disposed of the unsuitable ones in this highly “fundamental” manner.

The enjoyment derived from breaking conventions, a sparkling sense of something fresh, boisterous and, not infrequently, even drastic, is radiated by most of the letters written in Gaienhofen. Hesse liked to counter the extravagantly status-based thinking of Wilhelminian society with a lifestyle of provocative simplicity, and to oppose the affected mannerisms of his intellectual colleagues with a laconically practical approach to life. Some of this aversion towards anything solemn or high-flown is also evident in the stories about craftsmen, tramps and mavericks he wrote during this period. Gradually, a small colony of artists began to settle in Gaienhofen, and soon all forms of artistic expression -

writing, painting, music - were interwoven in the most productive of fashion in Hesse's circle of friends.

The first to follow him to Gaienhofen was the friend from his youth in Tübingen, the physician and writer Ludwig Finckh, who settled in Gaienhofen permanently from 1905. Hesse's fellow Alemannian writers - Emil Strauß, Emanuel von Bodman, Jakob Schaffner, Wilhelm von Scholz, Wilhelm Schusser, and Christian Wagner - were always welcome guests. From Stuttgart came Wilhelm Lang, writer and editor with Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, with whom Hesse had compiled the folksong anthology *Der Lindenbaum*. From Munich came, in addition to Albert Langen, the young publisher Georg Müller, accompanied by Leo Greiner, director of the "Die 11 Scharfrichter" ("The 11 Hangmen") cabaret. Wilhelm Schäfer, editor of the most influential art magazine *Die Rheinlande*, also visited several times, as did Jakob Wassermann, Stefan Zweig, and Carl Hauptmann, the forgotten brother of Gerhard Hauptmann. They were joined by all the painter and music friends, such as wood-carver Max Bucherer from Basel, who settled here in 1905, and the painter Wilhelm Steinhausen from Frankfurt, the graphic artists Ludwig Renner and Otto Blümel, who produced illustrations and decorative designs for books such as Hesse's novel *Gertrud*, the volumes of verse entitled *Unterwegs*, and *Lieder deutsche Dichter*, and the most imaginative of paper-cuts and verses to go with his street ballad on Hesse's journey to India. ("Lo, he circumnavigates Europics / and is suddenly in the tropics"). Other visitors included painter Ernst Würtenberger, who produced a portrait of Hesse here in 1905, and Fritz Widmann, who had accompanied Hesse on many hiking trips through northern Italy, the musicians Edwin Fischer and Alfred Schlenker, a dentist and composer from Konstanz, for whom Hesse wrote the libretto to an opera called *Die Flüchtlinge* ("The Refugees"), and who introduced him to the young Swiss composer of lieder, Othmar Schoeck, in Gaienhofen in March 1911. Schoeck, who was a genius when it came to inventing congenial melodies, stirred an elective affinity in Hesse, who had written the following lines to Theodor Heuss in 1910: "As a closet lyricist, the desire for melody is ultimately, perhaps, a little greater in me than that of penetrating weightier materials."

Yet barely had Hesse achieved what he had dreamed of for so long - a home and sense of belonging - when his temperament, one constantly oscillating between the desire for a settled and nomadic existence, began to display the first harbingers of change. In like manner to Robert Walser, a man of similar disposition, he felt a remarkably frequent need for a change of scenery, excursions, and ever more distant journeys. "O, ye wanderers," he wrote at the time, "you blissfully light of foot, I gaze after each of you, even though I may have given you a fiver, as I would a king!" In their willingness to change and start over, he sees vagabonds as spike and spur, stirring him to guard against stagnation and a sedentary existence. When describing a *Fußreise im Herbst* ("Autumn Journey On Foot"), for example, it is no accident that he thinks of well-heeled, oversated people of his own age whom he knew back when "they would have given their life for a kiss, and their world for a fool's prank," yet who were now "stroking their sideboards, had their housewife at their side, and were getting all worked up in philistine discussions about the price of land and changes to the railway timetable."

The bid to work this problem out of his system by writing the hobo story *Knulp* succeeded only in part when first begun, the manuscript having remained unfinished. Only years later, after he had put physical distance between himself and Gaienhofen, and the first world war had put an end to the vagabond existence, did he manage to complete the story. *Tedium vitae* - the tedium of life - is the revealing title of a story written during the final years in Gaienhofen.

Yet it was not a spurning of Lake Constance that prompted Hesse to seek a way to escape the idyll after eight years. At the time, he would have needed to break free of any place he might have happened to be living in. By September 1911, the time had come: five weeks after the birth of his third son, Martin, Hesse departs on the longest journey of his lifetime - to India, the country to which his parents and grandparents had travelled as missionaries. He returns in mid-December, and soon after comes the decision to leave Gaienhofen for good, and to sell the house built just four years previously. In September 1912, he moves with his family to a "ramshackle little aristocratic estate" near Berne, the house of painter Albert Welti, who had died a short time before. The quietest and most secluded period of Hermann Hesse's life thus comes to an end. The first world war is already casting its shadow and, with it, the "peeling away of an agreeable blindness and lack of responsibility," as he notes when looking back on his years in Gaienhofen. The second half of his life that now ensued "was the dramatic one," he concludes at the age of 80, "and one rich in struggles, enemies, neediness, and successes, yet the strength needed to overcome this unsettled half of my life, derived, it seems to me, from the first, quieter half, from the almost forty years of peace that I was able to enjoy before the clatter of world drama intruded into our lives in such importunate manner. War has been spoken of as a bath in steel," he continued, "yet my experience shows that it is peace alone which gives us strength."

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